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Caring for the environs is not a choice

Australia's Minister for Climate Change and Water applauds the Green Building Index Malaysia

By Abby Lu

"The reason we care (for the environment) is because we have to," said Senator Penny Wong in her keynote address at the recent Green Design Forum organised by Pertubuhan Akitek Malaysia (PAM).

Speaking for the first time here since her appointment as Australia's Minister for Climate Change and Water, Wong addressed an audience of predominantly architects, engineers and those from related industries.

She said architects, due to the "intergenerational" trait of their works, could influence climate change in a bigger way than some politicians.

"Spaces influence the way in which people interact with the environment ... and buildings last for generations," she added, urging architects, as consultants, to nurture responsible decisions from clients.

Wong, who is Australia's first Asian-born minister, also shared some of the trials



Decisions you make today influence the future, says Wong.

they are combating in their country.

According to the *Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme: Australia's Low Pollution Future White Paper* that was published last month, the country – as one of the world's hottest and driest continents – stands

to suffer tremendously from climate change.

She told the audience "we cannot ignore the figures as 11 of the past 12 years have been the hottest we've ever seen" and the importance of tackling the issue with "economically and environmentally sound" methods.

Touching on Malaysia's green rating system, the Green Building Index (GBI), Wong said studies have shown that expenditures in sustainable energy are repaid up to five times in savings.

"Thus, one of Australia's targets is to achieve a renewable energy proportion of 20 per cent by 2020," she said.

GBI, a joint effort between PAM and the Association of Consulting Engineers Malaysia, will be launched in April.

The rating system offers developers opportunities to design and construct green, sustainable buildings that can translate into energy and water savings, a healthier indoor environment and better connectivity to public transport as well as adoption of recycling and greenery in their projects.