

FOCUS[®] ON THE FAMILY

BY DR BILL MAIER

INDOOR FUN

What do you do when you're cooped up indoors with a bunch of bored kids? That's easy — you get creative!

Instead of mindlessly flipping through the channels, hoping something decent is on, why not turn off the television and get busy having fun?

Try designing an obstacle course with pillows and chairs, and cardboard boxes. Get a stopwatch and see who can get through it the fastest.

After that, try a game of musical chairs, hide and seek or play your favourite board game. I'll bet it's more fun than you remember.

When's the last time you played tag? Or jumped rope? There are tons of great indoor games to play if you're willing to move furniture around and make a path in the middle of the room.

If all else fails, get the kids dancing to some energetic music. Anything is better than vegging out in front of the television on those bad-weather days.

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VOICES

Not quite yet a breakthrough

Indonesia's environmental problems have deep structural roots

Letter from Kwan Jin Yao

MR RICHARD Hartung's commentary, "Adding firepower to the fight for our forests" (June 5-6), gives a brief summary of the "groundbreaking" agreement between Indonesia and Norway to place a two-year moratorium on new logging concessions.

Indeed, other than the direct financial benefits for the Indonesian administration if the commitment is adhered to, serious environmental challenges such as air pollution, desertification and deforestation would be simultaneously tackled as well.

The two-pronged approach — enhancing technology and tracking systems, as well as addressing institutional challenges such as under-development and corruption — would appear to many observers as a significant breakthrough for Indonesia.

However, the fact is that the United Nations and the Association of South-east Asian Nations have been working in the past decades to achieve the aforementioned — albeit not of such scale and publicity — to little or no avail.

Considerable sums of money and resources have been pumped into the region — with the active harmonisation of national,



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regional and international policies — but the ends do not justify the means. There is little reason to think that the current letter of intent would be any different. Even if any short-term success is achieved, the sustainability of the policies would be in question given that the moratorium only grants delays and temporary suspensions.

The problem at hand is a structural one. Geographically, the practices of deforestation, logging and primitive "slash-and-burn" are hard to track and control because of the sheer number of individual islands and forest cover.

Having developed the wood-processing industries as a key driver of its economic growth, Indonesia has no choice but to maintain its production capacity for fiscal development. The assortment of conservation efforts have failed miserably

because they have ignored the composition of the Indonesian system, mistakenly adopting generalised plans and ignoring the root of the challenges.

Enforcement measures on collective, small-time farmers consistently backfire because they have little choice but to resort to primitive methods to efficiently clear land for plantations. Even with subsidies, they simply cannot afford new technology, and see no incentives to do so. Rather, the administration should bring the involved stakeholders together at grassroots level to comprehend their concerns and sensitively address issues of concern.

For the corporations that exploit the resources and farmers, the authorities should step up efforts to curb their expansion, and ensure that they adhere to the respective legislations. Stem corruption and strengthen initiatives to get rid of officials who selfishly decide to do otherwise. Transmigration should also be better managed.

It goes beyond the haze and air pollution: Indonesia currently is the third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases. If the status quo is allowed to manifest, our future generations might no longer have an Earth to safely inhabit.

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