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By: Lorenz S. Marasigan

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DOJ charged with oral defamation for maligning police, military**](#)

By: Joel R. San Juan

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By: Selva Ramachandran

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By: Rosa Rahimi

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FINANCIAL TIMES

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By: Kenza Bryan

A landmark climate finance framework endorsed by world leaders as a way to fund the green transition in poorer countries is struggling to raise capital, a report has said, resulting in polluting coal plants staying open.

GMA

[SC grants writs of amparo, habeas data to activists Tamano, Castro](#)

By: Joahna Lei Casilao

Jhed Tamano and Jonila Castro, two environmental activists who claimed they were kidnapped by state forces, were granted a temporary protection order as well as writs of amparo and habeas data by the Supreme Court.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Groups urge PH to restore mangroves in abandoned fishponds](#)

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

In the face of climate change's escalating damage, Oceana, an international organization, and a coalition of scientists and civic groups are urging the government to breathe new life into abandoned fishponds by restoring them to thriving mangrove ecosystems.

[High court grants protection to 2 green activists](#)

By: Jane Bautista

The Supreme Court has granted a petition by two environmental activists for protection against state authorities allegedly responsible for their abduction last year and persons and government entities that covered up the action and threatened further violations of their rights and freedoms.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Canada earmarks P14.5-M aid for flood-hit Mindanao](#)

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

The Canadian government is donating CAD350,000 or approximately PHP14.5 million in humanitarian aid to support the victims of recent floods and landslides that hit several areas in Mindanao.

Sen. Go reiterates 'urgent' need for disaster resilience agency

By: Che Palicte

With Mindanao and the rest of the country being battered by disasters, Senator Christopher Lawrence Go on Thursday reiterated the "urgent" need for the establishment of the Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) agency.

Profits over planet and people? Green, indigenous groups oppose charter change

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Amending the Constitution to loosen restrictions on foreign investments could heighten the risk of environmental degradation and pose a greater threat to local communities, especially indigenous peoples, groups have warned.

POLITIKO

SC Grants Writs Of Amparo, Habeas Data In Favor Of 2 Activists

The Supreme Court (SC) announced on Thursday (Feb. 15) that it has granted writs of amparo and habeas data in favor of environmental activists Jonila Castro and Jhed Tamano.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PTV

Art gallery exhibit ng Climate Change Commission na may temang Sustain Art from Scrap to Masterpiece, Building a Greener Future, opisyal nang binuksan

Naka-display sa Art Gallery Hall ng Manila Hotel ang mga obra ni Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz na gawa sa scrap metal.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

Globe maintains CDP climate change score

By: Lorenz S. Marasigan

Globe Telecom Inc. on Thursday said it maintained a “B” score in CDP—formerly known as the Carbon Disclosure Project—for the third consecutive year.

Globe Chief Sustainability and Corporate Communication Officer Yoly Crisanto said the consistent “B” score signifies its “robust environmental practices” and places it in the CDP Management band, a distinction earned by surpassing a threshold percentage of available awareness points.

She added that the recognition reflects Globe’s comprehensive assessment of environmental issues and that Globe understands how these concerns meld with business operations.

“We understand the critical role we play in mitigating climate change and are dedicated to operationalizing our climate action in ways that are both impactful and sustainable. This recognition reaffirms our resolve to continue advancing our sustainability agenda, driving positive change within our industry and beyond.”

The CDP, a globally recognized not-for-profit charity, operates a disclosure system to manage and assess environmental impacts, widely acknowledged as the gold standard in environmental reporting.

Crisanto said Globe has operationalized its climate action programs through several strategies, including the transition of 27 sites to renewable energy.

She noted that Globe is also exploring alternative energy solutions such as solar hybrid gensets and onsite solar panels, particularly for high-energy utilization sites.

The company has deployed over 9,000 green network solutions, incorporating cleaner fuel technologies, energy-efficient cooling systems, and battery solutions that support the shift towards renewable energy. Intelligent monitoring systems optimize energy usage and maintenance operations, enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of Globe’s network infrastructure.

Globe operates under a “Supplier Code of Ethics,” a sustainability criteria for supplier assessment ensure alignment with Globe’s sustainability standards.

“Also, the Sustainability Academy for the Supply Chain empowers Globe’s suppliers with essential Environment, Social, and Governance principles and practices, ensuring these values are embedded in their business strategies,” said Crisanto.

[SC issues writ of amparo and habeas data in favor of environmental advocates DOJ charged with oral defamation for maligning police, military](#)

By: Joel R. San Juan

The Supreme Court has issued writs of amparo and habeas data in favor of environmental advocates Jonila F. Castro and Jhed Reiyana C. Tamano who were earlier charged by the Department of Justice with grave oral defamation for embarrassing the police and the military during a press conference last September 2023.

In a 17-page decision penned by Associate Justice Ramon Paul Hernando, the Court en banc also granted the plea of Castro and Tamano for a temporary protection order (TPO) against the respondents namely Lieutenant Colonel Ronnel B. Dela Cruz and members of the 70th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army; Police Captain Carlito Buco and members of the Philippine National Police, Bataan; National Security Council Assistant Director General Jonathan Malaya; National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), and all others acting under their direction, instructions, and orders.

