

2016 Collection of e-Sustainability Talk Bulletins



July 2017

TRANSFORMATION * INNOVATION * PARTNERSHIP

Copyright © July 2017 by the Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC)

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, except with the prior written permission of the Director-General of Malaysia Productivity Corporation or in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the Director-General, Malaysia Productivity Corporation.

Published by
Malaysia Productivity Corporation,
P.O. Box 64, Jalan Sultan,
46200 PETALING JAYA
MALAYSIA

Website : www.mpc.gov.my
Email : marketing@mpc.gov.my
Tel : 603 – 7955 7266 / 7955 7050
Fax : 603 – 7957 8068 / 7955 1824

C O N T E N T S	Preface
	1. We are all in this together
	2. Sustainability is innovation's new frontier
	3. Green is the way forward
	4. It's HOT, HOT & DRY!
	5. Green is the way forward II
	6. HEAT is on, yet many are nonchalant!
	7. Climate Change
	8. The lazy person's guide to saving the world!
	9. Climate Change and LCCF
	10. Low carbon cities and its framework
	11. On crop nutrients, rising CO² & human health
	12. Crop nutrients, rising CO² & human health II
	13. Sustainable Slumber
	14. Sustainable brain power & body fuel for productivity
	15. Sustainable happiness for positive & productive living!
	16. Happiness and Productivity
	17. Happiness, Productivity and us
	18. Productivity Habits
	19. Productivity Habits II – Discard bad habits!
	20. Productivity Habits III – Address habit hostile environments
	21. Productivity Habits IV – Are you overthinking & stressed?
	22. Sustainable Health – Get moving!
	23. Sustainable Fitness –WALK!
24. Sustainable Productivity for MPB	

Preface

It is my pleasure of presenting here my second *Collection of e-Sustainability Talk* bulletins. In 2016, I have talked about various topics on sustainability, mainly in the economic and social aspects. As Malaysia undertakes the initiatives to pursue Green Growth, we need to understand that there are three pillars of sustainability; namely, economic, environment and social. These three pillars are essential for us to achieve sustainability in the true sense. Social sustainability is the ability of the social system comprising the nation, family and organisation to function at a defined level of social well-being and harmony. Economic sustainability is the ability of an economy to support a defined level of economic production indefinitely. Hence, the e-Sustainability Talk bulletins have the noble aim to share and enlighten people on the importance of sustainability in everything we do and its relatedness to the productiveness of our daily tasks and life. In reiterating what I have been saying in my bulletins: “***We are all in this together***”. In the spirit of continuous pursuance for productivity, quality and competitiveness, appreciate our only one living planet and consume with care. *Happy Reading!*

Shaik

Dr. Shaik Roslinah Bux,
Author of e-Sustainability Talk/ Senior Manager,
Productivity & Competitiveness Development (PCD) Division,
Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC)
(E) roslinahbux@mpc.gov.my

July 2017

e-Sustainability Talk 1/2016: We are all in this together

Welcome to the 2nd week of 2016! The year 2015 had been dramatic globally. We experienced many unexpected happenings last year; be it environmentally, economically, socially or politically. Drastic change in global climate has caused havoc in many nations. It will be worse if our effort to arrest the declining climatic change is slower than the damage that the human race is causing on planet Earth. Plan what you may; the most important question that rings loud and clear is: are those planning of ours sustainable by our planet. It is baffling how people plan as though we have endless supply of resources. The many environmental awakening happenings of recent months told us “NO!” To drive home this issue, I am sharing here an extract from the foreword of Marco Lambertini, Director-General of WWF International that was published in the Living Planet Report 2014.

The Living Planet Index has recorded a population decline of 52% among mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish on planet Earth since 1970. What this means is that, in less than two human generations, population size of vertebrate species have dropped by half. Why are we so anxious about this, you may ask! The indicated declined population are the living forms that constitute the fabric of the eco-systems that sustain life on Earth. This is a barometer of what we are doing to our own planet, our only home. We can choose to ignore their decline at our peril! By taking more from our ecosystems and natural processes than can be replenished, we are jeopardising our very future. **Nature conservation and sustainable development go hand-in-hand**. They are about preserving biodiversity and wild places as well as about safeguarding the future of humanity – our well-being, economy, food security and social stability – indeed, our very survival.

Protecting nature is an important task every nation must undertake as nature is the lifeline of many of the world's poorest people. The simple reason being, we all need nutritious food, fresh water and clean air – wherever in the world we live. Although recent climatic catastrophes may seem daunting and discouraging, we must believe that we can overcome this global issue. As quoted by Marco, “...because it is in ourselves, who have caused the problem, that we can find the solution...” Hence, we must close this destructive chapter in our history and build a future where people can live and prosper in harmony with nature. A meaningful closing remark from Marco sums up the essence of my e-Sustainability Talk series since 2015, “We are all connected - and collectively, we have the potential to find and adopt the solutions that will safeguard the future of this, our one and only planet.” Remember, **Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Consume with Care”**.

e-Sustainability Talk 2/2016: Sustainability is innovation's new frontier

Taking the cue from Marco Lambertini of WWF International who said, "...because it is in ourselves who caused the problem, that we can find the solution", we must believe that we can overcome the global climate issues. One simple way is by taking the initiative to live sustainably. Another is taking cognisance that sustainability is innovation's new frontier. Many organisations having realised that Green is the way forward, have pursued strategic directions that make their products and services acceptable to the public. In line with corporate social responsibility, organisations are compelled to ensure that their products are environmentally safe through a broad range of activities such as production process, packaging, advertising as well as product modification. Green practices have been noted to be given priority during recent economy recession. According to Adi Ignatius in the article "Why Green is Growing (When Not Much Else is)" published by Harvard Business Review in 2009, even China allocated 210 billion yuan or 5% of its stimulus spending to sustainable development. Although many developed countries have deliberated on global warming issues in various international settings, established numerous protocols, and the United Nation is now actively propagating sustainable development as indicated by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2030), one big question needs attention: To what extent will this enhanced commitment to sustainability cascade through the global economy?

On a cautionary side, consumers must be wary on the possibility of Green being subjected to unethical issues as Green was never clearly defined. There may be cases of Green Washing, a term coined by Jay Westerveld, an American Environmentalist. Green Washing is basically about insincere practice of organisations in labelling their products / services and policies as environmental-friendly for profit purposes when in reality their products / services fall short of the label. Three of the noted unethical practices are: placing Green and energy efficiency labels without proof, being vague about its contents, and lying about their products / services environment certification standard. Hence, to address this matter as well as "pushing" companies to inculcate Green practices, many stock exchange boards have made it mandatory for listed companies to produce annual sustainability report. As our planet Earth gets sicker by the second, it became critically important that we have 100% absolute inclusiveness for sustainability. This is the basic contribution from everyone towards recuperating our sole living planet and leaving it a better place for future generations. Remember, **"One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!"**

e-Sustainability Talk 3/2016: Green is the way forward

Like it or not, we have now moved into the 2nd week of February 2016. Time flies – many would say or lament. Does time really fly? Or, is it life has become so hectic that even 24 hours a day is not enough! In the process of our round-the-clock busyness, the activities of the modern world have taken tolls on planet Earth and the human health, be it mentally (relates to IQ), physically (PQ), emotionally (EQ) as well as spiritually (SQ)! Deliberations of the effects on IQ, PQ, EQ and SQ have to be at another platform. The focus here is the generic issue of sustainability as we live in a cyclical process – what comes round, goes round!

