

## ASEAN calls for nature's conservation to prevent future pandemics



**SAFETY PROTOCOLS.** Due to COVID-19 concerns, signage requiring the use of face masks is now a familiar sight in public places like the entrance to this train station in the Philippines.

The ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) held their first webinar on 20 May, underscoring the linkages of biodiversity and health and regional efforts to integrate biodiversity conservation into the COVID-19 response.

Gathering a panel of experts, the webinar entitled *Biodiversity and Preventing Future Pandemics* took place through Zoom and was broadcast live on Facebook, engaging citizens and various audiences from the ASEAN Member States about nature's role in preventing future pandemics.

Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) of ASEAN for Socio-Cultural Community Kung Phoak opened the webinar. In his remarks, he said, "In spite of restrictions on movements in most of the ASEAN region, ASEAN Secretariat and the ACB are keen to use this momentum to engage ASEAN sectoral bodies and the general public to exchange knowledge, ideas, and experiences on interlinkages of biodiversity and human health."

DSG Kung underscored the importance of nature-based solutions to prevent future pandemics through cross-sectoral collaboration and multi-stakeholder engagement, as part of ASEAN's agenda on

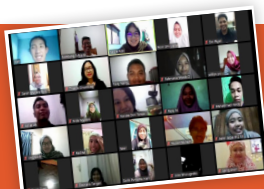
mainstreaming biodiversity across relevant sectors, while encouraging individuals and community to become 'bio-literate' to adopt behaviours that address the root cause of future pandemic and zoonosis.

The panel included ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim; Acep Somantri (representing the Secretary-General, Ministry of Health of Indonesia Drg. Oscar Primadi M.P.H.), Director of the Bureau of International Cooperation of Indonesia's Ministry of Health; Founding chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and Malaysia's 2017 ASEAN Biodiversity Hero Dr. Tan Sri Zakri bin Abdul Hamid; Dr. Unnikrishnan Payyappallimana of the International Institute for Global Health of the United Nations University; and Dr. Marian Delos Angeles, resource economics and environmental valuation expert. Antoinette Taus, UN Environment Programme's National Goodwill Ambassador for the Philippines, moderated the two-hour session.

Dr. Lim, a wildlife management expert, stressed the need for greater cooperation within ASEAN and with other regional bodies and governments of the world to prevent future pandemics as "COVID-19 may not be the last." She cited recent IPBES data that there may be around 1.7 million unidentified viruses believed to still exist in mammals and water birds that can infect people.

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## “Now is the best time:” ASEAN youth leaders raise biodiversity awareness, participation online amid COVID-19

As shelter-in-place directives are in force and movement is restricted in the ASEAN region and elsewhere in the world, ASEAN youth leaders go online to drive home the importance of biodiversity conservation for humanity’s future.

No strangers to technology, the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Leaders (YBLs) have transitioned from organising in-person activities to online workshops and gatherings, with topics ranging from biodiversity loss, plastic pollution and illegal wildlife trade, to youth participation through volunteering, starting an organisation, and providing inputs for the crafting of their country’s laws on biodiversity.

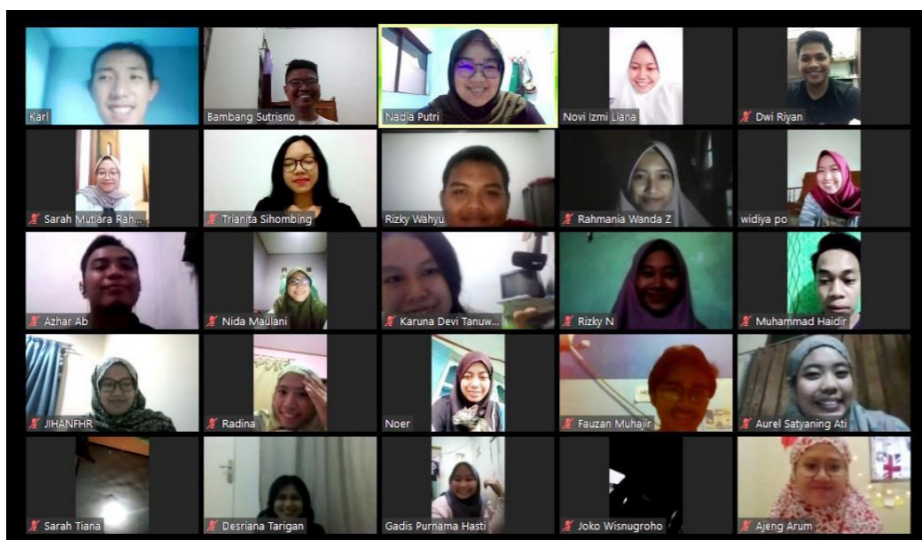
The YBL is part of the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme (AYBP) spearheaded by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), in collaboration with the Global Youth Biodiversity Network, and with the support of EU through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP) project.

### Mobilising the youth

Cirilo Lagnason, Jr., the programme head of *Kidlikasan*, a youth environmental organisation based in the Philippines, gave a talk on organising the youth in one of the online discussions initiated by the Earth Island Institute Philippines in celebration of Earth Day.

“The pandemic should not limit the work that we can do for biodiversity. Our work should cross borders and we should see it as an opportunity to raise awareness by making use of technology as our friend,” Lagnason said.

Lagnason is also part of the 2019 Cohort of the YBL fellowship, a one-year training and mentorship designed to take youth leaders’ conservation impact to the next level.



ASEAN youth come together in an online biodiversity event where biodiversity issues and initiatives in the region were discussed. Photo by Nadia Putri Rachma Persada

Lagnason spoke about conducting activities with its 39 members and over 100 volunteers in South-Central Mindanao despite minimal resources. “Don’t let lack of funds stop you,” he advised.

He said while grand activities are great, low-key activities can still have huge impacts on the environment.

