

The Road from Rio : a Quantum Leap

In a special issue on the environment, the Los Angeles Times featured A Day in the Life of Mother Earth, stating that if it is a typical day, 250,000 people will be added to the world's population while up to 140 species of living creatures will be doomed to extinction.

Still in one day, nearly 140,000 new cars, trucks and buses will join 500 million already on the road. Forests covering an area more than one-third the size of Los Angeles will be destroyed. More than 120,000 barrels of crude oil will be spilled into the world's oceans.

In many parts of the world, the situation seems one of environmental conservation against economic need — in Timbuktu where overused land feeds an advancing desert, in European dumps where toxic waste piles up with no end in sight, in Chernobyl where the threat of nuclear radiation lingers and in Brazil's Amazon where rainforests are felled in the name of progress.

It was against this backdrop that leaders and activists in environment and development from 175 countries met for an Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro last June. Threshed out at the meeting was an action plan for the survival not only of our planet, but also its inhabitants.

The Summit was a quantum leap from the first world environmental meeting in Stockholm in 1972, which stressed caring for the Earth. Now the issue addressed also includes the equitable sharing of the fruits of the earth. For me, the road to Rio began 12 years ago. Struck by a report on the dependence of the North on the resources of the

South and the fact that the Philippines has in abundance all the basic materials needed for industrialisation, I decided to pursue the question: "If Asia is rich, why are the Asians poor?" This led to the birth of BALAI Asian Journal on the natural resources of the region.

In the early 1980s BALAI was a voice in the wilderness because ecological concern was not 'in' BALAI blazed the trail with issues covering oil, minerals, marine wealth, forest destruction, land, the corporate seed, technology,

North-dictated solutions to the problem.

For example, the North is anxious to curb global population growth brought on by daily additions of 140,000 in Asia, 75,000 in Africa and 22,000 in Latin America.

But who depletes the resources of the earth? What should worry us are the affluent among the 13,000 also born in a day, who belong to 20 per cent of the world's population that will gobble up 80 per cent of the world's resources.

political reality within many Third World countries is that what people are overwhelmingly concerned about is how to survive to the next harvest."

To Cuban leader Fidel Castro, poverty and underdevelopment are the worst pollutants and that the ecological debt, must first and foremost be paid. He urged industrial countries to change their habits of high consumption, which he believed is the leading cause of environmental degradation.

What should be aimed at is

By no means should the underdeveloped world bear the burden of preserving ecological well-being. By all means should preservation go hand in hand with ensuring the survival of the world's underprivileged

gender, people's rights, water, population, migration, nuclear power, child labour, indigenous medicine. We delved into root causes and saw the geopolitics of forces at work as well as the social movements struggling against exploitation.

At about the same time, I founded the Third World Movement Against the Exploitation of Women espousing the Third World Brand of feminism that addressed sexism, classism, racism and cultural subjugation in a neocolonial setting.

So as early as 1980 I was on the road of ecofeminism, tackling both development and environment from the point of view of a feminist.

Although the environmental degradation of the planet is alarming, I am wary of overstressing global environmental concerns and putting the burden on the South to carry out

Just imagine a typical American using up 12,000 grocery bags, driving 700,000 miles on 28,000 gallons of gasoline, using and discarding 27,500 newspapers, using up 29,627 aluminum beverage cans, eating 8,486 pounds of meat, consuming enough electricity to burn 16,610 lbs of coal and churning out 110,250 lbs of trash.

As Martin Knor of the Third World Network put it, "... the relevant fact to examine is not (that) '80 per cent of the world's population live in the South and we must control its growth' but rather that 80 per cent of the world's resources are used up by a small minority for non-essential consumption."

Said Lester Brown, president of Worldwatch Institute: "What I see is the industrial countries trying to get developing countries to focus on these [global environmental] issues. But the

sustainable development. During negotiations over the Rio Declaration, it was made clear that "sustainable development" must first and foremost be the cutting of wastage in the North and not the curtailment of the South's right to development.

For the first time in an international document, it was stated:

"*That the 'right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations."

"*That poverty eradication is indispensable for sustainable development to decrease income disparities and meet the needs of the majority."

"*That the 'developed countries acknowledge the responsibility they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global

Coal Blackens Rosy Future

THERE'S a dark side to China's phenomenal industrial growth, much of which is fueled by coal-fired energy.