On the commercial front, many firms have become environment friendly to make their products popular. Green has been the “in” colour in the corporate world for the past three decades. Even President Barack Obama in his American presidency campaign has pledged USD15mil annually to develop cleaner energy sources. In addition to the attention surrounding the Green issue, numerous phrases such as Green products, eco-friendly, eco-marketing and eco-responsibility have cropped out. Sustainability definitely relates to everything that we do. It is beyond the climatic change that we are all experiencing – a repercussion of how we have treated Mother Earth. In the industry perspective, Philips, a renowned company, has been balancing the need to develop meaningful products and be Green at the same time. In 1994, Philips developed the **Eco-Vision** to reduce energy, waste, water and emissions throughout its product production processes. This initiative is complemented by **Eco-Design**, the main philosophy behind Philips’ product development. As shared by the company, an integral part of the Eco-Design philosophy is **Philips Green Focal Areas**, a product assessment process where an investigation of additional environment improvement options is carried out with set objectives and targets.

In this connection, I would like to reiterate what I have mentioned in my first 2016 e-Sustainability Talk dated 11 January: **“Protecting nature is an important task every nation must undertake as nature is the lifeline of many of the world’s poorest people.”** To know more about the Philips Green Focal Areas and our connectedness to what’s happening around us, stay tuned! Remember, **“Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Consume with Care”**.

e-Sustainability Talk 4/2016: It's HOT, HOT & DRY!

I have planned to continue our conversation on "Green is the way forward", but current HOT and DRY happenings take priority as it is a social awakening for all. Malaysian Meteorological Department (MetMalaysia) has issued information that Malaysia will experience hot weather in the coming weeks, especially the Northern Peninsula (North of Perak, Penang, Kedah, Perlis & Kelantan) due to the El Nino phenomenon. It will be hot, hot and hot with the expected temperature to be 0.5 to 2 degree Celsius above average. People in the Klang Valley have been lucky to enjoy some respite with isolated rain. Why and what have these to do with MPC, or us you would ask? Remember, climatic factor affects our well-being, individual and collective productivity as well as the quality of yields, production and services, be it agriculture, manufacturing, or H2H (human to human) interactions in the services industry. In this regard, allow me to remind everyone of our role in SCP or Sustainable Consumption and Production that I have deliberated on in my 2015 e-Sustainability Talk bulletins. In addition, Prof. Dr. Fredolin Tangang, a *climatologist* with UKM warned that the El Nino phenomenon could induce a drought over northern Borneo in the next three months. This will have repercussion on food production and bring on water crisis. Everyone must assume respective responsibility to assist our community and our nation to weather this climatic challenge. A most basic step we could undertake is stopping our wasteful habits as highlighted by Forum Air Malaysia in its article entitled "Time to stop our wasteful habits" published in the Star newspaper on 17 February 2016. An extract of the published item is being shared here for your information and action where due.

*"Time and again, we are reminded that Malaysia is a country blessed with abundant water resources. In fact, we are so used to getting water easily we sometimes forget that there are people around the world who are struggling just to quench thirst with a cup of clean water. ...Netherlands researchers found that four billion people around the world experience water scarcity problem. Lack of clean water for a week could negatively affect a person's health. We need clean water to drink, for hygiene and sanitation. It is proven that areas, which lack clean water, face problems with diseases. According to a 2015 report on Palestinian's access to water, people in Palestine only use an average of 40 litres per capita per day (l/c/d). Malaysians on average use 232 l/c/d. Penang is noted to be the state with the highest water usage at nearly 300 l/c/d. WHO (World Health Organisation) recommends 150 l/c/d under normal conditions while 100 l/c/d is set as the minimum for drinking and hygiene purposes. ...**Despite issuing warnings since 2015, our water usage habits remain the same.** Water scarcity problems are becoming more serious due to pollution and climate change. We can no longer afford to stick to our current wasteful habits. These may be hard to change immediately but you can always start with the smallest effort, such as turning off the tap while you brush your teeth or apply soap."*

In addition, UN warns that the world could suffer a serious water crisis within 15 years due to rampant population growth and increasing use of ground water in farming, industry and personal consumption. If this trend continues, UN anticipates that the world will have only 60% of water it needs by 2030! With the looming water crisis, remember, **"One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do your bit NOW!"**

e-Sustainability Talk 5/2016: Green is the way forward II

Hello again. Further to my e-Sustainability Talk 3/2016 dated 11 February 2016, we will continue our conversation on greening our environment and Philips Green Focal Areas. Global climate has heated up due to excessive usage and depletion of natural resources. We are now facing the brunt of unethical doings such as ill-planned developments and production, robbing our future generations of clean and pleasant nature that could ensure sustainable living and productivity. In the quest to go Green for Business Sustainability, many organisations have created ethical issues such as Green Washing and Green Sheen. Jay Westerveld, an American environmentalist, has coined the term “Green Washing” to describe the insincere practices by organisations in labelling their products and policies as being environmental-friendly for profit purposes but in truth, their products fall short of the label. Consequently, there is an urgent need to make Green clear and simple. This is simply because going Green is all aspects of an organisation’s operations are no easy task. Within the context of an organisation’s operation, there are product creations, manufacturing processes and procurement, the communities in which it operates including the behaviour and working practices of employees.

In a documented 1994 case, Philips has developed the Eco-Vision programme that covers both the production and the development of all its products. The programme that includes Eco-Design focuses on the reduction of energy, waste, water and emissions throughout the production of Philips products. The Philips Green Focal Areas (PGFA) forms an integral part of the Eco-Design philosophy at Philips. PGFA is a product assessment process where an investigation of additional environmental improvement options is carried out with set targets and objectives. The PGFA covers the areas of energy efficiency, packaging, hazardous substances, weight, recycling and disposal of wastes. Additionally, in the pursuance of Green practices, many organisations including Philips use the life cycle approach to determine a product’s overall environmental improvement. The life cycle assessment calculates the environmental impact of a product over its total life cycle; that is, from raw materials, manufacturing, product use, to disposal. The result of such calculations is an Eco-Indicator that could indicate the level of a company’s LEAN practices, quality, productivity and competitiveness. I have introduced numerous Green terms in this bulletin. Hence, we will adjourn here to ease our journey of understanding the Green Business world. Until the next bulletin, have Environmental-friendly days ahead! Remember, **“One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do your bit NOW!”**

e-Sustainability Talk 6/2016: HEAT is on, yet many are nonchalant!

The heatwave is on and the climate change is a reality. There have been countless talks on the need to go green and adopt sustainability in everything we do. Yet, people still plan to have huge production increments and enhance lifestyles without a blink on the consequence of their decisions. The nonchalant or the “somebody/anybody/nobody” attitude of some people has driven us to the current environmental situation. People always discount the fact that there is opportunity cost in everything we do or have decided upon. In this connection, allow me to share the thoughts of two prominent Malaysians. The first is the view of Prof. Dzulkifli Abdul Razak who lamented that **environmental lessons are not learnt** in his manuscript published in the Sun Newspaper on 13 January 2016. Despite the Cameron Highland disaster and the worst flooding in the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia, nothing substantial were done. Another looming calamity is the possibility of a “red ocean” – instead of muddy rivers at Pantai Balok and Pantai Batu Hitam near Kuantan. Hazards from bauxite activities have been forewarned. At a time when the cost of living is escalating, the last thing we want is polluted natural drinking water and unfit seafood for consumption! Many livelihoods are at stake!