“Now is the best time to act. It is better to mobilise the youth when there are dramatic or disturbing significant events in the community,” he said citing the increasing participation of the youth at the height of COVID-19 pandemic.

With their hyper connectivity and aptitude for harnessing technologies, young people can overcome physical movement restrictions due to the pandemic, and mobilise for biodiversity conservation.

Lagnason’s organisation, *Kidlikasan*, is a finalist of the Ten Accomplished Youth Organizations award in the Philippines.

Meanwhile, recognising the link between biodiversity degradation and diseases like COVID-19, Lin Ji Liaw, a YBL from Brunei Darussalam, organised a sharing session on this link and the importance of

protecting natural habitats to address these. Liaw is the founder of BruWILD, an educational organisation working to conserve the flora and fauna of Brunei Darussalam.

A YBL from Indonesia, Nadia Putri Rachma Persada was a resource speaker at an event, Youth Talks on Biological Diversity in April, organised by Teens Go Green, a youth organisation in Indonesia.

“This pandemic is another reminder for us to really start living in harmony with nature,” said Putri, Jakarta coordinator for Biodiversity Warriors in Indonesia.

Putri talked about pressing issues in Indonesia, like overexploitation of resources such as illegal logging and wildlife trade and unsustainable practices like plastic waste disposal, as well as the impact of these practices on wildlife, and on people’s access to basic needs like food and water. She encouraged the youth to contribute to biodiversity conservation efforts.

Joining Putri at the event was Karl Png Jun Qiang, 2019 YBL for Singapore and a member of the

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Environmental Biology Interest Group at the National University of Singapore.

Png talked about his biodiversity work in Singapore, among them bringing together a community of students at the National University of Singapore to encourage the country’s next naturalists. He expressed concern that most Singaporean youth are urbanites and are losing their connection with nature.

The event, according to Putri, was well-received, and the audience of students, fresh graduates, and general public were eager to learn about volunteering opportunities to help in biodiversity conservation.

### Voices in policymaking

The youth should also participate in the crafting of their country’s laws on biodiversity. This is what Kittikun Saksung, a YBL from Thailand, had in mind when he and his team at the Thailand Youth Biodiversity Network organised the Youth Voices for Biodiversity Act, originally planned to be a face-to-face engagement.

With restrictions on large gatherings, his team pivoted to push through with the event as a series of online biodiversity knowledge sharing sessions and public youth hearings to get inputs from the youth for Thailand’s draft Biodiversity Act. The new act is intended to provide a unified and effective tool for biodiversity management in Thailand, among others.

“This is a big opportunity for young people to gather together and make our voices heard,” Saksung said. “The main goal was to create a collaborative position paper of youth towards the drafting of the Biodiversity Act.”

Making the event online also allowed many Thai youth from other provinces, or those currently studying abroad, to participate.

Saksung revealed that he was inspired to organise the event after he and Png were sent as youth representatives by the ACB through the BCAMP Project to the second round of negotiations about the post-2020 global biodiversity framework in Rome, Italy at the end

of February 2020. The post-2020 framework will give directions to the world’s governments in their policies and programmes in safeguarding biodiversity beyond 2020. Coming back from global-level discussions, Saksung wanted to ensure the youth’s voice is also heard for biodiversity policies in his home country.

During the negotiations in Italy, Saksung was able to experience inter-sessional consultative meetings with different agencies, industries, non-government and government organisations, and academe, which prepared him for the online consultation with Thailand’s youth.

He said the youth and other attendees gained a greater appreciation for biodiversity through the online knowledge-sharing sessions. Thailand Youth Biodiversity Network on its Facebook page also acknowledged youth participation in the online public youth hearings, which ended on 3 May, and has committed to compile the youth’s inputs.

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“The decline of species can trigger the spillover of viruses that are dormant or inactive, leading to their transmission to both domestic animals and humans. This grim data should serve as a warning to all of us,” Dr. Lim said.

Dr. Payyappallimana shared the highlights of the scoping study on the interlinkages of health and biodiversity of the ACB, in cooperation with the United Nations University International Institute for Global Health, and supported by ASEAN-EU Project, *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* or BCAMP.

Meanwhile, Dr. Zakri said nature must not be forgotten while governments

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# Biodiversity and Preventing Future Pandemics

20 May 2020 | 10:00 A.M. – 11:30 A.M. (GMT+8)

Livestreaming on [facebook.com/ASEANBiodiversity](https://www.facebook.com/ASEANBiodiversity)

**Panel of Experts:**

- H.E. Kung Phook, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN
- Dr. Oscar Primadi, MPH, Secretary General, Ministry of Health, Indonesia
- Dr. Theresa Mundita S. Lim, Executive Director of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
- Prof. Zakri Abdul Hamid, President of the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
- Dr. Umikrishnan Payyappallimana, Director General, National Institute for Health Research and Development (NIHR)
- Dr. Marian S. Deles Angeles, Ph.D., Regional Director, ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity
- Ms. Antoinette Taus, Moderator

The ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity gathered an esteemed panel of experts in their first webinar on 20 May 2020.

are saving human lives and rebooting the economy in their post-COVID 19 response. “After all, the root cause of those zoonotic diseases such as COVID-19 is the destruction of wildlife habitats, a fact endorsed by most scientific community,” Dr. Zakri said. The activity was part of the efforts of the ASEAN Secretariat and the

ACB to increase their communication activities and mainstream biodiversity across various sectors and disciplines leading up to the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB). With the theme *Our solutions are in nature*, the observance of the IDB highlights the global call to citizens to re-examine their relationship with nature.



## “Now is the best time:” ASEAN youth leaders raise biodiversity awareness, participation online amid COVID-19 ...continued from page 3

These inputs will be submitted to Thailand’s Office of National Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP) for consideration for the draft Biodiversity Act.

### Collaborate, seek support

Asking for help and collaborating is also important for the success of any initiative.

Lagnason said their organisation asked local government officials to help sponsor meals and venues for their events.