As production statistics rise, so do China's pollution levels, and even the country's neighbours like Hong Kong and Japan are beginning to feel the effects of its gas emissions.

Economic reforms boosted China's industrial output by 18 per cent in the last year, according to official data. In some areas where foreign investment is booming like Guangdong province, industrial production is up by 35 per cent this year.

But such fast growth is taking a heavy toll on the environment, and experts warn the resulting pollution will rebound on the quality of life in China that has improved recently because of the country's economic successes.

But even before China's latest industrialisation drive began last year, the country was already burning more coal than

domestic fuels are to blame, much of the pollution is also caused by out-of-date technologies in power stations and factories.

Efficiency of conversion of coal into actual fuel is in some cases as low as 30 per cent, according to one Chinese study. The rest is spewed out into the atmosphere as pollutants.

China's booming industries, which depend on coal-fired energy, are increasing the country's already high pollution levels. Yojana Sharma of IPS reports.

Much of China's coal is also of a low grade and that used as domestic fuel has high levels of dust, adding to atmospheric contamination.

Three years ago, Chinese researchers in Beijing noted that all of China's big cities including the capital surpassed the sulphur dioxide and dust levels set by the government.

rise in air pollution levels that could not be attributed to local sources.

Meanwhile, a report released in the same month by the General Research Institute of Japan's electric power industry noted that big coal-burning stations along China's Yangtze river are partially responsible for Japan's acid rain problem.

Sulphur dioxide emissions from coal-fired power plants are the primary cause of acid rain. In China, acid rain has been estimated to cause more than 350 million dollars of damage to agricultural land, particularly in the provinces of Sichuan, Chzhou and Guanzhou.

Studies released in the last two years showed the problem was spreading. Acid rain pollution has been revealed in Fujian and Shandong provinces leading to low crop yields and damage to forests.

Acid rain levels in Changsha, capital of Hunan Province, already exceeded that of Kobe, Japan in 1989 or the US state of Florida — both notorious for high acid rain. Chinese studies noted.

Paddy fields in the Chongqing area turn a sickly yellow after high acid rainfalls and metal structures and concrete works are becoming severely corroded. In south-western China, forests are dying at a rate comparable to the most serious cases in Europe.

China's National Environment Protection Agency is working hard to enact new policies but it is hampered by the decentralisation of authority caused by the industrialisation itself.

Special economic zones — where industrial growth is at breakneck speed — evade central authority and are motivated by quick profits and the need to keep production costs low.

The demise of inefficient state-owned enterprises and the farming out of production to small village-based firms has also made monitoring and implementing pollution controls impossible, says Kazi Jalal, environment unit head of the Asian Development Bank.

China says it does not have the means to enforce such rules. And many officials continue to shrug off complaints about pollution, saying the only way to cope with the increased demands on China's resources is by controlling the population.

—IPS



Commonwealth Helps Search for Ways to Save Amazon

CONRAD Gorinsky's eyes light up. This is radical, way out science. New age science. It is also, he believes, "our last chance."

He's talking about the Iwokrama forest project: the Commonwealth's plans for a 900,000 acre nature reserve and natural laboratory in the heart of Guyana's rainforest.

Half of the virtually unpopulated land will be preserved for the study of the astounding variety of life forms in the forest, with the other half dedicated to experiments in responsible management of forest products.

As the demand increases for "sustainably produced" wood products, modern foresters and scientists find they have no real understanding of how to manage the forest in such a manner. The research centre will lead the international community in forest management research and the key, says Gorinsky, is the participation of the area's indigenous people.

The indigenous people of Amazon are scientific masters, says Gorinsky, 56, who grew up on an isolated river bank in Guyana.

"These people design their own drugs, and their own food systems," he says, and they were designing them a thousand years ago.

Amerindians will participate, not as second — or third-rate helpers, but as "authorities in their own right at the highest level of scientific expertise."

Initial surveying of the area has been led by an amerindian from one of the two villages on the border of the reserve. He has told researchers, for example, of a fire that occurred several decades ago that they would not have known about

otherwise.

He also points out which plants are good to eat, and those which have medicinal uses.

"We have to bring in these people if we are to know anything at all about the forest," says Gorinsky.

