



ENVIRONMENTAL CHAMPION MATTHIAS GELBER TALKS ABOUT HIS WORK AND HOW WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

He's a businessman, environmental-advocate, trainer, consultant and speaker who has been awarded the title of Greenest Person on the Planet by a Canadian organisation. Meet Matthias Gelber, a German native who has chosen to make his home in Kuala Lumpur, at least for now, and who continues to campaign tirelessly on Mother Nature's behalf.

Having recently spoken at Be The Change, an event organised by HELLO! magazine in collaboration with Origins, Matthias was more than happy to share with us a little bit more about his environmental efforts and his journey from a village boy growing up in Germany to becoming an internationally-recognised authority on the environment. Besides owning 16 hectares of forest plantations in Panama as a green investment, he is also director of a company that specialises in low carbon footprint/high performance building materials, and doesn't own a car!

At which point in your life did you decide to devote yourself to environmental work? Was there a particular incident that prompted that response?

When I was a young kid growing up in a German *kampung*, I was always outdoors in the woods and enjoyed surrounding myself with nature. My family did some gardening and small-scale farming for our own consumption so I built a connection with the environment very early on.

I was taught at home, in school and in youth groups to be good and to be green. There was acid rain in Europe at the time, and then there was the Chernobyl disaster where the nuclear reactor released loads of radioactivity. Even though Germany was far away from it, we were asked not to eat any vegetables from our garden for some weeks.

Over time, many things came together and I really developed a passion for the environment. I realised that without a living





...tact environment, there is no basis
...on this planet. We live from the
...ment. If we destroy it, we destroy
...as well.

**What is the most important message you
...everybody should know about the
...ment?**

...n make a difference. Your contribution
... Please look at the carbon footprint
... are responsible for. You have control
... your life and your decisions. At the very
... m to become carbon neutral, meaning
... mpensate for all the CO2 emissions
... are responsible for.

**What other message for Malaysia is that the
... thing we can do is protect the peat
... forest from being exploited and burned
... have 10 to 15 times more carbon stored
... than any other type of forest. This
... ere were peat swamp forest fires that
... oted to the haze and released loads of
... we need to work together to protect
... I think that's the biggest contribution
... make in Malaysia.**

**What has been the biggest challenge you've
... in your environmental efforts?**

... biggest challenge is on the business
... y company is trying to replace normal
... -based products with green cement
... ts but like with the electric car, the
... t market players aren't keen on new
... ts coming up in the market. There
... ot of barriers to green products from
... g players in the marketplace.

**Does it feel to be awarded the title of
... st Person on the Planet?**

... anful for the recognition and I take it
... ditional challenge to promote a green
... and green products. I started Eco
... s Malaysia after that and I think the
... has helped me to mobilise and inspire

**Do you find Asians' perceptions toward
... ment conservation?**

... feel it is important but I feel a lot of
... we lost faith in the government and in
... en ability to make a change. Once they
... pired and work with others, however,
... e that we can make a difference and
... ings start happening.

... we learned through groups like Eco
... s Malaysia, Green Drinks and Malaysia
... Climate Justice Network that young
... in particular are keen to make a
... ce and contribute to the conservation
... environment. Good things are starting
... en but governments are still hesitant
... nforcing existing legislation so people
... e rules or get away with small fines
... ough they may have caused a lot of

**What are three things everybody can do to
... e the environment?**

... your energy bill – electricity generation
... very big impact on the environment.
... meat and more vegetables – meat, in



Matthias Gelber credits, among other things, his childhood in a small village in Germany for instilling in him a keen passion for the environment. Clockwise from top left: A photograph of Matthias as a small boy; Matthias spends much of his free time involved in environmental projects like tree-planting; the simple recycling system that Eco Warriors developed for condominiums

... particular beef, has a very high environmental impact. Start a recycling system in your condominium by working with the cleaners – check out the system that Eco Warriors developed for condominiums in KL.

