

Eco campaigner's blog viewed in 163 countries

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Climate change is a problem so serious that people have to make a conscious choice to save the earth, says Lavanya Prakash, a student of environmental studies at the National University of Singapore.

Perturbed by a major disaster seemingly looming, the 20-year-old started a blog titled *My Nature Experience* in March 2013 to make people aware of environmental problems and give them hope.

Since then she has written 116 posts on various environmental topics which have garnered more than 170,000 views – with people from 163 countries reading her observations.

“I wanted to be an advocate for the environment after seeing that many people lack awareness about Singapore’s rich biodiversity,” she told *tabla!*. “I realised that many did not know that Singapore is one of the most biodiversity-rich cities in the world with more than 23,000 terrestrial organisms – from birds, butterflies and insects to mammals.”

Her blog has photographs of several plants and animals found at Bukit Timah, Labrador Park, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and more than 50 nature parks in Singapore.

She has also written essays based on her photography and spoken twice at TEDxSingapore, a non-profit organisation devoted to “ideas worth spreading”, about environmental issues.

“I am pleasantly surprised by the positive response I have received from

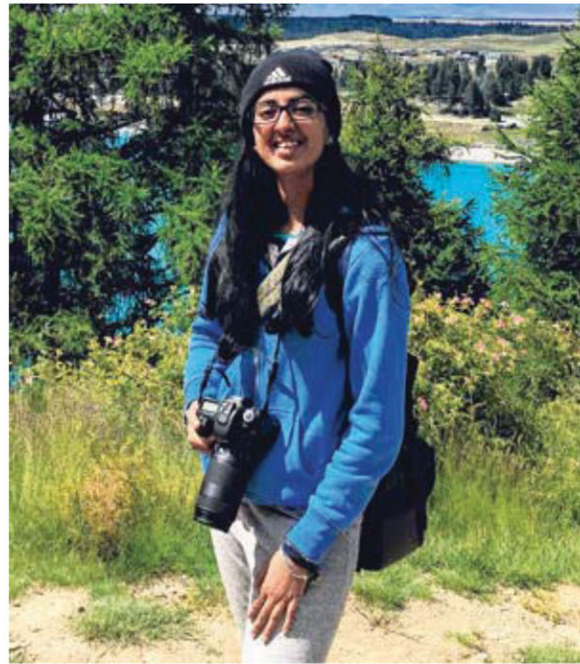


PHOTO: LAVANYA PRAKASH

across the world as I do not aggressively create and post content,” said Lavanya, who was born in England and raised in Singapore since she was three.

She keeps her writing simple and personal and believes her posts are an honest documentation of her experiences.

Perturbed since childhood by people’s apathy towards the environment, Lavanya decided at age 12 to channel her feelings into action via nature photography. “I attended photography classes at the Singapore Science Centre and workshops by Kodak,” she

said. “After that, I started taking pictures using a Sony DSLR.”

She has been appreciating nature and taking photos despite the onset of Covid-19 in early 2020.

“I did see lots of birds during the circuit breaker just from my window,” she said. “I spotted oriental pied hornbills frequently near my home (in Clementi). These birds are quite rare to see, typically we only see them in Pulau Ubin or Sungei Buloh.

“I also saw a crimson sunbird, which is the national bird of Singapore.”

“I wanted to be an advocate for the environment after seeing that many people lack awareness about Singapore’s rich biodiversity. Singapore is one of the most biodiversity-rich cities in the world with more than 23,000 terrestrial organisms.”

– Lavanya Prakash (left)

Lavanya also saw a unique flowering plant “which looked like Japanese cherry blossom” while hiking at the Bukit Timah Nature Reserve after the circuit breaker.

She believes that Singapore is determined to tackle climate change, and this was reflected at the UN Climate change conference (COP26) in Glasgow in November last year.

“Many new commitments were made by several countries at the conference, which shows progress is being made since the 2015 Paris Agreement,” she said. “Singapore signed some of these commitments, including phasing out coal use by 2050, reducing methane emissions and signing a pledge to halt and reverse deforestation by 2030.

“Singapore also led negotiations to create a robust global carbon market for companies to reduce and offset their greenhouse gas emissions.”

Yet, she feels that Singapore can do much more.

“For example, Singapore has not committed to net-zero emissions by 2050 which is recommended by scientists as necessary to avoid the worst impacts of climate change,” she said.

“Singapore still largely relies on fossil fuels (natural gas). So we need to transition our energy mix to mainly renewable energy as soon as viable.

“Singapore can also take action to reduce emissions from high-polluting sectors like shipping and aviation. Hopefully these actions will reflect in its revised climate policies.”

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