The Iwokrama Programme — meaning "spiritually powerful fox" — grants indigenous people "intellectual property rights" to their knowledge of

by Jill Forrester

the forest's plants and animals and economic benefits from any products developed from the research.

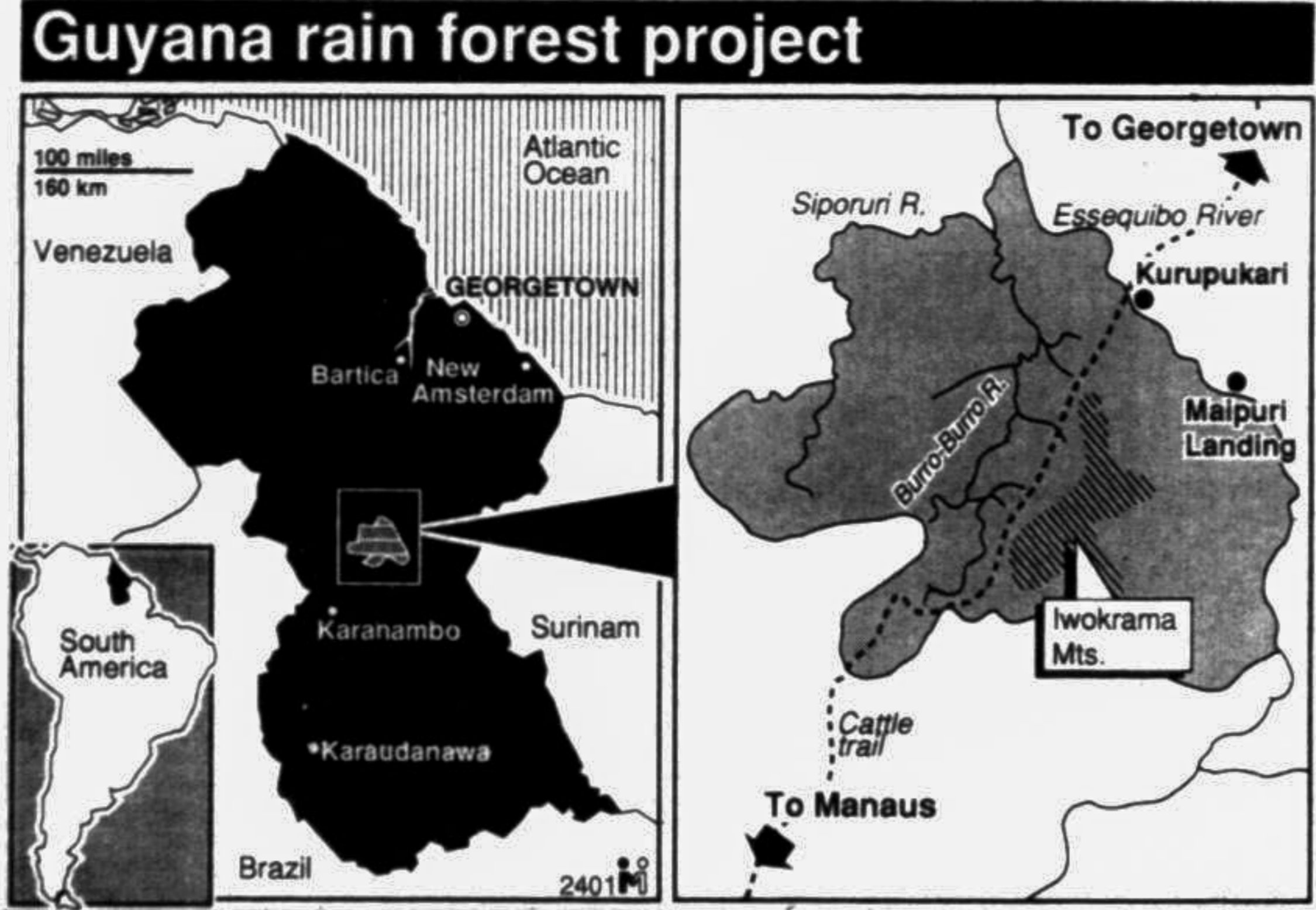
Still, concerns have been voiced at Commonwealth

meetings for the native people's way of life.

It seems to be a matter of who gets there first. The governments of Guyana and Brazil have already begun construction of a road linking Manaus, in Brazil, with Georgetown, the capital of Guyana, that will pass right through the reserve site.

