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# Man-made disasters getting worse

**I**N recent times, weather-related adversities worldwide have been occurring but what is of concern is that they are happening with greater frequency and extent of devastation, including the loss of human lives.

These happenings have been described as the most severe and serious and the worst ever experienced by the country.

Who can forget "Super storm Sandy" – reportedly one of the deadliest and most destructive hurricanes in the history of the United States – which took 159 lives and causing \$65bil (RM208bil) in damage making it the second-costliest weather disaster in American history behind only Hurricane Katrina.

More recently, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines was an exceptionally powerful tropical cyclone that devastated portions of Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, in early November. It was the deadliest Philippine typhoon on record, killing at least 5,796 people in that country alone.

In Singapore, meteorologists expect that December will be the wettest month here in several years.

The amount of rain recorded for the first four days of the month is already about half that seen for the full month in 2011 and last year.

Closer home, those experiencing the floods in Pahang can testify that they have never had such heavy rainfall triggering the worst floods the state has experienced.

It was reported that Kuantan registered a record 900 millilitres of rainfall from Dec 1 to Dec 3, equivalent to thrice the amount for the whole of December last year.

Are all of these "acts of god" that we have no control of whatsoever?

Scientists and climate-change experts now have overwhelming evidence to confirm that these incidents are happening due to man-made activities (or anthropogenic causes) as opposed to earlier views that these changes in climate may have resulted as part of Earth's natural processes.

Putting it simply, our lifestyles are such that we are emitting too much carbon into the atmosphere and we are doing it without any restraint.

Pollution is one of the biggest man-made problems. By burning fossil fuels (such as petrol), we pollute the environment. Fossil fuels

are fuels made of organic matter such as oil, gas or coal. When fossil fuels are burned they give off a heat-emitting greenhouse gas called CO<sub>2</sub> which is slowly but surely warming up our globe.

Can we not do anything about it?

As a start, we all can do our part to reduce our carbon footprint. How? Reduce our electricity and petrol consumption and take public transport whenever possible.

Other "green" efforts include supporting renewable energy efforts by installing solar photovoltaic panels on our rooftop, do our part in planting more trees or support such causes initiated by organisations as well help preserve the current greenery and forest.

Trees and forest help to capture and store the heat-warming carbon (a process called sequestration)

Factories and business entities can do their part by adopting energy efficiency measures such as installing energy-efficient equipment and processes as well as make their office operations and building as "green" as possible.

Electricity generating companies such as TNB and the independent power producers

should make every effort to also contribute to Malaysia's green objectives. It would be good for these companies to publicise the extent to which they have reduced their carbon emissions over time.

With a business-as-usual scenario, chances are that the above disastrous events will continue to occur with greater frequency and no country will be spared.

Unfortunately there is currently no legislation that imposes penalties on individuals, organisations and firms that continually emit carbon dioxide with impunity.

Many countries have successfully implemented a carbon tax scheme where the worst-polluting industries have taken significant steps to reduce their carbon emissions.

Unless all of us (individuals, organisations and firms) make conscious and serious efforts to reduce our carbon footprint, the weather-related disasters will continue and the most frightening aspect of all is that the worst is yet to come!

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