The other related thought is by Soo Ewe Jin, the Executive Editor of the Star newspaper in his Sunday Starters column published on 20 March 2016. He highlighted that **people always say they think of their future generations, but many of the things that they do today have dire long term consequence on the environment**. Besides, we have been observing Earth Hour on 19 March for some years now, what does it mean to you? How does it contribute to a better world? Only one hour of switching off lights; what about other electronic gadgets that affect Mother Earth too? How about embracing an environmental-friendly lifestyle for long term benefits? Everyone must make greater efforts to understand why climatologists are getting worried over global climate trends. As said earlier, climate change is REAL and getting beyond manageability! Scientists have stressed that the unprecedented temperatures and the unusual strong El Nino pattern in the Pacific Ocean were due to man-made climate change.

Over to the Northern Peninsula, rice production is affected. Land has become so dry that replanting of rice is impossible. It is reported that the El Nino phenomenon has caused some 8500ha of paddy fields to dry up resulting in harvest jeopardy for about 5,100 farmers in north Seberang Prai. The heatwave in the state is also causing water to evaporate quickly making it difficult to irrigate the fields from Sungai Muda. Even pumping stations are suffering from dropping water levels. Dr. Arif Bahardin, State Agriculture & Agro-based Industry Rural Development &

Health Committee chairman advised that **"Water is precious now, lets' not waste any."** Incidentally, yesterday (22 March) was World Water Day as declared by United Nations General Assembly in 1993. We must remember that global warming is a universal issue where everything is interconnected. We must adjust our consumption patterns that will in turn guide industries to adjust their production patterns. This matter is reinforced in the principles of **SCP (Sustainable Consumption and Production)** that have been explained in my e-Sustainability Talk bulletins last year. Subsequently, it became important that everyone understands and participates in global sustainability efforts as stipulated in the **United Nations' SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) 2016-2030** launched in 2015. We certainly do not want to reach a situation where an American once said, *"When the last tree has been cut down, the last fish caught, the last river poisoned, only then will we realised that one cannot eat money!"* As aptly asked by Ewe Jin, "Is that the kind of world we want to leave to our children and grand-children?" Their future is in our hands. We are all in this together; remember **Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Consume with Care"**.

e-Sustainability Talk 7/2016: Climate Change

Welcome back to another session on sustainability. Much has been said about the critical need to consume, live and produce sustainably. For this serial, I will share with you on the topic of climate change. Climate change or global warming is a natural process that occurs over time. Before the industrial age, climate change was an effect of changes in solar energy, volcanic eruptions and natural changes in greenhouse gas concentrations. Since the mid of the 20th century, increased human activities such as burning of fossil fuels, intensive agriculture and land clearing have escalated greenhouse gas levels, making these the cause of rising temperatures and climate changes. In 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) painted a bleak future in one of its report:

“Throughout the 21st century, climate change impacts are projected to slow down economic growth, make poverty reduction more difficult, further erode food security, prolonging existing while creating new poverty traps, the latter especially in urban areas and emerging hot spots of hunger.”

What and where are the connections between what we do and what is happening now, you would ask? Climate change is the result of increasing amount of greenhouse gasses (GHG) in the atmosphere. The GHG act as a blanket that traps energy in the lower atmosphere, warming the earth's surface. As more heat gets trapped on the surface, so does earth's temperature, leading to global warming. So, what are the primary contributors to climate change? The primary cause is urban development that produces about 50% of total GHG, followed by industrial activities at 19%, deforestation, 17% and agriculture, 14%. In accordance with the National Communications Report submitted by each country to the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), national rapid developments have caused Malaysia's CO² emissions per capita higher than average for Asia Pacific. It was reported that Malaysia's total GHG emissions increased by 45% in 2000 compared to the 1994 level. Hence, at the 2009 **United Nations Climate Change Conference**, PM Malaysia, the Honourable Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak pledged Malaysia's commitment to “conditional voluntary reduction of carbon emission of up to 40% by the year 2020 compared to the 2005 level.” So, what are some of the initiatives Malaysia has undertaken to achieve this commitment? To know, stay tuned! Just take note that it is important for us to do the right things from the start and keep doing the right things right so that we can eliminate unnecessary CO² emissions. Remember, the future of our subsequent generation and health of planet Earth are in our hands. We are all in this together; **One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!**

e-Sustainability Talk 8/2016: The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World!

Environment sustainability issues have become too real for us! For far too long many have lived in denial of our detrimental ways on planet Earth. It is illogical for people to keep planning for incremental productions without much thought on its multi-prong consequences. The opportunity cost from such folly thinking is getting too huge for any one country to maintain, and worse still, it is also affecting neighbouring countries and the whole world over as we all share the same planet called Earth. It is akin to people throwing rubbish from their window or car or into the drain, and pretend the rubbish will disintegrate by itself! It does not!! The repercussion of this action will always come back to “haunt” us through clogged pipes, drains, sewage systems and floods! Drastic weather patterns for the last two decades have been getting more severe by the day with loud ringing alarm bells – so loud that even a deaf person could “hear”! Yet, there are still people who are nonchalant about the happenings around them. To them, it is somebody's, anybody's or perhaps nobody's responsibility; the easiest way to complain is that the Government is at fault! After years of talking and deliberating environmental issues, the United Nation (UN) announced its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on 25 September 2015. The SDGs have the noble aims to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of the world's new sustainable development agenda. However, the achievement of the 17 SDGs requires the contribution of everyone to make it a success, be you the government, the private sector, civil society or just a simple layman. In this connection, UN has put together a list of actions that you and I could practise in our everyday life to ensure a sustainable future for all. This list is called “The Lazy Person's Guide to Saving the World”! Some of the listed actions are:

1. Save electricity by plugging appliances into a power strip and turning them off completely when not in use;
2. Stop paper bank statements and pay your bills online or via mobile. No paper, no need for forest destruction;
3. Speak up! Ask your local and national authorities to engage in initiatives that do not harm people or the planet;
4. Air-dry your hair and clothes naturally instead of running a machine. If you do wash your clothes, make sure the load is full;
5. Eat less meat, poultry and fish. More resources are used to provide meat than plants;
6. Freeze fresh produce and leftovers if you do not have the chance to eat them before they go bad. You will save food and money;
7. Compost – composting food scraps reduces climate impact and recycles nutrients;
8. Recycle paper, plastic, glass and aluminium to keep landfills from growing;

9. Buy minimally packaged goods;
10. Avoid pre-heating the oven unless you need a precise baking temperature. Start heating your food right when you turn on the oven;
11. Plug air leaks in windows and doors to increase energy efficiency;
12. Replace old appliances with energy efficient models and light bulbs;
13. Choose a better diaper option. Swaddle your baby in cloth diapers or a new environmentally responsible disposable brand;
14. Shop local. Supporting neighbourhood businesses keeps people employed and helps prevent trucks from driving far distances;
15. Buy funny fruit – many fruits and vegetables are thrown out because their size, shape or colour are not “right”. Buying the perfectly good funny fruit utilizes food that might otherwise go to waste;
16. Bike, walk or take public transport. Save the car trips when you have a big group;
17. Bring your own bag when you shop. Pass on the plastic bag and start carrying your own reusable totes;
18. Take fewer napkins. You do not need a handful of napkins to eat your takeout. Take just what you need;
19. Maintain your car. A well-tuned car will emit fewer toxic fumes;
20. Donate what you do not use. Local charities will give your gently used clothes, books and furniture a new life; and
21. Vaccinate yourself and your children. Protecting your family from disease also aids public health.