In granting their petition, the Court found that petitioners were able to prove “by substantial evidence” the allegations in their petition meriting the protection of their freedoms through the writs of amparo and habeas data.

A writ of amparo is a remedy available to any person whose right to life, liberty, and security has been violated or is threatened with violation by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity.

A writ of habeas data “is a legal remedy available to any person whose right to privacy in life, liberty or security is violated or threatened by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity engaged in the gathering, collecting or storing of data or information.”

The Court found that elements of enforced disappearance were present in the case, specifically that petitioners were forcibly taken on September 2, 2023, as evidenced by the affidavit by a member of Karapatan Gitnang Luzon as to the accounts of witnesses to the abduction in plain sight; petitioners’ attestation that they left their footwear during their struggle against their captors; and photos of petitioners’ footwear left at the scene of the abduction.

As to the writ of habeas data, the Court found Malaya’s statements during a television interview announcing to “expose all information they have on the petitioners and that they may be charged with perjury” “is already an open and express threat to petitioners’

right to life, liberty, and security publicly verbalized by government official admittedly engaged in the gathering, collecting, and storing of data and information against petitioners.”

“After a judicious review of the records, there was an established violation or threat to the life, liberty, or security of petitioners by respondents. The writs are called to be issued for reasons so obvious on the mere face of the petition,” the SC said.

On the other hand, A TPO was issued by the Court motu proprio prohibiting them from entering within a radius of one kilometer from the persons, places of residence, school, work, or present locations, of petitioners, as well as those of their immediate families.

In issuing the writs of amparo and habeas corpus, the SC directed the respondents to comply with the rules on return under Section 9 of the Rule on the Writ of Amparo and Section 10 of the Rule on the Writ of Habeas Data.

The SC also ordered the Court of Appeals (CA) to conduct a summary hearing and decide on the petition and the other relief being sought by petitioners.

Based on the Court’s records of the case, petitioners are volunteers for the Alyansa para sa Pagtatanggol sa Kabuhayan, Paninirahan, at Kalikasan ng Manila Bay (AKAP KA Manila Bay), a network of various environmental advocate groups that aim to advance the concerns of marginalized stakeholders along the Manila Bay Area.

Petitioners were sent by AKAP KA Manila Bay to Orion, Bataan, to coordinate with communities affected by the Manila Bay reclamation projects.

Petitioners claim that while walking along Manrique Street, Orion, Bataan on September 2, 2023, at around 7:00 P.M., they were grabbed and pulled by men alighting from a sports utility vehicle.

Inside the vehicle, the unidentified men confiscated and went through petitioners’ bags and belongings to check for guns, turned off their cellular phones, tied petitioners’ hands behind their backs, blindfolded them tightly, and wrapped their heads with duct tape to completely seal their vision.

From September 2 to 11, petitioners were brought to two locations where they were interrogated, with psychological torment and threats, forcing them to “surrender as rebels.”

Eventually, they were made to handwrite their affidavits with a narrative prepared for them.

They were brought to the 70th Infantry Battalion Camp in Bulacan on September 12, where their personal details were taken, and they were given a medical check-up.

They were later introduced to the mayor of Angat, Bulacan and to Dela Cruz, who were to serve as witnesses to their affidavits.

They were also introduced to a member of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency and some more persons.

On September 13, 2023, petitioners were introduced to Atty. Joefer Baggay from the Public Attorney's Office, to whom petitioners' handwritten affidavits were handed, to be arranged and printed on his computer.

Petitioners, with Tamano's parents, were made to swear to the printed affidavits before Baggay.

On September 14, 2023, petitioners met with three representatives from the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to confirm their "voluntary surrender" and the veracity of their sworn affidavits.

On September 19, 2023, petitioners proceeded with the press conference organized by the NTF-ELCAC, but abandoned the plans made for them and instead revealed in public that they were abducted.

They denied the version of respondents that they "surrendered" and stated categorically that they were forcibly taken by the military and made to sign their affidavits.

Petitioners were then turned over to the CHR's custody before they were released to their families and colleagues.

Last month, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has recommended the filing of grave oral defamation against Castro and Tamano for intentionally embarrassing and putting the military in a bad light during the said press conference.

The DOJ, however, did not give merit to the claim of the complainant that the respondents are liable for perjury.

Likewise, the DOJ rejected claim of Castro and Tamano that they were abducted by the military, noting that they failed to identify their abductors but merely insinuated that they are military men.

The DOJ said the respondents “employed machinations and took advantage of the benevolence of the 70th Infantry Battalion and the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) to embarrass and put them in bad light.”

The resolution further stated adding that there was “deep-rooted motive on the part of Castro and Tamano “to select a public forum that would express their sentiment.”

BUSINESS WORLD

[\[Opinion\] New directions for human development in the Philippines](#)

By: Selva Ramachandran

Human development revolves around elevating peoples' capabilities, broadening the scope of their choices, upholding their freedom, and advocating for their human rights. This developmental concept transcends mere economic growth, placing people's lives at its core.