Saksung said that their online sessions with Thailand’s youth were co-organised with ONEP, BioFin (Biodiversity Financing) and the United Nations Development Programme also provided speaker recommendations, and connected them with various networks. The success of their sessions was partly because they sought advice from “people with better knowledge.”

Collaborating with youth from other ASEAN Member States also offers an opportunity to learn from one another and work together.

“Indonesia and Singapore have a huge difference in biodiversity matters, but we still have similar problems and we could learn from each other, and highlight which part our youth can work together to have the most powerful impact,” Putri said about her and Png’s participation in the same biodiversity event.

Png echoed Putri’s statements, adding that he also wanted to bring home insights from the session to fellow Singaporean youth. He said these insights will help them understand the region’s biodiversity more, an understanding which would be important for future collaborations.

### Future directions

In the weeks leading up to the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity on 22 May, YBLs from the 2019 and 2020 Cohort held a number of online events and campaigns across the ASEAN region: from busting myths on bees and creating biodiversity-inspired recipes, to teaching others how to make compost or create their own garden, as well as celebrating the inseparable link

between biodiversity and cultural diversity through songs.

AYBP Coordinator Mika Tan expressed confidence that the YBLs’ initiatives will carry on despite challenges like the pandemic. “The youth have always been ingenious even before the covid-19 pandemic. They will always find ways when they are driven by their passion for biodiversity,” Tan said.

She described a text-based biodiversity seminar organised by the YBLs and held entirely on WhatsApp, which allowed even youth with a weak mobile signal or patchy internet connection to participate, as the seminar did not demand the same bandwidth that a video conference or seminar would.

For her part, ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim commended the YBLs’ initiatives and shared hopes for the work ahead in safeguarding biodiversity. “The youth are the rights holders of the Earth’s future, and they play an important part in advocating for biodiversity conservation as a long-term solution so that pandemics like the one we are experiencing are less likely to happen again,” she said.

## Critical role of communicators, visual artists in the age of environment and health crises



In celebration of this year’s World Environment Day, Climate Conversations Singapore, in cooperation with the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), featured communicators and artists and how storytelling and visual arts inspire environmental actions. The webinar entitled, *The Role of Visual Arts in Environmental Action in Southeast Asia*, highlighted the importance of effective communication in motivating people to conserve and protect the environment, especially during global health and environmental crises.

In the speakers panel were Dr. Mary Kristerie Baleva, acting head of ACB Communication and Public Affairs Unit; Danny Ocampo, campaign manager of Oceana Philippines and an underwater photographer; Wally Tham, co-founder of grassroots advocacy group Stand Up For Our Singapore, and a professional filmmaker; and Dr. Glenn Graves, a psychologist and life coach specialising in creativity, based in Singapore. The webinar was moderated by Xin Ying Tok, co-founder of Climate Conversations.

### Promoting conservation through visuals

When asked how visual arts bridge the communication gap between environmentalists and the public,

Dr. Baleva stressed the effectiveness of powerful visuals in promoting appreciation for nature. “The initial step is to let your audience appreciate what they have. This can be done through showcasing powerful images and works of art. We take care of what we love. Visuals transcend language barriers and allow us to experience nature and our shared humanity,” said Dr. Baleva. Some initiatives of the ACB in communicating the values of biodiversity through visual arts include: *Biodiversity through my Eyes*, a biodiversity and autism awareness exhibit; *A SEA Story*, an exhibit on ASEAN’s biodiversity focusing on marine life and how folklore reflect each country’s respect to the web of life; poster-making competitions for the youth; production of visual and audio-visual materials; and *Zooming in on Biodiversity*, an ASEAN-wide photo competition.

The ACB has been staging *Zooming in on Biodiversity*, with the support of its partners such as the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* and the EU, since 2009. The first staging in 2009 gathered photos depicting the harmonious relationship of all forms of life with

the theme, *Biodiversity and Me*. The 2013 staging had the theme *Biodiversity and Climate Change*; the next focused on *Biodiversity and Sustainable Development* (2015); and the fourth staging was about the *Biodiversity Richness of ASEAN* (2018). The ACB will search for the next batch of outstanding biodiversity photos towards the end of the year.

Danny Ocampo shared how he communicates environmental conservation through photography. “Action is the celebration of awareness. I want to show people what is happening in the environment through my photos. I want them to take action,” said Ocampo, who was also the grand winner of the 2018 *Zooming in on Biodiversity* photo contest.

He explained that one major conservation problem is that some people fail to understand that everything is interconnected and that humans are part of the web of life and not outside of it. He showed a photo he calls *Blue Harmony*, featuring a sea turtle, vibrant coral reefs, and a fisherman on the surface of the sea. The photo was

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taken in Apo Island in Dumaguete, Philippines. "This photo shows that humans are not really far from the environment; we're part of it. The only way to survive is to protect the environment because if we don't, we lose our source of food, and even our home," he added.

Dr. Graves, who has a keen interest in eco-psychology and the power of imagery in awareness raising, emphasised the importance of visuals in effective story-telling. "Tell a story using imagery. Show how a place looks like before, and how it looks like now. But you have to make sure that your message is clear. Your visuals should communicate the message that you want to convey," said Dr. Graves.

**Communicators amid a pandemic**

Most of the questions from the viewers were about the role of communicators and visual artists in light of COVID-19.

Wally Tham shared how they helped address the growing anxiety of the people in Singapore caused by the pandemic. "Sometime in February, we were seeing points of anxiety in Singapore where certain people were shouting at nurses and doctors to get out of trains or elevators because they fear catching the virus from them. That is when we realised that we have to do something," Tham shared. This gave birth to a social media campaign called #BraveHeartSg where they encouraged people to send letters of encouragement to frontliners. It generated over 6,000 public submissions of love notes to healthcare workers and reached almost 200,000 social media mentions in a day. "We were able to take people away from thinking of just their own survival and anxiety, and focus on the ones who are working for the common good," he added.



