

TARIKH : 25 OKTOBER 2022
AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 14

Support sustainability, win votes

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THE world is serious about sustainability. Embracing sustainability is the only way to make sure the planet continues to be a place worth living on in the future.

The 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the best guide for how the country can make sustainability an important part of the national agenda. (The SDGs are a collection of interlinked global goals that form a "shared blueprint for peace and sustainable prosperity for people and the planet".)

The recent establishment of a new national SDG Centre under the Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Minister's Department is a positive step for the nation.

To support sustainability, all leaders, especially business leaders, must sincerely embrace sustainable environment, social and governance (ESG) metrics in their dealings. Bursa Malaysia is encouraging businesses to adopt ESG as standard business practice and Bank Negara and the Securities Commission have also communicated similar signals to the business community.

Business is the group that can make the biggest difference to glob-

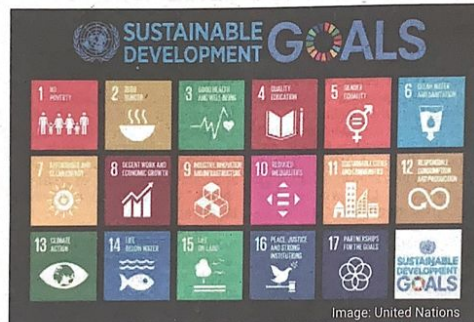


Image: United Nations

al sustainability because unsustainable business operations and practices form the biggest obstacle to achieving sustainability.

But pledges by industry players alone cannot truly deliver sustainability. Lawmakers must create the ecosystem to drive sustainability – there is no denying that much of the commitment to sustainability comes from the need to comply with laws and regulations.

Sustainability is different from

Covid-19 in terms of speed of impact. A pandemic like Covid-19 creates almost instant pain for the world. That's why pushing for collaboration among countries and even businesses did not meet with much resistance.

In contrast, the impact of a lack of sustainability and consequent climate change is a slower process. Many are still not feeling the pain. It is only those communities that are now enduring constant flooding

and other natural calamities that understand the urgency. Even the rise in global temperatures is not generating much concern among many, except those who experience intense heat waves. But evidence of a calamitous future for all of us is becoming clearer by the day, as scientists who regularly monitor the fundamentals have been reporting.

Lawmakers vying for seats in Malaysia's 15th General Election (GE15) on Nov 19 must realise that the issues surrounding sustainability must not be taken lightly. Striving for sustainability must be clearly demonstrated in their campaigns. Sustainability must be a key feature of their promises to the electorate if they are truly sincere about serving the rakyat.

This is because much of the economic and daily living pains that the rakyat are now experiencing can be traced back to one root cause: unsustainable practices, not only among businesses but also among the communities themselves. Few may be aware that even the food and energy crises now besetting the world can be traced back to unsustainable living.

This is further exacerbated by the

fact that laws and regulations around sustainability already in place are not effectively enforced. Many get away with shortcuts. All this has to change if we are to truly deliver sustainability.

As a result of constant calamities – especially flash floods – that people are facing, many among the general public are now more educated about sustainability issues. Candidates who fail to accept this reality may find themselves losing favour while those who incorporate pledges to support sustainability in their manifestos will gain voters.

I know of one party which has already made that pledge through a book by its leader entitled *SCRIPT (Sustainability, Care & Compassion, Respect, Innovation Prosperity, and Trust)* which champions sustainability. Rightfully, all manifestos in GE15 must place sustainability high on their list of promises.

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