

READING: Read and answer the questions

Full name: _____ Level: _____

Hot topic: THE ENVIRONMENT

This week, four experts share with us what they think the key challenges for the world's environment will be in the future. As always, we are curious to get our readers' reactions. So tell us what you think.



1 Endangered species

The black rhino in Africa is in serious danger of becoming extinct. This is because some people think rhino horn has special powers. They pay enormous sums of money for it. So people kill rhinos and sell their horns. Tigers are in serious danger, too. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were about 100,000 tigers. Now there are only about 3,000 left. In a few years' time, there might not be any tigers left at all! These are just two examples. Many other animals are endangered, too. Some of them may be gone forever very soon.

Joc Wagner, Cape Town

2 Overfishing

It's not looking good for the fish population. Certain species are in danger, and there aren't many of them in the sea where fishermen usually go. Fishing ships are therefore going further and further out into the oceans. They try to get the rare species because they can get better prices for them. If things go on like this, 40 years from now there won't be any fish left in the seas. It's not too late yet, but it may be soon. The oceans need much stricter laws and a fishing industry that keeps to them.

Rick Cavendish, San Diego

3 Deforestation

About 30% of the world's land is still covered with forests. But every year, we lose areas as big as the country of Panama. Big companies earn millions from producing wood, paper and cardboard from the trees. Forests are also cut down to make more space for growing crops such as soya or creating huge cattle farms. The consequences of deforestation are dramatic and partly responsible for climate change. About 70% of the world's land animals and plants live in forests. If we lose the forests, we will lose millions of species.

Alejandro Silvas, Quito

4 Rising levels of sea water

Over the last 20 years or so, sea water temperatures have been going up. As a consequence, the ice caps around the poles have started to melt, and sea levels have started to rise. If this doesn't stop, the water will rise further and may flood many islands. Then some countries like the Maldives won't be there any more. There is also a danger that some huge low-lying coastal cities might end up below the sea. It's hard to imagine what the consequences of such changes might be.

Gajkaran Sanu, New Delhi

1. What animals do people kill because they think they have special powers?

2. Why are rare species of fish more in danger from overfishing than others?

3. How much of the world is covered in forest?

4. Why are people cutting down forests? (Two reasons)

5. How long have we already had the problem of rising sea water temperatures?

6. What effects might it have on coastal cities if temperatures rise further?