Blue Harmony by Danny Ocampo

#BraveHeartSg also offers home kits to help groups and individuals gain social emotional tools that may help them cope with COVID-19. These resources can be accessed at [www.braveheart.sg](http://www.braveheart.sg).

Dr. Baleva reiterated the importance of communicating about the interconnectedness of all forms of life and their natural environment. She stressed that now that the world is faced with a pandemic, there is a heightened need to mainstream biodiversity within and across sectors, especially the health sector. The ACB has been raising public awareness of the link between biodiversity and health through various communication initiatives, one of which was a webinar entitled,

Biodiversity and Preventing Future Pandemics, held in May 2020 via Zoom.

Xin Ying Tok closed the webinar by highlighting the need to establish good relationships and to understand people's emotions to be able to communicate more effectively and to encourage more people to act for the environment.

Climate Conversations Singapore is a non-profit organisation created in 2017 to advocate for climate and environmental action towards a sustainable future.

**CALL FOR APPLICATIONS**

**ACB Long-Term Secondment Programme**

**DEADLINE EXTENDED UNTIL 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**WHAT?**

The ACB Long-term Secondment Programme is a capacity building programme aimed at promoting and facilitating the direct participation of government and non-government officers and staff from the AMS in carrying out selected regular functions of the ACB through long-term assignments.

**HOW LONG IS THE TEMPORARY ASSIGNMENT?**

Long-term assignment will be for a period of one year. The selected applicants will be posted at the ACB Headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines. The start of the assignment will be in 2021.

**WHO CAN APPLY?**

- Governments' Junior and Senior Officers (Management/Technical Officers); and
- Academic or research personnel from universities, and other relevant government organisations duly endorsed by the ACB National Focal Point

**DEADLINE?**

The application is extended until 30 September 2020 at 23:59 GMT+8.

**HOW TO APPLY?**

Kindly visit <http://aseanbiodiversity.org/2020/03/10/call-for-applications-acb-giz-secondment-programme-for-asean-member-states/>



Be capacitated and raise public awareness and understanding of biodiversity conservation issues prevalent in the region. **APPLY NOW!**



## ASEAN equips frontliners of protected areas to boost conservation

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) is taking steps to improve the management of selected protected areas in the region with the help of technology, such as anti-poacher camera traps and other Global Positioning System-equipped devices that are useful in boosting law enforcement and monitoring activities.

In collaboration with EU through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP)* project, the ACB has purchased camera traps, information technology equipment, radios, and binoculars for Nam Poui National Protected Area and Phou Xieng Thong National Protected Area in Lao PDR, as well as Endau-Rompin Johor National Park and Krau Wildlife Reserve in Malaysia.

These are four of the 10 protected sites that the ACB-EU BCAMP project has been supporting since it commenced in 2017. In the coming months, similar equipment will be purchased for the other six sites - Virachey National Park and Southern Cardamoms in Cambodia; Mounts Iglit-Baco National Park and Pasonanca National Park in the Philippines; Tarutao National Park

and the Eastern Forest Complex in Thailand.

Three of these 10 sites are ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) while the rest are potential AHPs. At present, 49 AHPs form a regional network of protected areas of high conservation importance and characterised by outstanding wilderness, ecological, and cultural values.

“With technology and protective gear, we are taking biodiversity conservation to another level. Our aim is to ensure that the managers and staff of protected sites are better equipped to effectively perform their duties, including enforcing laws and apprehending violators,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

Equipped with sensors, an anti-poacher camera trap is a remotely activated device that captures images of people in the forest and sends them to the rangers’ smartphones, enabling them to take effective real-time action when poachers are detected. The information technology equipment, on the other hand, will be used for data management, analysis, mapping, monitoring and evaluation,

and reporting. Apart from the gadgets, forest rangers in these sites were given protective gear like boots and work uniforms.

Lim stressed that effective management of protected areas keeps poaching and illicit wildlife trafficking at bay, thus preventing the emergence of zoonotic diseases in the future.

“Rangers and managers of protected areas are frontliners, too. While most of us stay home, they need to be out to make sure that our forests, coral reefs, mangroves and other natural ecosystems, as well as the wildlife that inhabits these, remain healthy, intact and ready to provide us sustained and long-term protection as soon as this pandemic is over,” Lim said.

She added that incidents that hit the headlines this week, such as forest fires and seizure of poached wildlife, show how indispensable the services of wildlife and protected area rangers are at this time despite lockdowns over COVID-19.



Rangers and protected area staff of Endau-Rompin Johor National Park and Krau Wildlife Reserve in Malaysia were trained how to use camera traps in one of the capacity enhancement activities under the ACB-EU BCAMP project in February this year.

## Small grants, big impacts on two ASEAN Heritage Parks in Indonesia



In its field visit in Gunung Leuser National Park in December 2019, Penabulu Foundation aims to gain an understanding of the areas of the then potential grantees. Photo courtesy of Penabulu Foundation

With technical and financial support from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), civil society organisations in Gunung Leuser National Park and Way Kambas National Park— Indonesia’s ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs)— are poised to create big impacts on conservation actions on the ground.

Under the *Small Grants Programme (SGP)*, the ACB, in cooperation with the German Development Bank KfW and the Indonesian government through the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, has recently awarded grants to eight organisations namely: Orangutan Sumatera Lestari Foundation, Pesona Tropis Alam Indonesia Foundation, Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation, Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia Sumatera Utara Foundation, Ekosistem Lestari Foundation, Aliansi Lestari Rimba Terpadu, PILI Green Network, University of Lampung, and Citizen Research-Based Conservation Action.

A total of EUR 446, 227 in grants have been allocated to initiatives, such as survey and monitoring of Sumatran rhino population through camera traps, mitigation of wildlife hunting and forest fire, and introduction on the potential uses of elephant dung in Way

Kambas National Park; as well as the management of community forestry, ecosystem restoration, awareness-raising activities, and other efforts to address threats in Gunung Leuser National Park.