It threatens to bring large numbers of migrants, including gold miners and foresters, from forests already ruined in

Two years ago, the government of Guyana gave 900,000 acres of unspoiled and virtually unpopulated rainforest to be used for international research. A Commonwealth scientist, born in the area, says the opportunity is unique. People who live on the borders of the protected forest have been passing their knowledge of indigenous medicines and practices on to the researchers. But, reports Gemini News Service, the area is now threatened by a proposed road that will pass directly through the area.



most other nations in the world. United Nations data show it to be the third largest producer of carbon dioxide — a major cause of global warming — after the United States and the Soviet Union.

Coal represents over 80 per cent of China's total energy consumption and its use is rising rapidly. Beijing has elaborate plans to expand nuclear energy and hydroelectric production but the situation is unlikely to improve in the medium term.

While the sheer size and growth of China's industry and population where coal accounts for over 85 percent of

Another study found that industrial pollution in the big cities was 10 times the norm set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

In 1990, the industrial city of Shenyang ranked second in the list of the World's most polluted cities. Benxi, a city of one million inhabitants, meanwhile, earned the dubious distinction of simply vanishing from satellite photos as it became enveloped in a blanket of thick industrial smog.

Evidence show things have become much worse. In May, monitoring stations all over Hong Kong suddenly registered a sudden and dangerous

Zambian Villagers Protect Parks

CHIEF Hamusonde is a tall man with a thin but powerful frame. He addresses his audience firmly, and his pointed words reflect his ninety-odd years.

"Our zebras were disturbed. They were driven into a clearing by a plane and taken away," Chief Hamusonde complains. "They were taken without our knowledge, and where they are planted, we do not know."

Chief Hamusonde is referring to zebras that were recently captured by authorities at Lochinvar National Park. The animals were relocated to game ranches in Zambia, to boost this new industry.

A few years ago, this event might not have raised local eyebrows. But today, villagers living on the Kafue Flats insist on being involved in decisions regarding local wildlife. The parks authorities had to apologise to Chief Hamusonde.

Chief Hamusonde is one of seven local chiefs participating in a WWF-World Wide Fund for Nature funded project on the Kafue Flats. In 1988, WWF and the World Conservation Union helped the Zambian Department of National Parks and Wildlife start a wetlands project on the Kafue Flats in central Zambia, and in the Bangweulu Basin, in the north.

The project area encompasses two parks (Lochinvar and Blue Lagoon National Parks) and three game management areas, totalling 12,500 square kilometres. These vast wetlands are best known for their Kafue lechwe (Kobus lechwe kafuensis) and black lechwe (Kobus lechwe smithemani), both unique to Zambia.

On the Kafue Flats, bird life is spectacular: there are over 400 species of birds including white and pink-backed pelicans, goliath herons, spur-winged geese and the largest African population of wattle crane, (Grus carunculatus) a threatened species.

To preserve this valuable ecosystem, the project involves local communities in protecting their wildlife, and encouraging them to sustainably use these natural resources.

For three years, the WWF project team met with local communities to encourage them to participate. "The local chiefs formed a wetlands management authority, responsible for participating in wildlife management," said Richard Jeffrey, WWF's country representative for Zambia.

This local participation, as

by Sandra Mbanefo

in the wetlands project, falls under the umbrella of a national programme in Zambia called ADMADE (Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas), which also receives WWF funding. ADMADE takes various forms.

For example, young villagers living on the border of protected areas, are trained as village scouts. The six-month course, held at the national ADMADE school in Nyaluma, involves wildlife monitoring, data collection, report writing and law enforcement.

They receive a regular salary and help conserve wildlife in the game management areas, adjacent to national parks. The scouts also act as representatives for the needs of the community. Often they are tipped off by villagers

WWF and the government are working on a comprehensive management plan for the region. Close to 120,000 people live on the Kafue Flats; most make their living from cattle herding and fishing. In order to meet their needs, a limited amount of commercial fishing is allowed in certain areas of the park.

A tourist camping site is being built with money from the revolving fund. Some villagers are operating a community grocery store, building with money loaned from the project.

Safari hunting is an important source of income. There are 60,000 lechwe and 5,000 zebras on the Kafue Flats. After careful calculation, the parks authorities decided that 250 lechwe and 100 zebra could be legally hunted every year, without significantly affecting the population. The figures could be higher if poaching is reduced further.

