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## Singapore to stem the flow

Agrees to join climate treaty to cut emission of greenhouse gases

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SINGAPORE has committed itself to becoming a party to the Kyoto Protocol climate treaty by the end of this year.

Delivering the good news in Parliament yesterday was a beaming Environment and Water Resources Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, who said this was in line with Singapore's intention to participate in the international debates on managing greenhouse gas emission levels in ways that would not harm economic growth.

The announcement, which was cheered by MPs in Parliament, comes just three months after Dr Yaacob attended the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Montreal, which aims to review and update the Kyoto Protocol. He had said then that it would be "a question of time" before Singapore joined the list of countries in this global agreement.

The Kyoto Protocol, which came into effect in February last year, is an accord which requires developed countries to cut down on emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases to about 5 per cent below 1990 levels.

"Climate change or global warming is one of the major global environmental challenges of our time," said Dr Yaacob. "The international community needs to take concerted action to deal with climate change before it's too late."

With Singapore's primary greenhouse gas being carbon dioxide generated from energy use, the Government is adopting stricter measures to improve energy efficiency.

From the middle of next year, it will be compulsory for all air-conditioners and refrigerators — described by Hong Kah GRC MP Dr Amy Khor as "energy guzzlers" as they make up 40 to 65 per cent of an average household's electricity bill — to carry energy efficiency labels.

Other appliances such as clothes dryers and water heaters could join the list soon.

Also high on the agenda of the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources is to raise the awareness of the public at large about environmental issues. A survey conducted recently found that one in two Singaporeans have not heard of climate change or global warming before.

The Singapore Environment Council and the National Environment Agency will roll out a public awareness programme on energy efficiency and climate change next month.

The target audience will be the transport sector and households, which together account for 30 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions.

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