In the Philippines, as in the whole Asia-Pacific region, human development has been a tale of progress, disparity, and disruption.

Today, we are faced with a convergence of escalating global tensions, deteriorating climate conditions, regional debt distress, and persisting inequality. This convergence is exerting considerable strain on development gains achieved in the past decades. This not only jeopardizes the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also creates a potential for unprecedented setbacks in human development, economic stability, as well as climate resilience, unless prompt and extensive corrective measures are implemented.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 2024 Regional Human Development Report (HDR) in the Philippines is launched at a time of great need. The 2024 Regional HDR delivers a compelling narrative: the Asia-Pacific region — known for its stellar economic performance and growth in the past decades — is home to half of the world's multidimensionally deprived, totaling 500 million people. Across the region, approximately 800 million women are not part of the workforce, while roughly 1.3 billion people rely exclusively on informality for their livelihoods.

Aptly entitled "Making our Future – New Directions for Human Development in the Asia-Pacific," the 2024 Regional HDR paints a qualified picture of long-term progress, but also persistent disparity and widespread disruption, foreseeing a turbulent development landscape and urgently calling for new directions to boost human development.

Over the last three decades, the Human Development Index (HDI) of the Asia-Pacific region has surged by 19 points — the greatest leap in the world. Rapid economic growth, an increase in adult literacy rates, and increased life expectancy rates have significantly contributed to major improvements in human development in the region. For the Philippines, the HDI score has increased from 0.598 in 1990 to 0.699 in 2021, growing over those three decades alongside the Asia-Pacific region's trajectory. It declined slightly under the impact of COVID-19, keeping it within the group of countries

with medium levels of human development. The Philippines ranks 7th in the ASEAN, 16th in the Asia-Pacific region, and 116th in the world.

Beyond the progress in the region, widespread disparities and persistent structural exclusion remain. Worsened by the pandemic and the rising cost of living amid global crises, persistent challenges of poverty and inequality, gender biases, and a large informal sector make it a challenge for the region to keep on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

To bring about the needed change, the report calls for three new directions in human development in the region: to put people at the heart of development, to recalibrate growth strategies to generate more jobs while keeping within planetary bounds, and to focus relentlessly on the politics of reform and the science of delivery to turn ideas into practice.

In the Philippines, these new directions can foster four major transformations, including: a larger and faster green economic and energy transition; strengthened resilience of families and communities from shocks and disasters; accelerated innovation and digital evolution as tools to accelerating and sustaining growth; and a more future-ready governance that can help to accelerate human development.

The Philippines can gain from decisively addressing the issues which prevent ordinary Filipinos from improving their lives through quality jobs and more secure livelihoods. As the Philippines is expecting to join the ranks of upper middle-income countries soon, a key challenge will be to tackle the lingering issues of precarity and inequality head-on. Doubling down on investments in education, health, and other human capital development needs will not only address a feeling of job insecurity among certain Filipinos, but also to further improve social mobility.

This new path also means strengthening the resilience of families and communities from shocks and disasters, which are becoming more frequent. Countries like the Philippines — which bear the brunt of climate change — face an existential crisis that can only be solved through urgent collective action at a global scale.

The Philippine government has wagered on innovation as a primary tool to accelerating and sustaining growth. However, to ensure that this growth benefits all Filipinos requires innovative approaches that are by their nature inclusive and driven by the grassroots. Innovation will need to contribute to transforming communities in “last mile” areas into effective levers of local development.

Finally, future-ready governance can help to accelerate change and human development in the Philippines. Delivering change requires making public institutions,

especially at the local level, more fit for the needs, the pace of change, and the capacity to deliver prosperity to communities at risk of being left behind.

CNN

[The Amazon has survived changes in the climate for 65 million years. Now it's heading for collapse, a study says](#)

By: Rosa Rahimi

The Amazon rainforest is on course to reach a crucial tipping point as soon as 2050, with devastating consequences for the region and the world's ability to tackle climate change, according to a study published Wednesday.

The Amazon has proven resilient to natural changes in the climate for 65 million years, but deforestation and the human-caused climate crisis have brought new levels of stress and could cause a large-scale collapse of the forest system within the next three decades, the study said.

The researchers predict that 10% to 47% of the Amazon will be exposed to stresses that could push the ecosystem to its tipping point, a critical threshold that once crossed will lead to a downward spiral of impacts.

The study, led by researchers at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil and published in the journal *Nature*, takes a holistic approach to estimating how soon the Amazon could reach that threshold.

The study's authors looked at the impact of warming temperatures, extreme droughts, deforestation and fires to draw their conclusions.

"We already knew about all these factors at play, but once we connected the pieces of this complex puzzle, the image was alarming," Bernardo Flores, lead author of the study, told CNN. "Our findings revealed how the Amazon forest system could enter a phase of self-reinforced collapse sooner than previously thought."

Previous studies had not predicted a collapse of this scale could happen in the 21st century.

A collapse of the Amazon, the world's vastest tropical rainforest, would weaken its ability to absorb planet-warming carbon pollution from the atmosphere, which would exacerbate global warming. Once known as the lungs of the planet, the Amazon has already become a net emitter of carbon emissions, meaning it releases more carbon into the atmosphere now than it absorbs. Forest fires and logging are the main reasons for that change.