On the Kafue Flats, an international hunter pays US\$600 for a license fee, and US\$200 for a hunting right to an animal. From the US\$800, US\$500 goes to the ADMADE revolving fund. If one multiplies this figure by 250 lechwe annually, the revolving fund could get more than US\$125,000, which is ploughed back into conservation and community development.

"I was on my way to Lusaka (Zambia's capital city) recently," Chief Hamusonde's cousin, Simuwe Mwinga Munakampe recounts. "A villager came to tell me to dispatch our scouts. He had seen a vehicle going into the national park, and poachers were killing lechwe."

Mr. Munakampe, who works with the WWF project, immediately organized the village scouts, and as a result, six people were arrested. "This good response from the local community never existed before," he said with some amazement.

Besides the village scout programme, earnings from safari concession fees and hunting go into an ADMADE "revolving fund" operated by the Wildlife Department.

For every dollar earned, 35 cents are invested in community development projects, 40 cents go towards local wildlife management coast, and the remaining 25 cents go to the Parks Department and ADMADE to cover administrative costs.

This local participation, as

Toxic Heaps in High-Growth Region

WITH Former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific no longer willing to be dumping grounds, South-East Asia has become the new toxic waste dump site for the United States and other industrialised countries.

The region, home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies, is also the final destination of millions of kgs of toxic plastic and other waste materials, which are being shipped to Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and even the rich city-state of Singapore.

According to documents released by the Washington-based Greenpeace Environmental Organisation, a total of 23 million kgs of plastic waste in 458 shipments were exported from the United States to Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia from January to November last year.

About 64 per cent, the biggest share, went to Indonesia, 31 per cent to the Philippines and the remaining five per

cent to Malaysia.

"US industry exports thousands of tonnes of toxic products and wastes each day, much of it through New York Harbour, to less industrialised countries whose people often have no knowledge of what they're importing," said Ann Leonard of Greenpeace's International waste trade project.

Leonard added that despite the demand from developing countries for a ban on toxic waste exports, US President George Bush's administration continues "pushing for new waste loopholes in national and international laws."

At least 89 developing countries have banned waste imports but industrialised countries, led by the United States, continue to export their wastes in the guise of recycling and reclamation.

According to Greenpeace,

by Han Jei

some importers of plastic scrap estimate that up to 40 per cent of the material are of low quality, contaminated and unusable.

The rest of the scrap are made into chips and melted, a process that emits strong toxic fumes. The melted plastic is

turned into cords, cut into pellets and then sent to manufacturers who use them in toys, containers and other products.

"If it is safe, why don't the US and other countries recycle their own plastic scrap waste instead of shipping it all the way to Asia where there is already more than enough waste?" said Rene Salazar of the Manila-based South-East Asian Regional Institute for Community Education (Searice).

The Philippine Senate pas-

South-East Asia is fast becoming the favourite dumping site of toxic wastes of industrialised countries.

sed a bill in 1988 banning the import, storage or transport of nuclear or toxic waste.

But this has not stopped companies like First Metals, the major broker for the waste trade in the country, from importing about 2.6 million kgs of plastic waste into the country last year.

"On paper, the Philippine government is against toxic

hazardous polyvinyl chloride plastic (PVC's)".

PVC is a chlorine-bearing plastic containing metal components which, upon incineration, release cancer-causing dioxins. Other emissions from burning PVC contribute to acid rain, says Greenpeace.

Singapore has been at both ends of the waste trade. Documented reports show a Singaporean firm, Transmedia, dumped a shipment of detergent in Indonesia's Bintan Island in 1989 under the guise of using the wastes as landfill. The Singapore government offered to retrieve the detergent wastes.

In Thailand, lax regulations have allowed many bogus companies to import so-called industrial chemicals which were actually industrial wastes from developed countries. The Thai government in a report to the United Nations said that between 1979 and 1983, Singapore had been illegally shipping chemical wastes to Thailand.

Indonesia has stated anyone shipping wastes into the country will be sued in the International Court of Justice. But Greenpeace documents reveal that Indonesia "is the target for much of the US scrap plastics, especially polyethylene and the environmentally

waste dumping but it is completely inept in implementing the ban on importation of toxic waste," said Salazar, who is a founding member of Manila's newly-formed Coalition Against Toxic Wastes.

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