



Need for environment education stressed

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Staff Reporter

Schools in particular and society in general should focus on both Environmental Literacy (EL) and Environmental Education (EE), rather than focusing on just one of them for effective awareness, visiting environmentalist and science teacher Kenny Peavey said yesterday.

He was delivering the keynote speech at a 2-day symposium on Global Environmental Issues, being hosted by the American School of Doha (ASD), Reach Out to Asia (Rota) and HSBC Bank. EE is the study of biology, the fauna and flora while EL deals with issues such as recycling, conservation and other environmental challenges.



Peavey interacting with the audience

“While everyone understands EL these days, it is the EE that is a little difficult to comprehend and is thus neglected,” said Peavey, who is a Science teacher at the International School of Kuala Lumpur and has worked extensively in ecological field studies.

“We need to know both in order to be able to have an effect on the environment.” He believes EE is about creating ‘awareness’ where students gain familiarity with local flora, fauna and ecological relationships in nature, about ‘immersion’ where students actually go out and develop a personal connection and sense of belonging to nature and ‘stewardship’ which is about personal empowerment and a lifelong commitment to engage in environmentally-related activities.

“In other words, environmental education is about the environment (awareness), in the environment (immersion), for the environment (stewardship),” remarked Peavey.

Author of a recently published book, *As If The Earth Matters*, Peavey suggested that teachers and parents encourage students by offering model actions, such as forest or beach clean-ups, tree planting and environmental monitoring.

“One of the most powerful experience a child can have is with parents, a close relative or friend, since he or she becomes emotionally attached to a creek, or a special tree or when visiting a family farm, while with them,” pointed out Peavey.

Explaining that more and more people were living in the cities at the dawn of the new Millennium, with lesser interaction with nature, Peavey suggested that “fun and playful experiences starting at an early age and continuing throughout life are crucial to developing a bond with nature.”

HSBC’s Sheldon Fernandes spoke about the bank’s 5-year global climate partnership programme that was initiated earlier this year.

Working with four international groups – The Climate Group, Earthwatch Institute, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) and WWF – the \$100mn programme also has a fifth partner, and that are the HSBC employees, Fernandes said.

“In order to truly make a contribution to combating climate change, all the employees of HSBC around the world, ensure that steps to reduce paper wastage, electricity and water and other resources are taken even at workplace,” said Fernandes.

The programme aims at engaging its employees to improve the climate change impacts for people, forests, water and cities.

It also works with the partners to make some of the world’s great cities - Hong Kong, London, Mumbai, New York and Shanghai - cleaner and greener and promote them as models for the world, while sponsor experts to undertake research, and helps protect four of the world’s major rivers - the Amazon, the Ganges, the Thames and the Yangtze.

“The significance of having such programmes in our cities is even more, considering for an instance, Qatar’s highest carbon emission per capita in the region at 69%. Kuwait and UAE being second and third respectively,” said Fernandes.

The highlight of the HSBC’s programme is to also conduct the largest-ever field experiment on the world’s forests to measure carbon and 150 years of climate change.

“This is by far, the largest employee engagement programme on climate change, in that it will have global reach in 82 countries, involving 312,000 employees,” pointed out Fernandes.

“Our partnership with ASD and Rota for this event was not a one-off attempt as well, rather it’s a long-term relationship and we hope to work with such institutions to work towards the environmental causes,” remarked Fernandes.

Earlier, the hosts of the day, Adam Dogde and Mike Johnston of ASD invited participants, including teachers from over 10 local and seven international schools and representative of such NGOs as Roots and Shoots, a global youth forum working towards better changes for environment and animals, to take part in environmental project sharing.

Interacting in groups, the teachers and the experts exchanged past experiences and ideas to improve the environment and ways to get the communities involved.

Some of the suggestions made on the first day of the symposium were, introducing elective courses in natural history for students, workshops for parents, recreational outdoor clubs, environmental community s