Once again, be reminded that the future of our next generation and health of planet Earth are in our hands. We are all in this together; **One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!**

Sustainability Talk 9/2016: Climate Change and LCCF

Welcome to the 20th week of 2016. The past 19 weeks had given us the “roller-coaster” feel of climate change – from hot and dry weather to strong and stormy winds, chilly temperature at times, severe drought in some states and flash floods!! The severe drought at Northern Peninsula Malaysia has affected our paddy production plans and it is anticipated we will experience lower yield for own consumption in the near future. We may have to import more rice that in turn balloons our food import expenses! Dams and lakes are drying up; yet property constructions are mushrooming all over the place! Have these constructions been given due considerations on the availability of water to cater to their projects and future needs? At the same time, we are told that El Nino is tailing off and La Nina has started with *her* wet impact. We are also told to brace ourselves for another round of haze, or what is correctly known as the smog - again! We are currently consistently faced with two prominent types of stress for “modern” living – the continuous bad traffic and the unpredictable weather! These have, either directly or indirectly affected the mental and physical health of many people. Climate change or global warming is the result of increasing amount of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the atmosphere – contributed mainly by modern living lifestyles and unbalanced economic developments – developments that are not in harmony with nature; and henceforth, not sustainable!

As informed in my e-Sustainability Talk 7/2016 dated 11 April 2016, there are four primary contributors to climate change; namely, **urban development that produces almost 50 percent of total GHG emissions**; industrial activities, 19 percent; deforestation, 17 percent; and agriculture at 14 percent. Malaysia’s total GHG emissions increased by 45% in 2000 compared to the 1994 level. Based on the National Communications Report submitted by each country to the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Malaysia’s CO₂ emissions per capita was higher than average for Asia Pacific. Hence, at the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference, Malaysia’s Prime Minister has committed to “conditional voluntary reduction of carbon emission of up to 40 percent by the year 2020 compared to the 2005 level.” As an effort to fulfil this pledge, Malaysia adopted the **Low Carbon Cities concept**. A low carbon city is a city that comprises societies that use sustainable green technology and emit relatively low carbon as compared with present day practice to avoid advance impacts of climate change. The groundwork for this effort is the **Low Carbon Cities Framework (LCCF)**, a result from the collaboration between the Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry with the Malaysian Green Technology (GreenTech Malaysia) and the Malaysian Institute of Planners. The LCCF has three objectives; they are: (1) encourage and promote the concept of low carbon cities and

townships; (2) increase the compatibility of cities / township with their local ecosystem; and (3) guide cities in making choice / decisions towards greener solution. Essentially, LCCF serves as a guide for developers, local councils, town planners or non-governmental organisations to reduce the leads of carbon emission in cities. These objectives also call for realignment of modern living so that it is sustainable. So much for now, I will share more on LCCF in my next bulletin. Until then, we certainly look forward to greater buy-ins for greener living. **We are all in this together;**
One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!

e-Sustainability Talk 10/2016: Low Carbon Cities and its framework

Hello again. I have shared on the Low Carbon Cities (LCC) concept and its framework in my bulletin last week. As a recap, a low carbon city is a city that comprises societies that use sustainable green technology and emit relatively low carbon as compared with present day practice to avoid advance impacts of climate change. The LCC concept is supported by the Low Carbon Cities Framework (LCCF) that serves as a guide for developers, local councils, town planners as well as non-governmental organisations to reduce the levels of carbon emission in cities. The LCCF comprises of two component systems; namely, the framework and its assessment methodology that together facilitate and evaluate the development of LCC. The framework serves as a manual to identify areas that could be targeted to curtail greenhouse gas emissions. The assessment system, on the other hand, is an in-built calculator that helps a city determine its current baseline. It is progressively used to monitor carbon emission levels. LCCF focuses mainly on four main areas of urban living that can contribute to a city's low carbon level either collectively or independently. The four main areas are:

1. Urban environment

This area looks at the site selection, urban form and urban greenery, and environmental quality.

2. Urban infrastructure

This area is about infrastructure provision, waste, energy and water management.

3. Urban Transport

This area concerns the shift of transport mode, green transport infrastructure, clean vehicles and traffic management.

4. Buildings

This area emphasises on low carbon building and community services.

A city-based approach provides a holistic view where all criteria on LCCF are considered and mitigated with the ultimate goal to achieve zero carbon emission. GreenTech Malaysia has rolled out its pilot tests at Tasik Kenyir Hang Tuah and Miri. Since then, high-density towns such as Petaling Jaya and Subang Jaya have enlisted GreenTech Malaysia for the LCCF programme. LCCF is still at its early stages. GreenTech Malaysia hopes to capitalise on its current strategic partnerships to convince all 149 local authorities in Malaysia to adopt the LCCF practices. As with any transformation agenda, it is a journey to advocate Low Carbon Cities in Malaysia. The success of low carbon cities rests on the commitment, passion and understanding of local authorities. One may ask if the LCC is for real. The answer is "YES"; its achievement requires the transformation of mind-set and our way of modern life. A noted example that we could benchmark

is Kitakyushu, a city in Fukuoka, Japan. Over the last thirty years, the city of Kitakyushu has worked tirelessly to shed its image as a “rust belt steel town” and repositioned itself as an Eco-Model City, a centre for environmental technology and protection measures. Today, Kitakyushu is recognised as the “Environmental Capital of the World” as well as the “Technology Capital of Asia”. Even with these recognitions, the city’s low carbon efforts continue. So much for now! Until the next bulletin, let us collectively work towards greener living. **We are all in this together; One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!**

¹ Source: Low carbon cities-concepts that will transform our lives, *Insights on property, The Sun*, April 25, 2014.

e-Sustainability Talk 11/2016: On Crop Nutrients, Rising CO² and Human Health

Welcome to the 6th month of 2016 and Ramadhan Kareem to Muslim colleagues. As we proceed along the year, many things have changed drastically due to global warming. We are currently experiencing two notable phenomena, such as the rising CO² level caused by fossil fuel burning and the declining quality and taste of eatable items, be it fruits, vegetables or cooked food. According to new scientific research, rising carbon dioxide emissions are causing the world's staple food crops such as wheat, rice, maize and soya beans less nutritious. Field trials of wheat, rice, maize and soya beans showed that higher CO² levels significantly reduce the levels of essential nutrients such as iron, zinc and protein. As a result, the rising CO² phenomenon worsens the serious health already suffered by billions of malnourished people. Through a research, Prof. Samuel Myers, an environmental health expert at Harvard University, Boston, found rising levels of CO² affect human nutrition through the reduced levels of important nutrients in main food crops. Prof. Myers was the lead author of the study "From a health viewpoint, iron and zinc are hugely important". He opined that two billion people already suffered iron and zinc deficiencies around the world – a situation that is harmful for developing babies and pregnant women. Moreover, there is already an enormous public health problem, and rising CO² in the atmosphere exacerbates the problem further. In poorer societies where meat is rarely eaten, wheat, rice, maize and soya beans, despite relatively low in iron and zinc, are a major source of the nutrients. The study shared that about 2.4 billion people currently get at least 60 percent of the zinc and iron from these staples, while it is over 75 percent in Bangladesh, Iraq and Algeria. Oxfam's head of policy for food and climate reiterated that such example indicates the impact of climate change on people's ability to grow and access the nutritious food they need. It is anticipated that another 25 million children under five will be at risk of malnutrition by 2050 due to climate change. Hence, action to cut emission and support communities to adapt is crucial. The question remains: Are we doing enough to arrest the degradation of Mother Earth? Food for thought! Until the next bulletin, remember **we are all in this together; One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!**