But the forest is still a huge, crucial carbon sink. It holds the equivalent of 15 to 20 years of the entire world's global carbon stores.

A loss of 'flying rivers'

The study also shows how a deteriorating Amazon could impact forests in other parts of South America.

The Amazon is crucial for water supply across the region, the study said, contributing as much as half of its rainfall through what the authors call "flying rivers" – rain that originates over the Amazon and spreads to other parts of the region. That means other forests and ecosystems that rely on rain are able to thrive. Those places include the Pantanal wetlands — the world's largest tropical wetlands that cross Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay — and the La Plata River basin, a biodiverse and crucial water system that drains one-fifth of South American land.

The Amazon provides moisture beyond the region, too.

"The Amazon forest is a major pump of moisture into the atmosphere, contributing to circulation processes that transfer moisture across the globe," Flores said. "When the forest is reduced, this weakens this process, causing the global climate to find a new equilibrium."

The authors of the study noted that water stress was a common factor in the disturbances to the Amazon. Water stress occurs when there is not enough water to meet human or ecological needs.

Global warming is intensifying the effects of water stress by causing the Amazonian climate to become drier and warmer. This increases water stress on trees, particularly those with low drought resistance in northwest parts of the forest, which "could suffer massive mortality if suddenly exposed to severe water stress," according to the study.

Reaching its tipping point could also make parts of the Amazon uninhabitable due to unbearable heat and a lack of resources for indigenous peoples and local communities, the study shows.

"A war of attrition on the Amazon rainforest is being waged through human-caused climate change and deforestation, which is sending this irreplaceable jewel of the planet to the brink," said Richard Allan, a professor in Climate Science at the University of Reading, who was not involved in the study. "These critical effects ... are compounded by continued destruction of forest for agriculture, settlement, and industry."

The study recommends ending deforestation, promoting forest restoration, and expanding protected areas and Indigenous territories. Flores also stressed the need for global cooperation to cut greenhouse gas emissions and emphasized the importance of Amazonian countries cooperating to promote forest restoration.

FINANCIAL TIMES

Flagship climate finance scheme struggles to raise capital

By: Kenza Bryan

A landmark climate finance framework endorsed by world leaders as a way to fund the green transition in poorer countries is struggling to raise capital, a report has said, resulting in polluting coal plants staying open.

The US, EU and UK were among the donors that promised to help mobilise vast sums for the green transition under the auspices of so-called Just Energy Transition Partnerships. Pledges have included a \$20bn package for Indonesia to pay for the coal-dependent country's shift to renewable energy, with similar projects in South Africa, Vietnam and Senegal.

Leaders including US President Joe Biden, former UK prime minister Boris Johnson and European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen pitched the model at the Glasgow climate conference in 2021 as a mechanism to plug the financing gap hampering the green transition in developing countries.

But according to a report from a charitable foundation based on conversations with donors and other stakeholders, frustration has grown that the deals have not yet raised the capital promised. This has forced lower-income countries to keep coal and other plants open.

The Rockefeller Foundation warned in a report on Thursday that the JETP model "may not be scalable" in its current form, blaming a lack of consistent support from multilateral development banks and the premature announcement of deals by political leaders before funding had been secured.

The current model has been "long on promise but short on progress", said Rajiv Shah, its president.

The foundation is helping to pilot what it sees as an improved JETP-style funding pitch for up to \$165bn until 2050 to accelerate renewable power and grid capacity in the Philippines, led by the country's own institutions.

A new approach to "delivering real new money on the table" was needed, said Ashvin Dayal, who leads Rockefeller's power and climate work. "The minute the numbers get contorted in ways that don't actually stack up based on the original announcements, that's when you lose political will."

One problem has been the perception that richer countries were pushing for coal power plant closures in South Africa and Indonesia before consensus had been reached in those countries on clear job and wealth-creation plans. “It has to be centred around a vision of energy abundance,” said Dayal.

Joko Widodo, Indonesia’s outgoing president, told the FT late last year that there was “tremendous” concern over the funds not materialising.

The Asian Development Bank, which is providing technical support for the Indonesian financing package, highlighted that “the planning, design, preparation and construction of large energy infrastructure is a big undertaking”. It added that the bank was committed to helping members achieve a “just, affordable and reliable energy transition”.

Leo Roberts, head of fossil fuel transitions at the climate focused think-tank E3G, said the “negligible” sums raised showed that world leaders had set “unrealistic” expectations about JETPs.

“Without a shiny celebrity cheque there wouldn’t have been enough momentum to get them off the ground in the first place,” he said, adding: “There were billions of dollars promised to countries for certain things and that money doesn’t seem to be being moved from the Global North to the Global South.”

The Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, a group of financial institutions which has tried to mobilise private sector capital in Indonesia and Vietnam, said “the work completed [on JETPS] has helped deepen all stakeholders’ understanding of the challenge ahead and how to expedite change with further collaboration, necessary policy adjustments and public-private finance solutions”.

