

Forum: Stop treating green spaces as land banks



Plantation District Tengah Forest Town. PHOTO: HDB

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In Singapore, the fate of green spaces has always been decided by their economic value rather than their environmental benefits.

Economic development has triumphed over conservation here ever since the early years of Singapore's history.

Even with the apparent diminishing of natural green spaces, deforestation is still happening to make way for economic progress.

With the recent launch of Tengah Forest Town, 700ha of secondary forest is to be cleared for urban infrastructure like housing and transport, despite the potentially huge negative environmental impact.

The Government's approach to establishing a compromise between environmental conservation and economic development is to plant more trees in urbanised areas and to "rebrand" deforested areas to make them look "green".

Some of these examples include the aforementioned Tengah Forest Town and Eco-Link@BKE.

These approaches may look good on paper, however, it is not sufficient to replace natural vegetation with man-made ones.

These natural green areas are important habitats for Singapore's natural flora and fauna.

Even though there have been efforts to strike a balance between conservation and economic growth, most of the time, the latter is given more weight.

The Government should see the value in keeping natural green spaces.

We have to find ways to coexist with the remaining precious greenery that we have.

I am not suggesting that we take economic growth out of the picture, but rather place more emphasis on conservation.

Our approach towards environmental conservation needs to change. We need to protect the precious natural green spaces we have and not just view them as land banks to be tapped for development whenever we like in the name of economic growth.

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