“We acknowledge the efforts that these civil society organisations are putting in despite the COVID-19 situation. With the help of our partners in Indonesia, these small grants can make a big difference in advancing our biodiversity conservation agenda,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said.

As a service provider of the SGP in Indonesia, Penabulu Foundation has been tapped to assist the grantees in the planning and implementation of the projects.

Adi Nugroho, the foundation’s chief manager for the SGP in Indonesia, said Penabulu Foundation ensures that the livelihoods of communities around the Way Kambas National Park and Gunung Leuser National Park, who are on the frontline of the parks’ conservation programmes, are improved.

“We are focusing on the management of non-timber agroforestry enterprises, community-based ecotourism, and other activities encouraging the

protection of forest areas and their ecosystems,” Nugroho said.

He said the grantees have so far contributed to the conservation of key species in the two national parks, such as the Sumatran rhinos and elephants through wildlife monitoring and research carried out by local tertiary institutions.

The ACB and the KfW started implementing the SGP in 2014 to contribute to biodiversity protection and management of natural resources in the ASEAN region while improving the livelihoods of local communities within and around AHPs.

The programme has selected 10 AHPs in Indonesia, Myanmar, and Viet Nam in its first and second phases, supporting a range of activities, such as general park management, ecotourism, habitat and species management, policy development, law enforcement, wildlife research and monitoring, community development, and community outreach and conservation awareness.

“The SGP empowers members of the communities to take part in the transformative change that the ACB and the rest of the ASEAN Member States hope to fulfill,” Lim said.



## Is nature conservation, a drain or a net contributor to global economy? Experts weigh in



Carving out 30 per cent of the Earth's surface for protection can be the wisest economic decision that the world will ever make as the nature sector drives the global economy, experts said.

The High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, with the National Geographic Society's Campaign for Nature and the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB), recently organised a webinar titled Making the case for protecting at least 30% of the planet by 2030: the biodiversity, climate, and economics of 30by30, with officials and representatives of the ASEAN Member States in attendance.

Among the webinar's panelists were Costa Rica Minister of Environment and Energy Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, National Geographic Society Explorer in Residence Dr. Enric Sala, Campaign for Nature Director Brian O'Donnell, Professor Zakri Abdul Hamid, founding chair of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services and co-chair of the Secretariat of Malaysia's Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council, and ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim.

O'Donnell in his presentation gave a preview of the groundbreaking global report, which lays out the economic costs and benefits of protecting 30 per cent of the planet by 2030. The report on the comprehensive study led by Anthony Waldron of Oxford University and 100 other experts, was published on 8 July 2020.

The zero draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, which was released in January 2020, calls for the protection of 30 per cent of the Earth's surface in 10 years, or touted as "30by30".

"Most people think that protected areas are going to be a drain on the global economy. But this report showed that the nature sector is, in fact, a net contributor, not a drain", O'Donnell said.

The tourism sector, which includes nature-based tourism, is one of the drivers of global economic growth, outweighing the impacts of other sectors, such as agriculture, timber, or fisheries.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was growing at 4 to 6 per cent annually, while agriculture

and timber industries have been growing by less than 1 per cent and the fisheries sector posting negative growth, O'Donnell explained.

Apart from these economic benefits, "30by30" also provides nonmonetary benefits, such as climate change mitigation, flood protection, clean water, and soil conservation.

O'Donnell said according to the global report, which ran different scenarios of biodiversity conservation for terrestrial and marine areas, the financial and economic benefits of protecting 30 per cent of the planet exceed its costs "by a factor of 5 to 1." This means that for every dollar cost of nature conservation, the economic benefit is equivalent to five USD.

To meet the proposed target of protection, USD 140 billion globally every year should be set aside.

### Small fraction of global GDP

Minister Rodriguez pointed out that while the figures sounded like a huge sum of money, the amount is a mere 0.16 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the

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combined gross national income of all the countries in the world.

"There is no excuse for us not to mobilise resources to be able to achieve our goal in the next 10 years", said Rodriguez, who has been selected as the next CEO and Chair of the Global Environment Facility.

The governments of Costa Rica and France are leading the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, a grouping of nations championing for the proposed "30by30" global target.

Rodriguez spoke about how Costa Rica doubled the size of its forest cover and at the same time tripled its economic growth in 30 years.

"I come from a country that has systematically invested in policy development, institutional solutions that balance nature conservation, human wellbeing, and economic development", he said, emphasizing the "short window of opportunity to address the biodiversity collapse".

Rodriguez underlined the correlation between establishing ecotourism protected areas and efforts to restore degraded landscapes, and the growth of the country's economy and income per capita.

In Costa Rica's case, 2.5 million tourists visit the country every year and spend around 3.5 billion USD in total, according to Rodriguez.

### Effective management

Sala, meanwhile, stressed the importance of effectively managing protected areas, saying only five per cent of the world's terrestrial protected areas and one per cent of the marine protected areas are considered to be effectively managed.

"When protected areas have higher budget and number of personnel, and active and effective management, they not only restore biodiversity effectively, they provide benefits including jobs for local people through tourism, fisheries; they bring in more economic revenues", Sala said.

In her opening remarks, Lim said the online discussion on the science and rationale behind the proposed target will help the ASEAN region determine its own contributions to the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and define its priority actions to ensure the agreed targets are met.

