

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

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Destroying Our Planet by Philip S. Chua, MD, FACS, FPCS

Our planet would be at an imminent grave risk of being destroyed, if Global Warming, more appropriately termed Climate Change, continues unabated. And like the multitudes of problems threatening the world, this major one is caused by its intelligent inhabitant, man himself, and his careless and irresponsible behavior, especially in the last two hundred some years. Human beings are not new to self-abuse, self-destruction, and to irreverence to his environment, in spite of their education, culture, and massive data in this age of exploding informational technology and mind-boggling advances in science and medicine.

Man's self-abuse and rape of his environment are almost certain to doom the world he lives in, unless he listens to Mother Nature and promptly starts to take a wise proactive strategy in dealing with his present ecologic dilemma. Man cannot afford to lose this one, his only sanctuary in the galaxy. And what's happening is scary.

Historically, the earth's climate has gone through various changes, from ice age to prolonged periods of heat waves. The factors involved include the alteration in the Earth's orbit, the degree of energy from the sun, and volcanic eruptions. The latter part of the 18th century ushered in the human factor: the industrial revolution which has contributed to more massive environmental pollution.

The human factor includes the carcinogenic fumes from cigarettes, carbon monoxide/dioxide from engine emissions, chemical contamination from the household agents (soaps, bleaches, tile and toilet cleaners, etc.) we use daily, factory polluting our atmosphere and dumping of toxic waste products into the our rivers and lakes, deforestation and destruction of our greeneries, invasion of the original habitats of animals and disturbing the natural order of things, and the environmental insults that urbanization brings with it in general. These changes in the landscape of nature have affected the health and atmosphere of our planet, causing its "body" to have a temperature that is rising like a fever from an "infection," and at an alarmingly faster rate than what it should be. And all this because of what we, its intelligent inhabitants, have done to the one and only "life-sustaining home" we know in the galaxy.



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This is the 23rd Issue since we started this publication 24 months ago. In our previous issues, we have tackled so many aspects of the environment and a lot of them are what could be considered as scholarly works – very fitting for a fraternity that prides itself with its very name – the Brotherhood of Scholars.

In a sense, this issue is an apt summary of a large portion of what has been written so far – plastics, deforestation, unhealthy garbage disposal, dangerous carbon monoxide emissions from factories, destruction of natural habitats not only of men but of other living things, uncontrolled population growth, and the like. Man has largely been responsible in all of these.

And yet the solution lies in man itself. As the author puts it, "The ball is in our court."

About the Author

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The burning of fossil fuels, such as coals and oil, and deforestation the past two centuries have led to the “greenhouse effect,” where the toxic gasses in the atmosphere has significantly increased to the point of trapping heat, like in a glass panel enclosure of a greenhouse, causing the earth’s temperature to climb more rapidly than ever before in its history. The resultant man-induced depletion of the ozone layer (nature’s protective “umbrella” shielding us from the harmful variety of sun rays) is likewise a great health hazard, a most plausible contributing factor in the alarmingly increasing rate of the various cancers killing people in the world today.

Although greenhouse gasses, at safe levels, are essential for life as we know it to keep our planet comfortably warm, abnormally high levels are far too dangerous for our Planet. At the present, man’s abuse of his environment has adversely affected many aspects of our life, including our means of subsistence, agriculture and aqua-culture, to mention a couple.

Data from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration and NASA “show that the earth’s average surface temperature has increased by about 1.2 to 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit since 1900...the warmest global average temperatures on record have all occurred within the past 15 years, with the warmest two years being 1998 and 2005.” This indisputably means the human factor has caused this dreadful and scary phenomenon.

Indeed, as guests in this Planet we call home, we, humans, have not been ecology-conscious enough and environmentally-friendly at all to Mother Earth. This has resulted in the gradual deterioration of our ecosystem.

What are the signs of a widespread and long-term trend toward global warming? The manifestations include unusually warmer weather and heat waves; glacier melting; Arctic and Antarctic warming; and, ocean warming, rising sea level, and coastal flooding. Aren’t the various volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, typhoons, and hurricanes, and evident weather changes not enough hints for us?

If man does not do anything about this climate change soon, the resultant impact of this global warming, according to experts, will lead to the following “harbingers”: diseases spreading more easily, spring arriving earlier, coral reef bleaching occurring, plant and animal range shifts and population changes taking place, downpours, heavy snow falls and giant tidal waves and flooding, droughts and fires happening often.



While government initiatives by all nations around the globe are vital to the remedial solution to this potentially catastrophic dilemma that could make our world uninhabitable and wipe out civilization as we know it, our individual and concerted community behavioral modifications and proactive lifestyle changes could immensely help and positively impact on how much longer we can keep Planet Earth a safe place to live in. The ball is in our court. Our fate is in our hands.

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