The US state department said rethinking a “decades-old development model” and “reforming markets to catalyse investment” would take time. “The test of success is not whether specific projects have gotten off the ground in a short period of time but whether we see sustained political will and aggressive, continued effort to turn the envisioned reforms into reality,” it added.

GMA

[SC grants writs of amparo, habeas data to activists Tamano, Castro](#)

By: Joahna Lei Casilao

Jhed Tamano and Jonila Castro, two environmental activists who claimed they were kidnapped by state forces, were granted a temporary protection order as well as writs of amparo and habeas data by the Supreme Court.

The SC en banc granted the petition filed by Tamano and Castro against Lieutenant Colonel Ronnel Dela Cruz and members of the 70th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army; Police Captain Carlito Buco and members of the Philippine National Police Bataan; National Security Council Assistant Director General Jonathan Malaya, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC), and others under them.

“In granting their petition, the Court found that petitioners were able to prove by substantial evidence the allegations in their petition meriting the protection of their freedoms through the writs of amparo and habeas data,” the Court said in a statement on Thursday.

The SC directed the respondents to comply with the rules under Section 9 of the Rule on the Writ of Amparo and Section 10 of the Rule on the Writ of Habeas Data.

The respondents were also prohibited from entering within a radius of one kilometer from the persons, places of residence, school, work, or present locations of the petitioners, as well as those of their immediate families.

The SC directed the Court of Appeals to conduct a summary hearing on the petition and other reliefs sought by Tamano and Castro within five days of receiving the decision.

Both Malaya and the NTF-ELCAC declined to comment on the development, saying they had not yet read the decision.

"We shall make a comment at the appropriate time once we have consulted with our lawyers on our future legal steps," the NTF-ELCAC said.

The writ of amparo is available to persons whose right to life, liberty, and security are being threatened or violated by public officials or employees or private individuals or entities.

It covers extralegal killings and enforced disappearances, or threats.

Meanwhile, the writ of habeas data is a remedy available to a person whose right to privacy, liberty or security is violated or threatened with violation by a public official or a private individual who gathers, collects, or stores information on the aggrieved party, their family, home, and correspondence.

In September 2023, the NTF-ELCAC claimed that Tamano and Castro surrendered to the 701B in Doña Remedios Trinidad, Bulacan, in the same month.

It presented the two at a press conference, ostensibly to debunk reports of their abduction. However, the activists said they were abducted by the military.

According to the Court, it found that the elements of enforced disappearance were present, specifically that Tamano and Castro were taken as evidenced by the affidavit of a member of Karapatan Gitnang Luzon on accounts of witnesses to the abduction; petitioners' remarks that they left their footwear during their struggle; and photos of the footwear left at the scene of the abduction.

The high court said that it was also established that Rosielie, Castro's mother, tried to locate her and tried to coordinate with Justin Gutierrez, who introduced himself as a member of the military.

It said Rosielie also tried to coordinate with the Orion Municipal Police Station but received no response from both agencies.

Meanwhile, the SC said that Malaya's statements in a television interview that they would expose all the information they have on Tamano and Castro and that the two would be charged were "open and express threats" to their right to life, liberty, and security.

"There was an established violation or threat to the life, liberty, or security of petitioners by respondents. The writs are called to be issued for reasons so obvious on the mere face of the petition," the Court said.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) recently recommended that Tamano and Castro be separately charged for grave oral defamation under Article 385 of the Revised Penal Code (RPC). The initial complaint against them was for perjury.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Groups urge PH to restore mangroves in abandoned fishponds

By: Cristina Eloisa Baclig

In the face of climate change's escalating damage, Oceana, an international organization, and a coalition of scientists and civic groups are urging the government to breathe new life into abandoned fishponds by restoring them to thriving mangrove ecosystems.

In a letter sent last December to Agriculture Secretary Francis Tiu Laurel and Environment Secretary Antonia Yulo Loyzaga, more than 10 global and local conservation groups highlighted the National Climate Change Action Plan's (NCCAP) emphasis on critical measures for boosting the resilience of communities and ecosystems against climate change.

"The protection and rehabilitation of critical ecosystems, such as mangroves, beach forests, and coastal wetlands, and the restoration of their ecological services contribute to our international commitments..." the letter read.

The framework targets the effective conservation and management of at least 30 percent of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas, and oceans.

The groups noted that the country has about 450,000 hectares of lush mangrove forests recorded in 1918.

Unfortunately, over half of these have disappeared, mainly because of their conversion to fishponds and other coastal projects, making the Philippines the second in rank in Southeast Asia for mangrove depletion.

'Inconsistencies in policies'

In the letter, the signatories stressed several laws and policies aimed at protecting mangroves and the repurposing of fishponds to their original status as mangroves.

The Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, also known as Presidential Decree No. 705, was strengthened by Republic Act 7161, which made cutting down mangroves illegal. In 1998, the Philippine Fisheries Code was introduced, specifying in Sections 46 and 49 that all abandoned fishponds must be reverted to their original mangrove state.

"The law is clear that the grant of Fishpond Lease Agreements come with mandatory conditions, such as automatic reversion back to mangroves once the fishponds have

been abandoned, or remain undeveloped or underutilized,” said lawyer Gloria Estenzo Ramos, Oceana vice president.