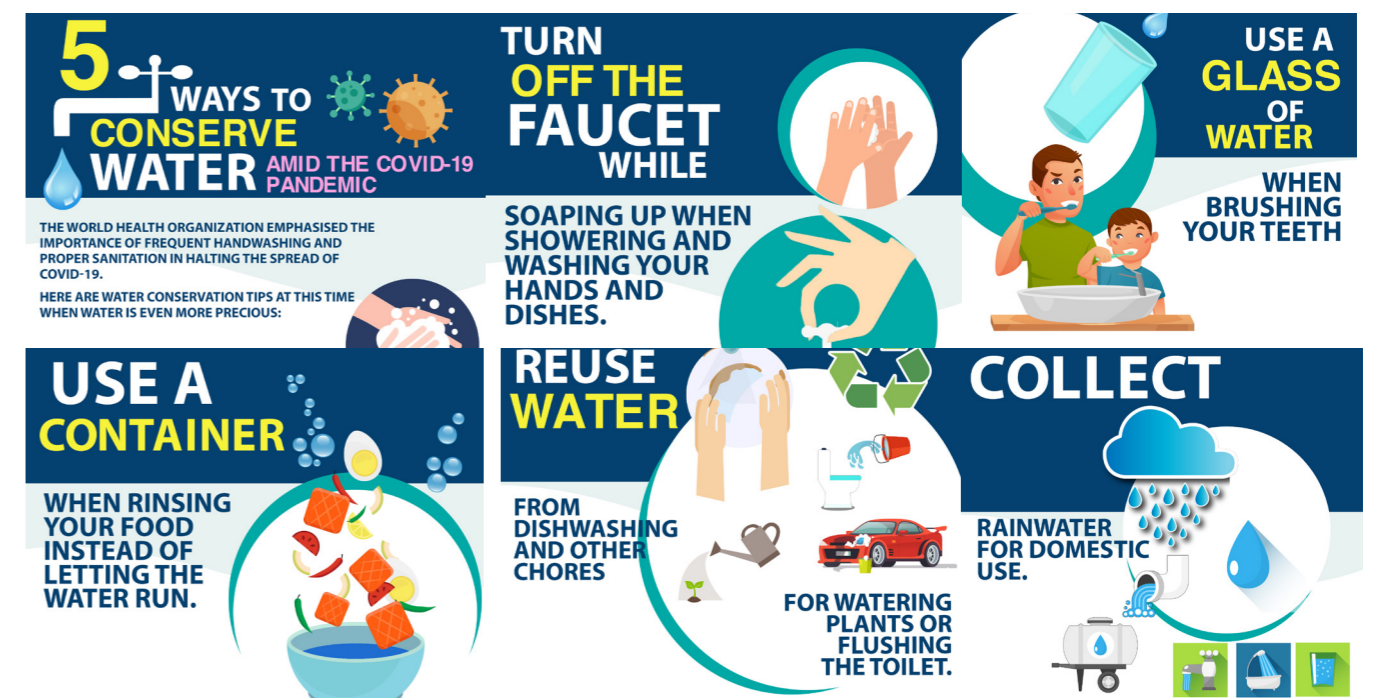
Lim stressed that setting aside protected areas still remains as one of the most effective ways to tackle biodiversity decline.

"Although we are crafting the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, we are not reinventing the wheel. The ASEAN Member States, all of which are parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, have shown considerable commitment to achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, particularly Target 11, which calls for the protection of at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and 10 per cent of marine areas by 2020," Lim said.

Professor Zakri, on the other hand, noted some of the challenges of biodiversity conservation in the ASEAN region, such as poaching, lack of conservation staff, the need for coordinated efforts in transboundary protected areas, and funding for conservation programmes.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework will be adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the CBD in its 15th meeting, which was originally scheduled to take place in October this year, in Kunming, China.

The 15th meeting is tentatively expected to take place during the second quarter of 2021, according to the announcement of the CBD Secretariat.





## Malaysia, Thailand team up in transboundary protected area management



Royal Belum State Park in Perak, Malaysia is one of the proposed protected areas in the transboundary collaboration between Malaysia and Thailand.

Protected area authorities in Malaysia and Thailand are working together to conserve a rainforest landscape of almost 260,000 hectares straddling the national border between the two ASEAN Member States (AMS).

Both share the common interest of improving the management of the cross-border forest area, which covers Royal Belum State Park in Perak, Malaysia, and Hala Bala Wildlife Sanctuary, Bang Lang National Park, and Halasah Non-Hunting Area in Southern Thailand.

The transboundary collaboration between Malaysia and Thailand will enhance the conservation of iconic species like tigers, hornbills, elephants, gaurs, tapirs, and gibbons, which depend on forest habitats on both sides of the border for their long-term survival. As poachers, illegal loggers, and forest product collectors move back and forth across the border, the joint action will also make law enforcement more effective.

“We share the same forest, we share the same wildlife, we share the same trees, and we share the same poachers,” Mohd Shah Redza Hussein, director of the Perak State Parks Corporation in Malaysia, said emphatically. “We need to protect our forests and wildlife together, for our children and their children, for the future.”

In a recent technical meeting held at Royal Belum State Park, the two AMS finalised the contents of a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and a joint action plan; and also established a joint technical working group. The MOU, which will guide the framework for collaboration between Malaysia and Thailand, is planned to be signed by the Perak State Parks Corporation in Malaysia and the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) Protected Area Regional Office 6 (Pattani Branch) in Thailand.

The parties are determined to push through with the collaboration

and are hopeful on the outcome. Chongklai Worapongsathorn, deputy director general of Thailand’s DNP, expressed his full support and said he looks forward to “Thailand and Malaysia making history together.”

Protected area management authorities from Thailand and Malaysia, government representatives, and experts on protected area management and wildlife attended the meeting. The event was jointly organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and the Perak State Parks Corporation, and supported by the EU through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN (BCAMP) project.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim lauded Malaysia and Thailand’s move and underscored their potential for enhanced conservation. “Neighbouring protected areas usually have common issues and concerns,” she said. “When their management

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## Experts optimistic about protecting 30 per cent of global ocean by 2030 as new target



The ASEAN region, home to a third of the world’s coastal and marine habitats plays a significant role in achieving the 30by30 ambition. Photo by John Rey Cuyos

Given the challenges of marine conservation, is the proposed global target of protecting at least 30 per cent of the global ocean by 2030 feasible?