e-Sustainability Talk 12/2016: Crop Nutrients, Rising CO² and Human Health II

Hello again. Two weeks ago, we talked about how rising carbon dioxide (CO²) reduces the nutrients in our staple food crops that in turn affects human health, especially among the many malnourished people. This bulletin shares on some findings of a research published in the journal called "Nature" on how rising CO² levels affect food nutrition. In 2014, we were living in an environment that registered between 380-390 parts per million (ppm) of ambient CO² levels. It is anticipated that this reading will reach 545-585 ppm by the year 2050 – even if substantial curbs on emissions are put in place by the world's governments. Nutrition researchers found that wheat grown in high CO² levels had nine percent less zinc, five percent less iron and six percent less protein while rice had three percent less zinc, five percent less iron and eight percent less protein. Maize had similar falls. Interestingly, soybean as a legume and not grass did not see lower protein. It only had similar lower levels of zinc and iron. The impact on human health resulting from the drop in the level of protein is less clear than for the zinc and iron loss. Prof. Samuel Myers, an environmental health expert at Harvard University, Boston cautioned that the resulting increase in carbohydrate in the food crops could increase the rate of metabolic syndrome, diabetes, heart disease and stroke that currently afflicts many in developed countries. Simply eating more staple foods to meet zinc and iron requirements was not realistic when food production must double by 2050 to meet the demand of rising population. With increasing climate change occurring worldwide, we are already staring into an imminent case of food security crisis at many countries. Food security refers to the availability of food and one's access to it. Food scientists have tried using some varieties that performed better than others did, raising the prospect of breeding strains that are less vulnerable to rising CO². However, such breeding programmes do not serve as panacea due to the affordability factor of improved seeds and the numerous criteria used by farmers in planting decisions such as taste, tradition, marketability, growing requirements and yield. Rising CO² is certainly an issue that will affect all living habitants on earth. Before the Industrial Revolution started the large-scale burning of fossil fuels, the level of CO² in the atmosphere was 290 ppm. It is now greater than 400 ppm. As a civilisation, we are now living with more than 400 ppm CO²; it is a new world but definitely an unhealthy one! Collectively, we have to assume our responsibility to address this matter. Remember, **we are all in this together; One Earth, Care for the Environment, Do Your Bit NOW!**

e-Sustainability Talk 13/2016: Sustainable Slumber!

Welcome to the second half of 2016. After a long break away from work and days of merriment, one thing that continuously affects us is that we seemed not to get enough of sleep! This week our sustainability talk diverges from environment to ourselves, and the focus will be on elements of sustainable health. At the turn of the 21st century, quality sleep became evasive for many people. On days when we do get eight hours of sleep, some will still wake up feeling sluggish and lethargic! Understandably, when we have many responsibilities to attend to during our waking hours, we do occasionally experience tiredness. However, if drowsiness is frequent or chronic during the day, this may be an indication that our health or sleep pattern is off tangent. Although eight hours of sleep has been found to be the optimum number of sleep hours for many people, the sleep needs of each individual is different. If we do not feel good after a night of sleep, we should tune our sleeping pattern that works well for us. Datuk Dr. Nor Ashikin Mokhtar, a consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist advises that we attune to our own body clock. She said, *“Your personal body clock can tell when you’ve had too much or too little sleep. It’s important to pay attention to your internal clock when it tells you when to sleep or when to wake.”* Every sleep’s time frame has five sleep cycles of 90 minutes each, alternating between regular sleep and deep sleep also known as REM (*a state of Rapid Eye Movement during sleep*). Do take note that, if we wake during non-REM sleep, we will be more likely to feel alert and attentive as the day progresses. However, if we wake up in the middle of REM sleep, we will feel tired during the day. When we are able to wake up five to 10 minutes before the alarm sounds, it means we have found the right bedtime. Otherwise, we need to adjust our sleeping time until we reach the right time for bed. Once the sleep rhythm is found, be consistent so that we can be attentive and productive during the day. Dr. Nor Ashikin advocates the following guides to improve our sleeping habits:

- ❖ **No electronic device** – Artificial blue light from the screens of devices such as mobile phone or tablet can send messages to your brain that tells it to stay awake because the light is associated with daytime. This will interrupt our circadian rhythm, resulting in lower quality of sleep.
- ❖ **Keep the light and noise out of your room** – Turn out all lights. Putting on music might appear to help lull you to sleep, but it is quite likely to be causing you uneasy sleep.
- ❖ **Caffeine disrupts our sleep** – Indulging in caffeinated beverages too close to bedtime is bad for sleep. Avoid drinking caffeinated drinks four hours before bed if you want to be on track with your sleep pattern.
- ❖ **Inculcate a healthier lifestyle** – Balancing routine exercise and healthy eating choices assist us to perform better during the day and sleep better during the night. Fatty foods

and processed carbs cause sleepiness during the day while late night spicy foods cause heartburn, indigestion and acid reflux. We should instead consume foods that are high in antioxidants, amino acids, proteins and vitamins such as leafy green, wholegrains, tree nuts, lean meat and fruits.

Regular exercise helps our body to adjust to a good sleep pattern and eliminate sleep fatigue. Accordingly, working out for about 30 minutes a day, three to four times a week promotes the production of endorphins, a “happy” hormone that improves our overall mood. Every nation certainly needs happy, healthy and productive citizens to achieve national mission and vision. Collectively, we are all in this together. Remember, **Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit Now!**

Reference:
Sleepy during the day, *Fit for life*, *The Sunday Star*, 26 June 2016

e-Sustainability Talk 14/2016: Sustainable Brain Power & Body Fuel for Productivity!

Hello, as we journey along the second half of 2016, it is important that we take stock of our health. This week's sustainability talk focusses on the need to exercise to boost brainpower and do physical exercises to keep ourselves fit and healthy. According to the British Journal of Sports Medicine, exercise boosts our physical health as well as our brainpower and learning performance. It has been found that physical activities and cardiorespiratory fitness are beneficial for brain development and function, and enhance academic performance in children and young people. Mastering basic movements in exercise can also help to boost brainpower and learning capability among mature adults. Continuously doing physical exercises can help develop important life skills, boost self-esteem, motivation, confidence and well-being, as well as build and strengthen relationships with peers. Hence, it became pertinent in the corporate world that physical activities such as bike lanes, parks and gym are incorporated at the workplace as these facilities have been proven effective strategies to enable employees to feel good and enhance their work performance. Equally important is the need to take breakfast to enable our body the fuel to replenish energy reserves after a night of sleep or fasting. People who do not take breakfast tend to lack energy to focus or to perform physical activities due to declining sugar levels in their body. An associate professor of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia opined that having a balanced breakfast provides about 25% of daily nutrient needs. Breakfast also replenishes 80% of energy reserves in our body lost during sleep. Contrary to the common belief that eating more meals will lead to weight gain, people especially children who skipped breakfast are more likely to be overweight and obese compared to those who eat breakfast. This is simply because missing the first meal of the day leads to frequent snacking during the day and eating more during lunch contributes to weight gain. Physical and mental growth, development and functioning are some of the important core elements of life that require energy. Energy keeps us active and provides the fuel needed to carry out our daily activities. It was found that people, especially children who skip breakfast in the long run would fall behind in the cognitive skills development such as problem solving. The ideal breakfast should contain food groups like fruits, wholegrain cereals, bread, eggs, vegetables and malt beverages. It is time we calibrated our meal and lifestyle patterns so that we can ensure ourselves continuous supply of energy as well as the production of endorphins, the "Happy" hormone that, in turn, enhances our alertness and productivity in carrying out our daily tasks. As said before, every nation / organisation certainly needs happy, healthy and productive citizens / employees to achieve national / organisational mission and vision. Collectively, we are all in this together. Remember, **Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit Now!**

Reference:

1. The British Journal of Sports Medicine
2. Nutrition Society of Malaysia

e-Sustainability Talk 15/2016: Sustainable Happiness for Positive & Productive Living!

