

General News

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RI wants money to preserve forests as part of climate change deal

JAKARTA (AP): Indonesia and other developing nations will demand money from rich countries to preserve their forests as part of any new deal to replace the Kyoto Protocol, Indonesia's environment minister said Wednesday.

Rachmat Witoelar told *The Associated Press* it was unfair that heavily forested countries such as Indonesia, Brazil and Costa Rica do not get rewarded for avoiding deforestation as part of efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions under the existing deal, which ends in 2012.

"Our view is that we can combat climate change by maintaining the health of our forests and for that we need funding," said Rachmat, who is chairing a major meeting on the Indonesian island of Bali in December where formal talks on a new post-Kyoto pact are slated to begin.

"This is a matter of justice."

Indonesia has the third most forest cover of any tropical country, but between 2000 and 2005 lost around 1.8 million hectares (4.5 million acres) of forest due to logging, agriculture and forest fires, according to figures by environmental group Greenpeace.

It currently is third highest emitter of carbon dioxide worldwide.

Rachmat declined to disclose how much Indonesia would request for not cutting down its forest, saying revealing the sums would compromise the country's bargaining position in the run-up to the Bali talks.

"We have around 50 to 60 million hectares of forests, just put a price tag on that!" he said.

Marco Kanninen, from the Indonesia-based Center for International Forestry Research, said the idea of rewarding countries for preserving their forests was gaining international support given that deforestation now accounted for 20 percent of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions.

"This is quite a cheap way of achieving some climate benefits," he said. "We are not constructing any expensive technological solutions, we are just preserving something that is there." (**)