

Going green going global to save the earth from calamity

Ever since the establishment of the UN Conference on Environment Declaration (UNCED) in Stockholm on June 16, 1972, which was reconfirmed by the Rio de Janeiro "Earth Summit" in June 1992, almost all operations – from the manufacture of wrapping paper to automobile parts – have had to be adjusted to environmental-protection requirements.

People, particularly those from developed countries, are generally more environmentally conscious. This is because they are more aware of the effects of greenhouse gases, local environmental problems, the destruction of the ozone layer, environmentally preferred products (EPPs), climate change due to the emission of CO₂ and so forth.

In the 1980s, substantial changes occurred in developed countries, resulting from the rising interest in the environmental attributes of products. In this context, the so-called greening of markets represents new opportunities for developing countries.

This assumption is based on the fact that these countries are important producers of nature-based products, including agricultural products, which often claim to be inherently more environmentally friendly than synthetics.

Environmentally motivated purchases have been on the rise in developed countries since that time, among individual consumers and corporate, institutional and government buyers.

A major factor of market expansion for EPPs is green consumerism.

In Germany, for instance, the proportion of customers who would rather buy an EPP rose from 57 percent in 1981 to 71 percent in 1991.

The sale of electric cars has been rising quite significantly in the US this year. We can see electric taxis moving around in New York City nowadays.

In the automotive industry, for example, manufacturers have been producing vehicles using gas, electric power, biofuels and other environmentally friendly fuels.

The Orbital Engine Corporation has developed a fuel saving and emission reducing technology for two-stroke engines.

In 1997, part of US\$100 million program called Project LEAP (low emission, advanced propulsion) on a new engine system was started at plants in Australia and Michigan.

The LEAP-2 outboard engine produced by the company differs from conventional outboard engines in that it utilizes electronic control of the combustion chamber.

This allows precise control of the combustion process, leading to significant reductions in emissions and fuel usage, a report says.

A number of manufacturers have been producing environmentally friendly engines for their cars, such as Honda's Earth Dreams Technology engine, Ford's Eco-Boost engine and Volkswagen's Blue Emotion.

Chevrolet, with the ecologic 101 engine beginning with 2012's Chevy Sonic car, is using landfill gas — a renewable source from waste that is less reliant on fossil fuels.

The production of automotive parts such as bumpers, light covers, dashboards, hoods, seat covers, even part of chassis are made from recycled materials.

Furthermore, the use of liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and compressed natural gas (CNG), being clean energies, have constantly developed as alternative fuels for motor vehicles by non-oil and gas producing countries like Singapore, Thailand, Japan and New Zealand, since the 1990s.

Future Olympic Games may provide a lucrative source of business for companies engaged in environmental ventures.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has decided to make environmental protection compulsory for all of its undertakings.

In 2000, Sydney, as a host of the Olympic Games, was setting the pace in the greening of the games, turning Olympic Park into a symbol of Australia's commitment to ecologically sustainable development.

The buses for visitors were powered by the city's garbage, solar power was used for street lighting, water heating and air conditioning operated in the athletes' village and media centre, bath and kitchen water was treated on site for re-use in gardens and for washing vehicles, and solar-electric vehicles was used to shuttle competitors to and from the events. Natural gas was used for taxis while food for athletes was prepared by using low-energy techniques.

The upcoming 2012 London Olympic Games pledged to stage the greenest games in history, with a focus on emissions reduction, reducing and mitigating the carbon footprint, the use of wind power, and providing Gold Standard certification.

At the Asia Pacific Travel and Ecotourism Association (PATA) Adventure Travel and Ecotourism Conference in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, in 1997, Indonesia agreed that it remains a niche market.

A keynote speaker at the conference said: "Ecotourism is a movement that is having profound effects on the future of the environment and of the travel. The danger is not that we are not leaving enough wildernesses alone for privileged explorers to sample for themselves. The real danger is that the wilderness will be developed by other so-called non-sustainable industries, such as logging, agriculture, petroleum and other forms of mining, which will be irrevocably destroy whatever they touch."

To meet this threat, members of the industries concerned are addressing the problem of ensuring that ecotourism can become a valid economic alternative for developers and industry operators, and for those who live in the places we visit.

In conclusion, the 200+ participants from 34 countries who participated in the conference expressed a desire to keep adventure and eco-tour prices high, to create selective participation, to maintain the niche market and to attract quality tourists with a higher awareness of, and concern for, protecting the environment.

In Indonesia, the greening projects have been quite advanced. The policy of eco-labelling has been imposed on industries that produce consumer products, including electronics, medicines, food and drink. They are also urged to use bio-fuels and natural-based sources in the production process.

State-owned oil company Pertamina recently initiated a program of so-called “change Tweets into Trees”. This movement is aimed at “Saving 100 Trees of Pertamina”. Any “netizen” who has Twitter account is asked to send any information on environment concerns to kartinisobatbumi.com. The total number of trees accumulated will then be planted by Pertamina. Would you like to join them?

If environmental protection is not properly put into effect sooner rather than later, the world will be decaying bit by bit. So the world is now actively engaged in “greening activities”. Otherwise we will be “killed” by ourselves. Keep in mind the 3R motto: Reduce – Reuse – Recycle, to save our beloved world.

The writer is a lecturer at the School of Economics, Atma Jaya University, Jakarta, and was bilateral cooperation head at the Mining and Energy Ministry until 2000.