If someone wants to get involved in environment-related causes, what would you recommend their first step be?

Join Eco Warriors Malaysia, Green Drinks or Malaysia Youth Climate Justice Network on Facebook and meet other people who are also involved in taking green action steps. Link up with organisations like WWF (World Wildlife Fund), MNS (Malaysian Nature Society) or others and become a part of what is going on. Discuss with your friends how you can go green at home, at work, in all areas of your life.

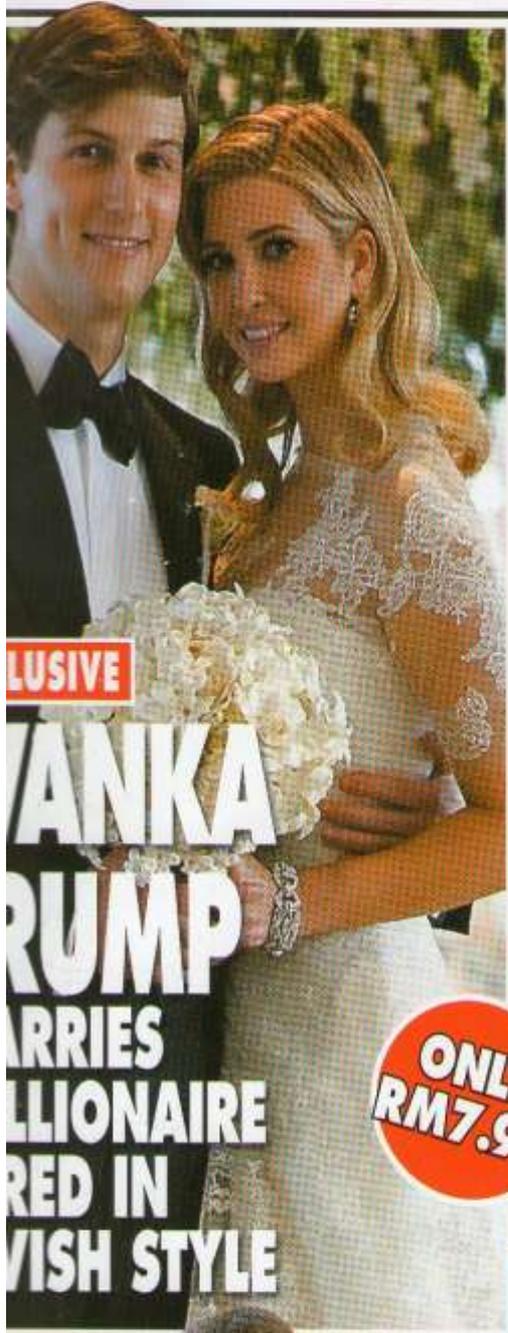


PHOTOS: MATTHIAS GELBER

HELLO!

AN • MALAYSIA • NO.45 • DECEMBER 2009 • RM7.90

NEW BABIES SPECIAL!



EXCLUSIVE

**ANKA RUMP
MARRIES
BILLIONAIRE
IN
WISH STYLE**

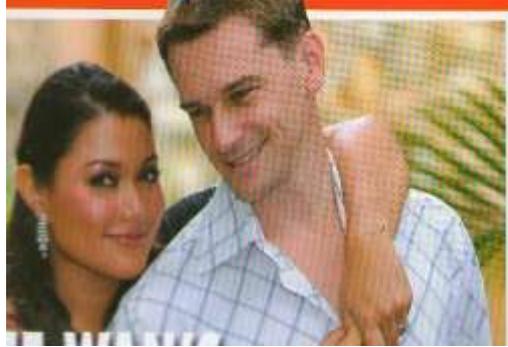
**ONLY
RM7.90**



**JUDE
LAW'S
CHILD WITH
SAMANTHA
BURKE**



**MEG
GIBSON'S
LOVE OKSANA
INTRODUCES
THEIR NEWBORN**



ANGELINA



FREE INSIDE