KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

KERATAN SURAT KHABAR

SURAT KHABAR	:	NST			
TARIKH	:	4/10/2021 (ISNIN)	MUKA SURAT	:	19
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BIODIVERSITY

MANAGING OUR NATURAL ASSETS

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THE government has just launched the 12th Malaysia Plan. It is now being debated in Parliament. The initial response has been mixed. Some laud the plan for its alignment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Others say the targets and assumptions are unrealistic. Many agree the success of the plan would depend very much on the commitments of stakeholders.

Most important of all, the key stakeholders, including the business, community and civil society, must own up to the plan. There must be good buy-in from all in the execution.

As has been shown in most past plans, effective implementation has always been the greatest challenge.

For a start, there must be an aggressive communication programme to get all stakeholders on board. Some of the failings in the past plans can be attributed to the lack of understanding and buy-in by industry and the community.

This must be followed up with a robust monitoring and evaluation of the actions. The feedback from the monitoring exercise would be used to improve the execution.

All five-year plans have one thing in common. They are all about how the country's assets can be managed efficiently to deliver returns sustainably.

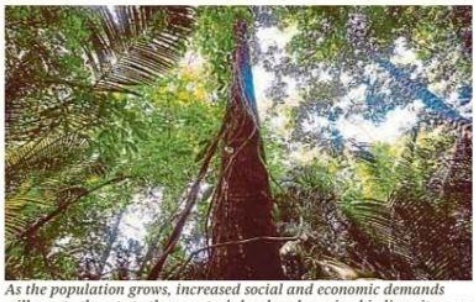
Or how can we sweat out maximum value from our assets? Values include those accruing to the economy and society without depleting the asset's core value.

In this age, where sustainable development is a common agenda, some key assets including nature, people, talent, and the built-up physical infrastructures must be well managed.

Increasingly, nature assets have emerged as one most critical.

Managing such assets requires close monitoring and supervision, to achieve efficiency. The usual monitoring is done by physically assessing the assets. This is often time consuming and less reliable.

Because of advances in the imaging technology, monitoring can be done remotely and at reasonable cost. We are talking about using satellite technology to generate the image and deploying AI algorithms to decipher the image for decision making.



As the population grows, increased social and economic demands will create threats to the country's land and marine biodiversity. FILE PIC

Take the natural asset of biodiversity for example. It is one of our prized assets because it has implications on many resources that we depend on. Water is one resource which an economy and society cannot do without.

As logging increasingly encroaches into sensitive water catchment areas, disruption to water supply has been showing a disturbing trend. There is no doubt that as the population grows, increased social and economic demands will create threats to the country's land and marine biodiversity.

In response to these threats, the government has created the National Policy on Biological Diversity 2016-2025, which addressed the country's biodiversity goals and aligned the country's commitment to the SDGs.

This is where effective monitoring is key. Many companies offer services on deploying earth observation data for effective monitoring. The largest is Planet, which provides data 24/7.

With Planet as a partner, the government can leverage near-daily, high-resolution imagery to make strategic and bold progress towards achieving the goals identified in the National Policy on Biological Diversity and drive the country towards a healthier and diverse ecosystem.

The earth observation technology can also support other SDG agenda, including smart cities, border surveillance and early warning on climate disasters.

Such investments pay as we strive to deliver sustainability to the nation. The deployment of earth observation imaging in the country is still at a low level. There have been initiatives on remote sensing in some surveillance projects.

But most do not use current images. The effectiveness is therefore questionable. It is time we invest in the necessary infrastructure and infostructure to support satellite imagery.

Development of the necessary talent in the technology is imminent as we increase our pace of digitalisation and automation.

The right industry ecosystem should be put in place to prepare the country to be economically involved in this industry.

Failing to do so will put many of our natural assets in peril.

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