Yes, was the general consensus among panelists during the Protecting the Oceans: UN Convention on Biological Diversity’s (CBD) Critical Role, an online discussion held on 21 May 2020, jointly organised by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and The Pew Charitable Trusts.

At the virtual meeting, marine conservation experts, policymakers, representatives of governments and civil society organisations, and researchers discussed the proposal of the UN CBD’s zero draft of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to raise the target for marine protected areas (MPA) to at least 30 per cent of the global ocean by 2030, dubbed as the “30by30 ambition.”

“As of 2018, the ASEAN Member States (AMS) have collectively established protection for 3.54 per cent of coastal and marine areas within their respective territorial jurisdiction,” ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim said in her opening remarks.

As parties to the CBD, the AMS have committed to achieving 20 global biodiversity targets. These include Aichi Target 11, which calls for the conservation of “at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well-connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.”

The current global MPA coverage is between 5.3-7.45 per cent, depending on the degree of implementation and active management in these MPAs. Although the 10 per cent target has not yet been reached, Target 11 has been one of the most successful of the 20 Aichi targets, galvanising global action on marine conservation. According to Dr. Lance Morgan, President of the Marine Conservation

Institute in California “while MPA progress is accelerating, it isn’t accelerating quickly enough for this 30 per cent target and we really need to redouble our efforts.”

“We need to raise the MPAs to the government’s agenda, mainstream the issue, and integrate them into medium- to long-term development plans,” said Rili Djohani, Executive Director of the Coral Triangle Center, underscoring the need to enhance capacity of the governments, and provide them with tools and training to support the expansion of MPAs. She also shared that in Indonesia, the close engagement with the national government and other sectors resulted in a significant growth of MPAs over the past decade.

“Targets are important, but beyond the numbers, we should focus on how to make the MPAs effective,” said Ms. Djohani. “We should look into how to measure the effectiveness of the MPAs and assess not only

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their ecological, but socio-economic impacts as well.”

“The ASEAN area is such an important maritime region and you know best of all that our ocean economies are dependent on our ocean health,” said RT Hon Lord Zac Goldsmith, Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, UK. He also shared information about the Global Ocean Alliance and the support from the UK government to promote the 30by30 campaign.

Experts expressed optimism that despite various challenges, the 30 per cent minimum global target for MPAs is achievable by 2030.

Rosie Carpenter of the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs noted that Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs) can also be important contributors to the 30 by 30 target in addition to MPAs. She explained that, as 30 by 30 is a global target, it can be met without each country or region necessarily reaching 30 per cent in their own waters, and can include areas in the high seas.

Reflecting on the potential new Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) high

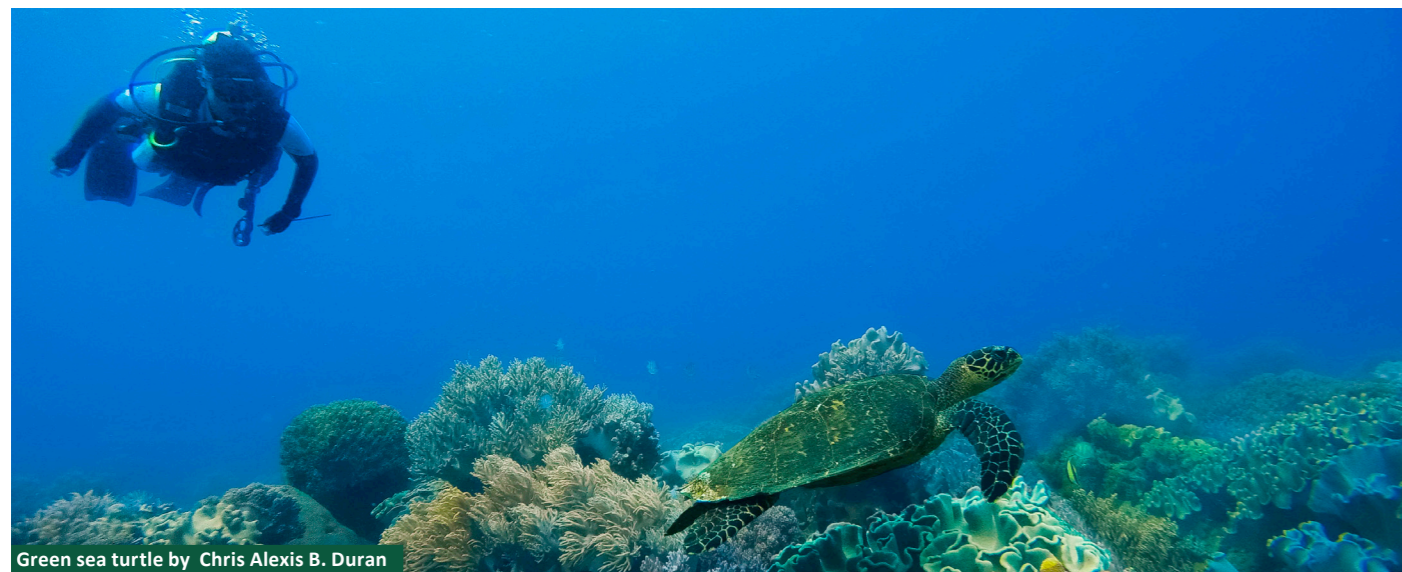
seas treaty, Nichola Clark, a principal associate of the Pew Charitable Trusts said, “One of the most exciting and promising things about [the treaty] is that if successful, it put provide a legal mechanism by which marine protected areas can be established on the high seas.” She further explained that protected area coverage in the high seas via BBNJ will greatly contribute to achieving the proposed 30by30 target.

A greater resource mobilisation package; raising awareness on the benefits of MPAs; high seas MPAs; and establishment of smaller MPAs managed by coastal communities, local governments and civil societies are among the identified measures to help governments realise the 30by30 ambition.