Ramos pointed to inconsistencies in the implementation of laws and the policies by the DENR and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources of the Department of Agriculture on abandoned fishponds.

The conservation groups tagged BFAR Fisheries Administrative Order (AO) 115, issued on March 28, 2011, as among the rules that are inconsistent with mangrove protection. The AO provides a framework for abandoned fishponds to be used as productive assets run by community-based management systems through fishers’ groups and cooperatives.

They added that in 2012, BFAR issued Fisheries Administrative Order 197-1 that sets out a process to cancel FLAs and promoted stewardship contracts for aquaculture.

The groups’ letter said there was a move to amend FAO 197-1 in the form of FAO 198-2.

“From the initial copy that we got, we found it to be all about fishponds or other aquaculture and nothing in the provisions are friendly to, or supportive of, mangroves,” said Jurgenne Primavera, chief mangrove scientific adviser of Zoological Society of London and a signatory to the letter.

“The attempt to include mangrove-friendly aquaculture failed in defining the metrics to ensure the survival and growth of these intertidal trees,” Primavera said.

Primavera added that the groups were also asking the BFAR to delete Section 2 on leases and permits “because there are no more available areas for fishpond development.”

According to 2003 data from BFAR, there are around 994 hectares of licensed and unlicensed fishponds that had been reverted to DENR jurisdiction. BFAR records identified 55 hectares of unlicensed fishponds.

Pimavera said there was a need to inventory all abandoned fishponds, FLAs and other aquaculture ponds and establish guidelines to identify abandoned fishponds.

She said BFAR and DENR should reassess the grant of FLAs to financial institutions and study the effects of turning abandoned ponds into salt farms, among other uses.

A ‘win-win nature-based solution’

The return of abandoned fishponds to use as mangrove would help achieve the ideal 4:1 ratio of mangroves to fishpond, Primavera said.

Citing a 2008 study, she said the ratio was crucial in environmental sustainability and optimizing the economic benefits of both mangroves and aquaculture ponds.

Currently, the ratio in the Philippines stands at 1:1, with mangroves and ponds each covering around 250,000 hectares.

The mangroves scientific expert also stressed that carbon sequestration is important as a Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation (CCAM) measure. A 2016 study revealed that mangroves restored in previously abandoned fishponds are more efficient at capturing carbon, with rates of approximately 650 metric tons per hectare, compared to 350 metric tons per hectare in natural mangroves.

“Why doesn’t DA-BFAR encourage the existing fishponds towards achieving the 4:1 mangrove to pond ratio?” Primavera said.

“The agency should craft and implement guidelines, in close coordination with the DENR, to treat the mangrove portion as a biological asset for blue carbon credit trading,” Primavera said.

“This will attract fishpond owners and operators to conserve, restore and rehabilitate mangroves in their fishpond areas and engage in the lucrative blue carbon market,” she continued.

The organizations emphasized the need for a mutually beneficial, nature-based approach that serves the interests of all current and future stakeholders.

High court grants protection to 2 green activists

By: Jane Bautista

The Supreme Court has granted a petition by two environmental activists for protection against state authorities allegedly responsible for their abduction last year and persons and government entities that covered up the action and threatened further violations of their rights and freedoms.

In an 18-page decision published on Thursday, the Supreme Court en banc granted the petition for the writs of amparo and habeas data, and a temporary protection order (TPO) filed by Jhed Tamano and Jonila Castro against Lt. Col. Ronnel dela Cruz and members of the 70th Infantry Battalion (IB) of the Philippine Army, which he commands.

Also named respondents were National Security Council Assistant Director General Jonathan Malaya, the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict, Police Captain Carlito Buco and members of the Philippine National Police, Bataan, and all others acting under the “direction, instructions and orders” of the government agencies mentioned.

The court ruled that the two activists’ requests for a production order are to be heard by the Court of Appeals.

A production order compels the respondents to release all documents related to the case. 1-km radius

The TPO prohibits the respondents from coming within a 1-kilometer radius of the petitioners and their families, their homes, schools and workplaces.

The high tribunal found “more than mere substantial evidence” in their allegations that merited the protection of their freedoms through the writs of amparo and habeas data.

On Sept. 2, 2023, the activists went missing, prompting the Commission on Human Rights to investigate. They were last seen in Orion, Bataan. On Sept. 15, 2023, authorities said the two, whom they claimed were members of the New People’s Army (NPA), were “safe and sound” after they “surrendered” to the 70th IB in Bulacan.

But when they were presented to the media on Sept. 19, 2023, the two women who are in their early 20s, openly accused the military of kidnapping them and forcing them to say in their sworn statements that they voluntarily surrendered.

The Supreme Court cited the statements of Malaya in an ABS-CBN interview where he announced that they would “expose all information they” have on the two and that they may be charged with perjury in relation to their affidavits while in Army custody.

The high court said Malaya’s pronouncements were “already an open and express threat to petitioners’ right to life, liberty and security publicly verbalized by government official admittedly engaged in the gathering, collecting, and storing of data and information against petitioners.”

