

It starts with you

In view of the disturbing global climate changes, the MyCarbon programme is a timely initiative, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**



AT the end of last year, you, as CEO of your company, insisted that all employees had to make a concerted effort to reduce the company's carbon footprint.

Six months into this year, energy consumption remains high and you have no idea why. Which machine is an energy guzzler? Who doesn't switch off the lights when these are not needed? Are the air conditioners on 24/7? What is going on?

This is where the MyCarbon programme can help your company mitigate your carbon emissions.

The programme is the first national corporate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reporting programme initiated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (NRE) with the support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Malaysia.

Datuk Dr Abdul Rahim Haji Nik, 58, NRE deputy secretary general (Environmental), says that the aim is to encourage the corporate sector to review, account and report their Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. This is in line with the pledge made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib that by 2020, Malaysia would reduce its GHG emissions intensity by up to 40 percent.

Soon Hun Yang, an environmen-

tal engineer and lead consultant for the programme, explains in simple terms: "Our atmosphere traps heat which we need to survive. However, if too much heat is trapped, it's bad. If too little heat is trapped, it's also bad. Think of a greenhouse — you need the air in there to be in optimal conditions for the plants to grow. Currently, there is an imbalance and this is caused by emissions of gases like Co², methane and so on."

Painting a picture that is all doom and gloom, both men warn that if we do not do something now, we will see climate change that will result in catastrophes. For instance, rice cultivation will be affected, soil erosion may cause whole countries to be flooded and animal species will become extinct.

To put a monetary value to all this, Soon, 37, shares a projection from the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department. It is estimated that there could be a 30 per cent reduction in the expected yield of oil palm if there is a rise in temperature of 2°C and a 10 per cent decrease in rainfall. This translates to an estimated loss of RM5 billion.

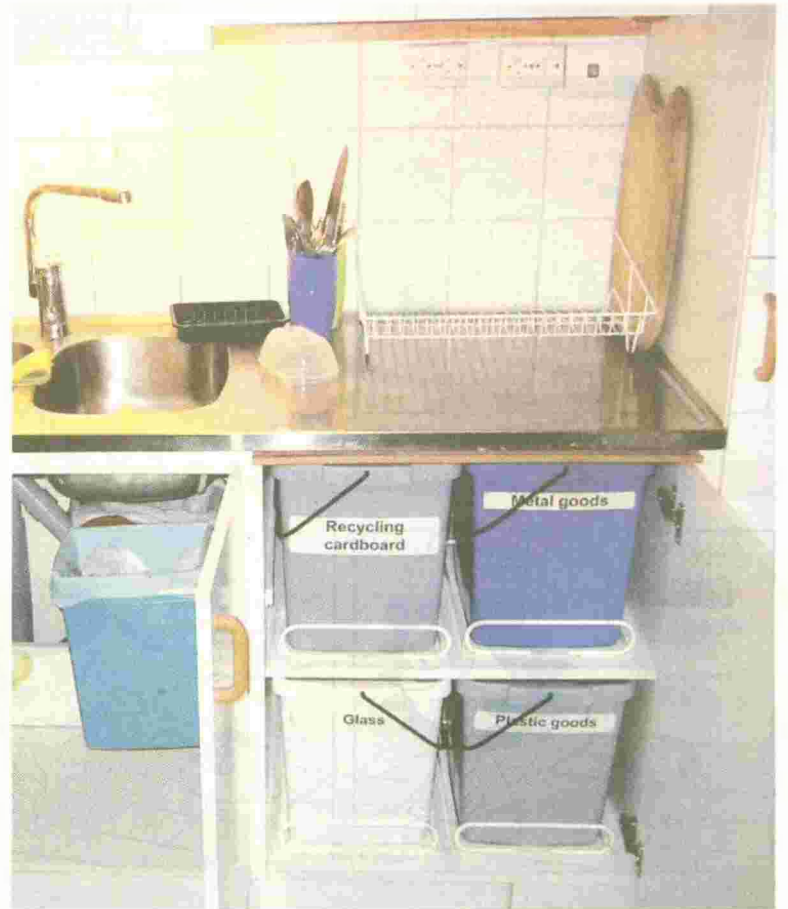
The main problem, says Soon, can be summed up in one phrase: Lack of management. For example, an apartment resident may have good

intentions and sorts his rubbish according to glass, plastic and waste. Then he takes the bags to the common rubbish-collection area where he finds the management, however, is not into recycling. So he ends up leaving all his sorted rubbish in one huge bin.

Soon then shows a series of photos of his time in Sweden where he completed his post-graduate programme in waste management. "In our dorms, everything was designed with recycling in mind. Look under the sink. They were already there... separate bins built into the space under the sink... one for plastic, one for glass and another for general waste."

The idea is to set up a globally-recognised accounting and reporting programme of GHG for companies in the country. Datuk Rahim says the voluntary programme targets companies from six sectors: Power, industrial processing, agriculture, waste and land use and forestry.

It is similar to other international



The recycling bins installed under the sink in Soon's dormitory in Sweden.



"Reporting carbon emissions will one day be made compulsory."
Soon Hun Yang

GHG reporting programmes but is adapted to suit local conditions and situations.

A website, www.mycarbon.gov.my, has been set up to help companies understand more about the MyCarbon programme.

Soon uses his company, Eco-Idea Consulting Sdn Bhd, to demonstrate how the programme works. "What we're doing is an energy audit. The principles are no different from a financial audit. If you don't keep track of your finances, you'll never know if you're losing money or making money. In the same way, we started in 2010 and began to keep track all the ways we were using energy. This included water dispensers, servers, laptops, printers, lights, air conditioner and so on. Our electricity bill was about RM300 each month. Then we took an inventory of all our appliances. We realised that the heater for the water dispenser was on all the time. And we had one switch for all

the lights," he says.

"So what we did was to rewire the place. Now, it's one switch for one light instead of all the lights in the room and you can only get hot water for tea and coffee at certain times. By doing this, we found that our electricity bill was reduced by half and we were able to reduce our carbon emissions effectively."

To date, some 21 companies have agreed to take part in the programme. It is gaining momentum because many of the stakeholders of these companies want to see transparency in the companies' actions.

"Think about it," says Soon, "if two telcos are offering exactly the same rates and packages, wouldn't you choose the one that wants to reduce its carbon emissions?"

Nevertheless, there are sceptics who question the need for more bureaucracy. In fact, Soon admits that he had one person ask him to his face "Why should I report to you?"

His answer is simple: "With MyCarbon, we are giving you the chance to prepare yourself. For now, it's a voluntary programme. There will come a time when it may become mandatory to report your carbon emissions under sustainability reporting. In many other countries, it is already mandatory."

Ultimately, he emphasises that it also comes down to the individual. We all have to share the responsibility of protecting our climate.

He says: "The problem is that many Malaysians don't see it as their problem. They're focused on blaming the government and authorities all the time. For example, they complain that waste is not collected from the drains. But who put the waste in the drain in the first place? We are the stakeholders of society. We need to do our part, but so many people can't be bothered. This is the attitude I am trying to change."