Lim said the ACB assists the AMS in making strides to increase the capacities of MPA management, through the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHPs) Programme, under which nine out of 49 designated AHPs are marine parks. The ACB also supports establishment of OECMs and collaborates with the key biodiversity areas community to identify areas of international importance in terms of biodiversity conservation.

“Science has a big part in our efforts to effectively manage our marine biodiversity and to help us further understand the situation in our region, including the socio-economic impacts of MPAs. This webinar has served as a platform for more science-based discussions for ASEAN’s inputs into the post-2020 global oceans targets and to take stock of our current efforts at the regional level”, Lim said.

A video from the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Leaders (AYBL) highlighting the role of the youth in ocean conservation was launched during online event. The AYBL is part of the ASEAN Youth Biodiversity Programme which is supported by the EU through the *Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN* (BCAMP) Project. The webinar, which is the first of a planned series, is expected to help inform the region’s preparation for the 24th Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, tentatively scheduled for October of 2020. Masha Kalinina, from The Pew Charitable Trusts, moderated the virtual meeting.



Green sea turtle by Chris Alexis B. Duran



The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity is headquartered in Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines

One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognising the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

On 20 May 2020, the ACB and the ASEAN Secretariat led an online discussion with officials of the ASEAN and experts from different parts of Asia as resource persons on the interlinkages of biodiversity and health and how biodiversity considerations can be integrated into the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other nature-based solutions to avoid pandemics in the future. Representatives from concerned ASEAN sectoral bodies participated in the webinar.

Lim cited some of the existing ASEAN initiatives and mechanisms that ensure and promote the effective

management of protected areas in the region and thus, also safeguarding wildlife habitats and helping address poaching and illegal wildlife trade to keep zoonotic diseases at bay. One such initiative is the ASEAN Heritage Parks (AHP) Programme, a flagship programme of the ASEAN, which recognises protected areas of regional importance.

The ACB recently conducted an online survey for the managers of ASEAN Heritage Parks and other protected areas in the ASEAN region in May 2020 to better assess the impacts of the COVID-19 on protected areas and their communities in the Region.

The results of which will inform the ACB’s future actions on enhancing the role of AHPs in disease prevention, and feed into the development of the regional action plan for the AHP Programme.

Similarly, the ACB, in an ongoing collaboration with NatureServe, is developing the ASEAN Biodiversity Dashboard, an interactive user-friendly platform that will visualise the progress of the ASEAN Member States in meeting the biodiversity conservation targets. The dashboard can help in raising awareness of and support for evidence-based policy-making in biodiversity-related issues, including the occurrence of zoonotic diseases, Lim explained.

“The ongoing public health crisis presents a unique opportunity to scale up efforts in integrating nature and biodiversity into the medium- and long-term plans for pandemic prevention and maintaining public health,” Lim said.

Malaysia, Thailand team up in transboundary protected... continued from page 12



Representatives from Malaysia and Thailand participated at the transboundary collaboration meeting from 18 to 20 February this year.

and staff exchange knowledge and best practices, and work together

on future initiatives, conservation outcomes will be multiplied.” Lim also added that collaboration between the two countries will ensure ecological connectivity between the different protected areas across boundaries. The bigger the area of interconnected forests or ecosystems is, the larger the populations of wildlife that can be supported. This will enhance the prospects of long-term conservation of key species and the sustainable

benefits for communities who depend on the ecosystem services these wildlife resources provide. The Malaysia-Thailand proposed transboundary protected area, when formally established, can also be an example of joint management of transboundary protected areas, which according to Lim, can further optimise conservation efforts in the ASEAN region.





Leaders of the ASEAN convened through teleconference on 26 June 2020 for the 36th ASEAN Summit. Photo by ASEAN/ASEAN Secretariat

## ACB lauds ASEAN’s nature considerations in COVID-19 response

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) welcomes the call of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte during the 36th ASEAN Summit to intensify the regional response against the COVID-19 pandemic and enable the ACB to help curb wildlife trafficking in the region.

President Duterte said that as the current pandemic may not be the last, the Region has to strengthen its capacity to address future infectious disease outbreaks.

“We can do this by promoting research and capacity-building on health technology development. We must enable the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity to contribute in combatting wildlife trafficking to prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases,” President Duterte said in his intervention at the virtual summit chaired by Viet Nam on 26 June 2020. In the Chair’s Statement of the 36th ASEAN summit, on the other hand, Viet Nam reaffirmed the importance of advancing cooperation on environmental protection and conservation with greater efforts to address cross-cutting issues for sustainable development, such

as climate change, marine debris, biodiversity conservation, and transboundary haze pollution.

ACB Executive Director Theresa Mundita Lim expressed her support to the pronouncement of President Duterte and the thrust of Viet Nam’s chairmanship for a cross-sectoral approach in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The ACB is more than ready to embark on this challenge and serve the ASEAN better, most especially in fulfilling its mandate of facilitating cooperation among the ASEAN Member States to conserve the region’s rich but highly threatened biodiversity. We appreciate the ASEAN leaders’ efforts to take up medium- to long-term measures in order to address the emergence of zoonotic diseases,” Lim said. She noted the ASEAN leaders’ unity and commitment to environmental protection and climate action, as demonstrated in previous ASEAN summits.

With the grave health-related risks posed by the increasing humans and animal interactions, the ACB is

planning to support the development or roll-out of applicable tools for wildlife disease surveillance relating to early detection of zoonotic disease outbreaks in the Region, Lim said.

“Monitoring and surveillance of species previously implicated as carriers of diseases, such as bats and pangolins, can greatly facilitate timely action and prevent the emergence of outbreaks and pandemics. We likewise need to work with existing organisations to coordinate efforts and help link ongoing activities in Southeast Asia that can give us a better understanding of the nature of zoonotic diseases that could occur in the region, as well as propose measures on building immunity or developing cures against newly discovered pathogens,” Lim said.

The ACB has been carrying out initiatives linking health and biodiversity and facilitating regional discussions on the development of One Health approaches.

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