This satisfied the purpose and coverage of the writ of amparo, which is a remedy to any person whose right to life, liberty and security are violated or threatened with violation by an unlawful act “or omission” by state authorities or private individuals or entities.

Remedy

The writ covers extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances or threats and the elements of enforced disappearance were present in the case.

The writ of habeas data is a remedy for an aggrieved person whose right to privacy in life, liberty or security is violated or threatened by government authorities or private persons and entities engaged in gathering, collecting or storing of information on such person, his family, home and correspondence.

The court cited accounts of witnesses to the abduction, the two women’s statements that they left their footwear during their struggle against their abductors, and the photos of these at the scene.

The Supreme Court said that Castro’s mother, Rosielie, tried hard to find her missing daughter and coordinated with a certain Justin Gutierrez, who allegedly introduced himself as a member of the military, and with the officers of the Orion Municipal Police Station, but received no positive response from them.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Canada earmarks P14.5-M aid for flood-hit Mindanao](#)

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

The Canadian government is donating CAD350,000 or approximately PHP14.5 million in humanitarian aid to support the victims of recent floods and landslides that hit several areas in Mindanao.

The Canadian Embassy in Manila said the aid would be sourced from the Canadian Humanitarian Assistance Fund.

“Canada is allocating C\$350,000 (approx. PHP 14.5 million) to support the response to recent flooding in Mindanao through its Canadian Humanitarian Assistance Fund with Humanitarian Coalition,” it said in an announcement dated Feb. 14.

“This will help provide emergency water, sanitation, hygiene services as well as the distribution of multipurpose cash and non-food items to affected communities,” it added.

The northeast monsoon or "amihan" and the trough of a low pressure area has recently triggered massive floods and landslides in parts of Mindanao, affecting more than 455,000 families and killing 22 persons.

Based on the Feb. 15 data of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, at least 11 were injured while two missing persons have so far been reported.

Sen. Go reiterates 'urgent' need for disaster resilience agency

By: Che Palicte

With Mindanao and the rest of the country being battered by disasters, Senator Christopher Lawrence Go on Thursday reiterated the "urgent" need for the establishment of the Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR) agency.

In an interview here, Go said the DDR would assist the government in disaster preparation, coordination, and immediate assistance, particularly in times of calamity where loss of life, injury, and property damage are anticipated.

Go was in this city as a special guest at the International Childhood Cancer Day and World Health Organization Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer's 5th Philippine anniversary held at the SMX Convention Center.

"There should be a Cabinet secretary that will focus on the area hit by a calamity. He or she will coordinate with the Department of Social Welfare and Development for the repositioning of goods and the Armed Forces of the Philippines for evacuation," he said at the sidelines of the event.

Go noted that the country remains highly vulnerable to multiple hazards being geographically located within the typhoon belt and the "Ring of Fire" where earthquakes, flooding, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, droughts, and landslides pose serious risks.

"Since we are in the Pacific Ring of Fire, disasters keep coming back. One factor also is climate change," Go added.

With proper coordination between the LGUs and agencies, the lawmaker said aid, rehabilitation, and other disaster interventions will be delivered faster.

He vowed to push for the proposed bill that remains pending at the committee level, deeming it necessary for the country.

[Profits over planet and people? Green, indigenous groups oppose charter change](#)

By: Gaea Katreena Cabico

Amending the Constitution to loosen restrictions on foreign investments could heighten the risk of environmental degradation and pose a greater threat to local communities, especially indigenous peoples, groups have warned.

The government is pushing to propose amendments to the economic provisions of the 1987 Constitution, with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. saying the charter “was not written for a globalized world.”

The Constitution limits the stake of foreign nationals and corporations in businesses at 40%.

“We have to adjust so that we can increase the economic activity in the Philippines, we can attract more foreign investors,” he said in an interview with GMA News in January.

The Philippines, however, has passed several laws that opened up the economy to the world without altering the charter such as the Public Services Act and Foreign Investment Act.

The push for amendments has sparked fears among environmental and indigenous groups that relaxing restrictions on foreign investments will hurt the environment and local communities.

“It renders the whole nation vulnerable to the destructive exploitation by foreign firms, whose primary motivation is profit over environmental protection and people’s welfare,” said Jaybee Garganera, national coordinator of Alyansa Tigil Mina (ATM).

ATM is one of the members of a new coalition campaigning against the push for charter change.

Extraction of natural resources

ATM pointed out that amending the Constitution could lead to an expansion of the extractive industries, particularly mining.

“The likely result would be flattened mountains, razed forests, choked rivers, ghost towns, and exacerbated impacts of climate change,” Garganera said, adding this would also lead to the loss of people’s livelihoods, health problems, and human rights violations.

A paper published by the Legal Rights and Natural Resources Center (LRC) in 2023 revealed that 60% of mineral deposits and mining projects in the Philippines are located in ancestral lands.

Mining is also linked to killings of environmental defenders, with rights organization Global Witness reporting that one-third of land defenders killed in the Philippines since 2012 opposed mineral extraction.

