

S'poreans can take collective green actions such as eating less meat: MAS chief Ravi Menon

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SINGAPORE - Climate change could be the "burning platform" to make Singaporeans an environmentally conscious people with a heart for nature.

They should not wait for the Government to organise, but come together and act collectively to safeguard the environment, such as by eating lower in the food chain, said Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) managing director Ravi Menon at an Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) lecture on Wednesday (July 28).

Citing studies which have found that cutting meat and dairy products from one's diet can help to reduce one's carbon footprint from food by up to 73 per cent, he said Singaporeans could cut out meat for one day a week, taking a leaf from the Meatless Mondays movement in the United States.

"Of course, we should take care not to gorge up on meat on Tuesdays to make up for the deficit."

Everyone can do an energy audit of their homes to identify ways to be more energy efficient, and change incandescent light bulbs to LED lights, he added.

They can also stop buying bottled water and reduce single-use plastics, and make a conscious effort to reduce waste.

"We have done it with water: Singapore is the first country in the world to achieve circularity in the water sector. We collect every drop of used water, treat and purify it, and turn much of it into clean water again. We can extend the circularity principle to other areas."

Driving less and taking public transport more is another needle-moving change that Singaporeans can also strive for, he said.

Noting that private cars make up the largest share of emissions by the transport sector in Singapore, he said initiatives such as car-free Sundays have been trialled in Singapore, and give a glimpse of what a car-lite Singapore could look like.

He observed that Singaporeans are becoming more environmentally conscious.

According to a 2020 study by IPS, 61 per cent of Singaporeans surveyed felt that protecting the environment should be prioritised, even if it results in slower economic

growth and some loss of jobs - a jump from the proportion who felt this way in previous studies in 2002 and 2012.

Mr Menon said there is a range of deep values which underpin people's commitment to the environment, and these are the same values that are congruent to a cohesive society.

While some see intrinsic value in nature, others see it as a way to connect with people to work for a larger cause.

Some, he added, believe that caring for ecosystems is crucial to caring for fellow human beings, while others see it as a social responsibility and a moral necessity.

"All of these are inspiring values - they are about something larger than ourselves."