As we advance into the eighth month of 2016, many happenings in the past seven months have driven the world around us into never ending depression. Anxiety is on the rise. Many people are not able to hold a positive thought long enough before being absorbed by negative torrent! The world seems to be in a constant state of despair and we are inundated with discouraging news practically every day. Yet, the pursuit of happiness is innate within us as the desire to be happy is universal. Happiness is important to our wellbeing as it goes beyond the feel good factor. Scientifically, happiness has an effect on the health of our heart, strengthens our immune system, helps us to combat stress as well as lengthens our lifespan. **Happiness is also known to trigger creativity and enhance productivity.** We must learn to avoid being gripped by negativity as it leads to depression, affect our nervous system, inhibit empowerment, and block our inspiration and problem-solving capabilities. Although happiness is normally linked to pleasure, in essence, happiness varies between pleasure, contentment and joy. More often than not, it is contentment (*peace*) that we seek. Hence, it became essential we know how to release negative emotions (i.e. *sad, angry and frustrated*). According to Harvard professor and author of ***Stumbling on Happiness***, David Gilbert, finding happiness requires us to “*strike a balance between feeling good enough to cope with a situation but bad enough to do something about it.*” The factors that entail happiness vary from person to person. The key to encouraging lasting happiness is to invest time and energy in what really matters to us so that happiness comes naturally. We must never be buoyed by desiring what others have or what society expects. Gretchen Rubin, author of ***The Happiness Project*** says, once we have identified what brings us happiness; we should set measureable and achievable goals with specific action steps. Small steps that we take and practise every single day have cumulative and compounding effects. However, should life gets complicated along the way; we should regroup and review as advised by Dalai Lama in ***The Art of Happiness***. Take a step back and remind ourselves of our overall purpose or goal. Reflect on what truly brings us happiness and then reset our priorities accordingly. Some possible ways to a happier us are:

- **Get more physical exercise**

Studies show that people who exercise are happier and have lesser incidences of depression.

- **Get quality sleep**

Sleep boosts emotional advantage. Research found that people who take an afternoon nap are de-sensitised to negative emotions yet more responsive to positive ones.

- **Put down the smartphone**

A study by Kent State University found that frequent use of mobile phone has correlation with lower grades, higher anxiety and reduced happiness. People who spend much time on devices have lesser live social networks and henceforth more vulnerable to social comparison that leave them with a sense of emptiness.

- **Spend more time to be social**

Spending more time with the people we care about is beneficial to improving our happiness and our overall quality of life.

- **Spend more time outdoors**

Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage*, advocates that spending as little as 20 minutes outside in good weather boosts positive mood as well as broadens our thinking and improves our memory.

- **Help others**

Helping others, be it financially or through volunteerism, boosts happiness. A study in Zurich, Switzerland supports the notion that volunteering is rewarding in terms of higher life satisfaction.

- **Practice gratitude**

Gratitude is the act of being thankful for simple things in our life. Practising gratitude has been proven to increase happiness.

As I have mentioned in my recent bulletin "*Sustainable Brain Power and Body Fuel for Productivity*" dated 26 July 2016, the onus is on us to strive for positive practices in life. All forms of positive vibes are critically important in lubricating our rather bumpy journey into the future. Remember, we are all in this together, **Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit Now!**

Reference: www.lifehack.org

e-Sustainability Talk 16/2016: Happiness and Productivity

Hello again! We have talked about sustainable happiness for positive and productive living in my recent bulletin dated 10 August 2016. This bulletin continues to focus on the issues that tie happiness to productivity. Paul Krugman, an eminent Nobel laureate in economics, has once commented, *“Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run, it is almost everything!”* Happiness is about our mental or emotional state of well-being that is defined by joy, satisfaction, contentment, enthusiasm and interest. Many psychologists have highlighted that happiness promotes our capacities for innovation, improves our memory and leads to greater altruism. There have been positive links between workers’ happiness and their productivity. A study based on four different experiments with more than 700 participants by the Department of Economics at the University of Warwick found that happy workers were 12% more productive, while unhappy workers were 10% less productive. In this connection, I wish to share that the happiness issue has become an important matter in Denmark. In 2013, this country set up the Happiness Research Institute, an independent think-tank that focuses on life satisfaction, happiness and quality of life. The institute that is based in Copenhagen has the mission to inform decision makers of the causes and effects of human happiness and suggests ways to improve the quality of life for citizens across the world. The goal of the institute is to provide scientific studies on happiness and make well-being a part of public policy discussion. According to the United Nations’ World Happiness Report 2016, Denmark ranks No.1 while Malaysia ranks 47th. The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network publishes this report that ranks 156 countries by their happiness levels. The first report was published in 2012. Merck Wiking, the CEO of the Happiness Research Institute explained that raising happiness is a serious business, as it would bring about positive outcomes for countries. The positive outcomes could be in the form of gross domestic product (GDP per capital) or wealth, healthy life expectancy, freedom from corruption, freedom to make life’s choices, altruism and social support. He advocates that on an individual level, the easiest way for us to be happy is to do something active, meaningful and with other people. If you can have these three ingredients in place, you are on the happiness journey! Once again, the onus is on us to choose. Remember, we are all in this together! As said before, **Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit Now!** Before signing off this bulletin, I take the opportunity to wish Malaysians **Happy 59th Independence Day** (*next Wednesday, the 31st August of 2016*). Appreciate and value the priceless independence that our forefathers have won for us. Remember too that the feeling of independence equates with happiness! So, **Merdeka! Merdeka! Merdeka!**

e-Sustainability Talk 17/2016: Happiness, Productivity and us

Welcome to the 9th month of 2016. As we chart our 3rd quarter performance, it became increasingly important that we find happiness in what we do – otherwise the daily challenges that we face become daunting and sustaining productivity would become an issue. Happiness is important to our well-being, triggers creativity as well as enhances our problem-solving capabilities. **I have shared that the key to encouraging lasting happiness is to invest time and energy in what really matters to us so that happiness comes naturally.** In this bulletin, I am sharing the economic values of happiness at some organisations. Between 1994 and 2009, the Fortune 100 best companies in the United States were found to outperform their peer groups by 2 to 3% annually. The London Business School deduced this finding as a direct causation between happier companies and shareholder returns. Google / Alphabet that has charted its record as the No.1 place to work for seven years in a decade, is acknowledged as the pioneer company for employee happiness. There is also an interesting finding indicated by the British sandwich chain called **Pret a Manger** – happy workers make better sandwiches! The company that takes its employees' well-being seriously attributed its impressive 16% annual sales growth in 2014 largely to its workforce happiness. On another side of the globe, happy workers are reported to be wanting in Japan. The U.N. Sustainable Development Solutions Network ranked Japan 53rd among 156 countries in the 2016 World Happiness Report Update. This is reckoned to have affected its productivity and competitiveness as reflected in the World Competitiveness Yearbook 2016 by Swiss business school, IMD. In the said report, Japan was ranked 26 among 61 economies in terms of competitiveness, and 29th for Business Efficiency. What could be the happiness factors that happy companies practice? At Google, its employees are given competitive salaries, free Wi-Fi on shuttle transport, free ice cream and healthy snacks, free lifts to work, and the opportunity to spend 20% of their office time on non-work projects of “passion”. Other practical measures practised by top companies are work-life balance, flexible hours, training opportunities, challenging assignments and clear career progression. These happiness factors have enabled employees to feel stretched professionally and valued personally. Perhaps, it is time our government considered measuring happiness at the workplace as “what gets measured gets managed”, as advocated by Peter Drucker, a modern management guru. **Having said these, there is still the onus on oneself to ensure intrinsic happiness exists before we can be receptive to explicit happiness and attain the true and sustainable sense of happiness!** Happiness is an important enabling factor for us to sustain our positive transformation journey towards Vision 2020. Besides “**Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit now,**” remember too “**Happiness as with excellence begins with oneself!**” Until the next bulletin, here's wishing Malaysians “Happy 59th Malaysia Day!”

e-Sustainability Talk 18/2016: Productivity Habits

Hello. As we tabulate our 3rd Quarter performance for 2016, it is essential that we also take stock of our personal productivity efforts. In this bulletin, I am sharing a gist of an interesting article entitled “Why new personal productivity efforts don’t stick” by Maura Thomas and Shawn Thomas. According to the authors, “productivity systems are the behaviours we repeat consistently and methodically to get more done.” People who do not have any system will just flow with the tide. They will always be seen as “doing” and just “doing” as though it is a system of its own – despite a reactive one and certainly confusing for productivity. Hence, people will constantly be busy, but not always getting the right things done. The authors opined that most productivity habits are developed without specific intention, leaving achievement to chance. This eventually results in a continuous need for productivity improvement. However, wanting to change and sustaining the needed change remain a challenge. There are three productivity-impeding factors; they are:

- (1) People tend to be convinced that certain old habits are necessary for success (despite the inefficiency of the old systems);
- (2) People feel entrapped in an environment that is not supportive of the new productive habits they are trying to cultivate; and
- (3) Present days of high stressed living are causing people to overthink their system. As a result, many people experience suffocative pressure.

What is your take on the said factors? How would you address them? Are they within or beyond your control? Food for thought as the third Quarter 2016 chapter closes this Friday (*tomorrow!*). May we take the coming long weekend to introspect, retrospect and ponder well on the said productivity issues. Let us hope we come back afresh and with the right footing next week as we start the final quarter of 2016. Wishing the ardent readers of this bulletin sustainable productivity days ahead. Remember, “**Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do your Bit now,**” Until the next bulletin, have a meaningful “*Maal Hijrah*” this Sunday and Happy Holidays!

e-Sustainability Talk 19/2016: Productivity Habits II – Discard Bad Habits!

Welcome to the last quarter of 2016. Continuous introspection and retrospection will enable us to focus on the appropriate productivity habits to inculcate. As said, productivity habits would become productivity systems when we repeat the behaviour consistently and methodically to get more done. It is essential that we know what we want to achieve; otherwise, mindless flow with the tide would bring about many untoward consequences to own-self, our community and our society. I have highlighted three productivity-impeding factors in my recent bulletin. Let us focus on the first issue: the need to discard belief in bad habits. There is always the danger of believing that certain old habits are necessary for success despite the inefficiency of the old systems. This is because; lack of belief in an effective habit coupled with misplaced belief in a less effective habit could lead us astray. To illustrate this point, let us talk about the difference between single tasking and multi-tasking. Studies have confirmed that single tasking is the most effective and efficient productive method as periods of uninterrupted work would bring about a sense of accomplishment, the feel good factor and happiness! On the other hand, task-switching or doing many tasks at the same time just like working on something yet leaving the email or smartphone on all the time to allow constant alerts and notification can cause a false sense of having more done. The consequence: people feel overwhelmed with little quality achievements to show! Many people experience this internal barrier as they undervalue true achievements and overvalue the importance of interruptions. The persistent belief that multitasking is good is difficult to overcome. Perhaps, this skewed notion has caused the deterioration of quality in many matters in the present world. It is ironical that the more advanced the human-race is the more people lament that we are seeing the disappearing of quality in our daily life. Much food for thought as we wind down for the weekend. Remember, **“Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit Now,”**

e-Sustainability Talk 20/2016: Productivity Habits III

– Address Habit-Hostile Environments

Hello again. Amidst the current challenging global economic background, the Budget 2017 announced on 21 October is deemed people-friendly. Whatever budget allocations, be it development expenditure or operating expenditure must be well managed and efficiently spent for desired impacts and outcome. Efficiency in this context that relates to the productivity of budget expenditures is of paramount importance as our economy needs the support of domestic consumption driven growth and domestic-direct investments (DDI) to cushion our country against the volatile global business situation. The productivity requirement that has the underlying essence of sustainability correlates with the productivity habits that I have been talking about in my recent two e-Sustainability Talk bulletins. I have shared that we need to have appropriate productivity systems in place to enhance the public sector's delivery mechanisms. Productivity systems have been explained as the behaviours we repeat consistently and methodically to get more done. The civil service needs to discard the habit of just doing with mindless flow; otherwise, we will not get the RIGHT things done. There are three productivity-impeding factors; one of which is the belief that certain old habits are necessary for success despite the inefficiency of the old systems. I have elaborated on this factor in my 19/2016 bulletin. In this bulletin, we will talk about the second impeding factor; that is, people feeling entrapped in an environment that is not supportive of the new productive habits they are trying to cultivate. According to Professor Art Markman in *Smart Change*, behaviours are triggered by physical and mental cues. When one engages in a behaviour consistently, it becomes "mapped" to certain circumstances and environments. In the present high e-gadget environment, we are consistently distracted by the smartphones in our hands to the computers on our desks to the open offices that are ubiquitous today. Hence, having an opportunity to focus would feel awkward to many! It is tough to change a productivity system without changing the environment. A documented example is that, if you switched from an office to a cubicle, you might suddenly find your habit of working for long uninterrupted periods being replaced with a "habit" of chatting with your co-workers. It is also hard to maintain a good productivity system of an organisation that does not have a consistent environment at all. A lack of a stable routine will prevent consistent mapping; thus, identifying some consistent cues from one's daily routine can be useful and helps to reduce the likelihood that your new system falls apart. One component of the productivity system is to keep a running task list that is prioritised by due date and based on key priorities the user wants to accomplish, not other people's goals. Food for thought as we bid adieu to October 2016. In addition, to achieve sustainable development and sustainable productivity in our journey forward towards Vision 2020, remember, **"Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, Do Your Bit Now."**

e-Sustainability Talk 21/2016: Productivity Habits IV

– Are You Overthinking & Stressed?

As we advance into the 45th week of 2016, we need to undertake introspections and retrospections as to what we have achieved for the year, both individually and organisationally before we welcome the brand new year of 2017 in seven weeks' time! This is not an option since MPC, as the nation's productivity caretaker must recalibrate our ways of doing things so that we could support the impending big agenda of the Malaysia Productivity Blueprint (MPB). One way of addressing this is by ensuring we have the RIGHT productivity system in place. The question now is that: Have we inculcated the RIGHT behaviour consistently and methodically to establish the RIGHT productivity system in the organisation? This issue must be clearly addressed and aligned to enable us to institutionalise the RIGHT productivity practices and culture, as well as delivering the expected milestones and impacts proposed in the MPB. Having said these, may I reiterate the three impeding productivity habits that I have shared earlier. We need to decide objectively if certain old habits are necessary for success as old systems may be inefficient for current needs. We also need to address habit hostile environments where people feel entrapped in situations that are not supportive of the new productive habits they are trying to cultivate. The third productivity-impeding factor is common to many – present days of high stressed living are causing people to overthink their system resulting in suffocative pressure. Interestingly, once a habit is created, the need for decision-making is removed, and the behaviour becomes automatic. What does this mean? It simply means that, when one faces an intense situation, that "situation" may erroneously signal to one's brain that one needs to do lots of intentional thinking. Malcolm Gladwell in his book *Outliers* calls this "choking." He cited the example of the 1993 Wimbledon final match between Jana Novotna and Steffi Graf. When the pressure became too much, Novotna began to suffer from overthinking or second-guess everything. Instead of relying on the muscle memory and mental habits she had developed from her countless hours of practice, her second-guessing move was disastrous for competition at that level. Similarly, work can be stressful. When under pressure, it is advised that one take cognisance of one's past successful productivity habits. This is the time when it is most useful to rely on one's "proven" system rather than turning every action into a decision. To accomplish true productivity, one needs to hone one's productivity system and ensure it is relied upon consistently. Likewise, if MPC wants to increase productivity throughout the organisation, perhaps it is time we considered if any of the said impeding factors is getting in our way. Once again, food for thought! In our effort towards a developed nation status by the year 2020, remember, **"Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, and Do Your Bit Now."**

e-Sustainability Talk 22/2016: Sustainable Health – Get Moving!

Welcome to the 47th week of 2016. As we begin our countdown to the New Year and hope to achieve as much as possible for our last quarter of 2016, it is more important that we take stock of our health. This is simply because health is wealth. If we have the mental and physical health, we can strive to achieve our desired goals. The questions facing us are: do we *move* enough to attain sustainable health; do we care enough to lead a productive life; and do we disconnect enough (*from e-gadgets*) to enable us to connect with the real world? Inactive lifestyles have brought about modern life health challenges such as heart and artery diseases as well as cancer. Scientists found that sitting for more than eight hours a day and not exercising significantly increases the risk of dying early. However, research has also found that an hour of moderate physical activity such as brisk walking or cycling daily could offset the negative effects of sitting behind an office desk or watching television. Hence, employers are urged to be understanding when staff take short breaks away from their desk that include occasional visit to the coffee machine or water dispenser. According to lead scientist, Professor Ulf Ekelund from Cambridge University and the Norwegian School of Sports Sciences, an hour of physical activity such as brisk walking or bike cycling each day could eliminate the association between sitting time and death. He advocates office employees to take five-minutes break every hour, be it going to the next office, go upstairs to the coffee corner or to the printer as this break enables one to stretch one's muscles and activates the blood flow system within us. A study published in *The Lancet* medical journal found that watching television for more than three hours per day was associated with increased risk of death for inactive groups. Long periods spent watching television or tapping away on one's e-gadget is also associated with a generally unhealthy lifestyle and the reluctance to take exercise. The ball is in respective court – to be active or inactive – the choice is yours. This decision would determine one's ability to lead a productive live and enjoy sustainable health, or otherwise! A penny for your thought as we enjoy another peaceful day here in Malaysia. Once again, remember, **“Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, and Do Your Bit Now.”**

e-Sustainability Talk 23/2016: Sustainable Fitness – WALK!

Hello to the 49th week of 2016. With 2017 taking its place in another three weeks, it is important that we constantly reflect and introspect of how things have been. Are we doing better or have we retrograded? In an increasingly dynamic environment that we live in, sustaining productivity requires our 360° attention and versatility. This effort is essential to sustain and value add our achievements of the year to the next level; be it individually, on community level, organisationally or on national level. The 360° attention and versatility is akin to giving holistic view and integration of various factors that matter to our intended purpose. We may look healthy; but are we fit as we should be? The best things in life need not be expensive and exclusive. A noted “cheapest” way to keep oneself fit and healthy is by walking. Walking is a gentle, low-impact exercise that is easy, free and available to everyone. We can derive five benefits from the practice of walking; they are:

1) Walking strengthens your heart

Walking regularly has been known to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. It is also a great cardio exercise that lowers the LDL (bad) cholesterol level while increases the HDL (good) cholesterol level. Accordingly, a brisk 30-minute walk daily helps to prevent and control the high blood pressure that causes strokes, as well as reducing the risk by up to 27%.

2) Walking lowers disease risk

A regular walking habit slashes the risk of type 2 diabetes by about 60%. Consistent walker also has 20% lesser risk of developing colon, breasts or womb cancer.

3) Walking helps you lose weight

Walking for 30 minutes could help you burn about 75 calories. Thus, scheduling short walks into your daily routine could help you to shed the kilos!

4) Walking prevents dementia

Research found that older people who walk six miles or more per week are more likely to avoid brain shrinkage and preserve memory. Walking is encouraged since dementia affects one in 14 people over the age 65 and one in six people over the age 80. Soon, the age range for dementia may expand to the younger region if people are too e-gadget dependent.

5) Walking makes you happy.

Exercise boosts our mood. Studies show that a brisk walk is as effective as antidepressants in mild to moderate cases of depression, releasing feel-good endorphins while reducing stress and anxiety.

Hence, if you want to attain positive mental health, walking is necessary. As stated in my previous bulletins, the choice to be fit or otherwise is in your hands. Happy Thinking! Remember, **“Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, and Do Your Bit Now.”**

Ref: Agencies, *the Sun* ON WEDNESDAY, August 10, 2016.

e-Sustainability Talk 24/2016: Sustainable Productivity for MPB

As 2016 draws to a close, we need to take stock if we are better than before and could continuously be better for subsequent years. This is part of our sustainability effort to achieve sustainable productivity in our daily tasks. With the advent of the Malaysia Productivity Blueprint or commonly known as MPB, it became essential that we broaden our worldviews and understanding on productivity. Everyone has the onus to enhance respective ability to see the big picture of productivity so that we could all in turn assist our targeted segment of customers specifically and the nation, generally. Everything around us is interrelated and could affect our ability to be productive. Hence, I wish to clarify that what I have written and shared in my recent few e-Sustainability Talk bulletins serve as underlying influencing factors on productivity, be they mediators or moderators, and test our mind on the scope of our understanding on productivity. Well-versed researchers would know what mediators and moderators are all about. Nobody live in a vacuum. Various causes and effects could put intended productivity targets off tangent. The happiness, health and fitness of individuals would contribute to one's ability to perform on the job. These, in turn, translates into our productivity performance. As we live in a dynamic environment, everyone has the role to learn, unlearn and relearn so that we could keep abreast and understand the changes taking place around us. Likewise, there is a corresponding need to think, un-think and re-think the what, why, where, who, when and how of things vis-à-vis productivity. This simple step would determine our ability to upkeep our performance and achieve what is called Sustainable Productivity. Much food for thought! Happy Digesting! Once again, as we rejoice the year end and welcome the new year, let's take the accountability to ensure everyone gets to enjoy sustainable environment that we could all live, work and grow comfortably. Two outcomes from this noble effort is the attainment of our Vision 2020 and the requirements of MPB. Until the next bulletin in the New Year, here's wishing everyone a **Happy and Meaningful New Year 2017!** Remember, **"Seven Billion Dreams, One Planet, and Do Your Bit Now."**