Republic Act 7942, or the Philippine Mining Act of 1995, already allows foreign-owned companies to engage in mining activities under a financial and technical assistance agreement with the Philippine government.

“RA 7942 legitimizes the plunder of our national patrimony,” Garganera said. “This situation will only worsen if ChaCha prospers and transnational corporations are allowed to act with impunity.”

Jon Bonifacio, national coordinator of Kalikasan People’s Network for the Environment, noted that multinational corporations “have abused the available space given to them under our current legal framework.”

He cited the social and environmental damage caused by mining operations of Australian-Canadian firm OceanaGold and the dredging and reclamation activities conducted by Dutch company Boskalis in Manila Bay.

“In the context of ongoing climate change and biodiversity loss, what we need is more regulation and a more mindful approach with regards to our environment—the complete opposite of what’s in store for us with the proposed charter change,” Bonifacio told Philstar.com.

‘Exploitation, repression of IPs’

For KATRIBU Kalipunan ng Katutubong Mamamayan ng Pilipinas, lifting foreign ownership restrictions will further erode the control of indigenous peoples over their territories.

“Granting 100% foreign ownership of lands would exacerbate the dispossession of IP from their ancestral lands, adversely affecting their livelihoods, cultural heritage, and the environment,” KATRIBU national convenor Beverly Longid told Philstar.com.

Longid stressed that granting foreign ownership rights would “fully undermine” the right to free, prior, informed consent process (FPIC) required for any projects or activities on indigenous lands.

The lack of informed consent often leads to displacement and social fragmentation within indigenous communities, such as in the cases of Kaliwa-Kanan Laiban, Cabacanan, Jalaur, and Cordillera dams.

She added that foreign ownership will result in increased militarization of indigenous territories and human rights abuses, “perpetuating a cycle of suffering and injustice.”

“The proposed charter change would intensify the existing state of exploitation, repression, discrimination, and neglect experienced by indigenous peoples and the Bangsamoro,” Longid said.

POLITIKO

[SC Grants Writs Of Amparo, Habeas Data In Favor Of 2 Activists](#)

The Supreme Court (SC) announced on Thursday (Feb. 15) that it has granted writs of amparo and habeas data in favor of environmental activists Jonila Castro and Jhed Tamano.

“After a judicious review of the records, there was an established violation or threat to the life, liberty, or security of petitioners by respondents. The writs

are called to be issued for reasons so obvious on the mere face of the Petition,” reads the 18-page decision issued by the SC en banc and penned by Associate Justice Ramon Paul Hernando.

With this, the SC granted the petition of the two environmental activists for the issuance of the writs against the respondents, namely, Lt. Col. Ronnel Dela Cruz and members of the 70th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army; Police Capt. Carlito Buco and members of the Philippine National Police (PNP) in Bataan; National Security Council Assistant Director General Jonathan Malaya; National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC); and all others acting under their direction, instructions, and orders.

“Respondents and all the persons and entities acting and operating under their directions, instructions, and orders are DIRECTED to comply with the rules on return under Sec. 9 of the Rule on the Writ of Amparo and Sec. 10 of the Rule on the Writ of Habeas Data,” the SC instructed in its decision.

The SC explained a writ of amparo is “a remedy available to any person whose right to life, liberty and security is violated or threatened with violation by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity.”

While, the writ of habeas data is “a remedy available to any person whose right to privacy in life, liberty or security is violated or threatened by an unlawful act or omission of a public official or employee, or of a private individual or entity engaged in the gathering, collecting or storing of data or information regarding the person, family, home and correspondence of the aggrieved party.”

The tribunal also issued a temporary protection order (TPO) that that ordered the respondents and all persons and entities acting on their behalf “from entering within a radius of one (1) kilometer from the persons, places of residence, school, work, or present locations, of petitioners, as well as those of their immediate families.

On Sept. 19, 2023, the NTF-ELCAC held a press conference and presented Castro and Tamano as rebel returnees who surrendered to the 70th Infantry Battalion in Bulacan.

However, instead of affirming the NTF-ELCAC, the two young women, both volunteers for the Alyansa para sa Pagtatanggol sa Kabuhayan, Paninirahan, at Kalikasan ng Manila Bay (AKAP KA Manila Bay), declared during the press conference that they were abducted by the military.

The activists recounted that they were abducted by men aboard a sports utility vehicle (SUV) along Manrique St. in Orion, Bataan on the evening of September 2, 2023.

They recounted that their belongings were taken from them and were tied behind their backs and blindfolded with their heads wrapped in duct tape.

The young women narrated that from Sept. 2 to 11 that year they were brought to two locations where they were interrogated and subjected to psychological torment and threats with the aim of forcing them to surrender as rebels.

The activists said they were subsequently make handwritten affidavits with a narrative prepared for them.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

PTV

[Art gallery exhibit ng Climate Change Commission na may temang Sustain Art from Scrap to Masterpiece, Building a Greener Future, opisyal nang binuksan](#)

Naka-display sa Art Gallery Hall ng Manila Hotel ang mga obra ni Commissioner Albert Dela Cruz na gawa sa scrap metal.

Mapupunta naman sa iba't ibang foundation ng CCC ang kikitain ng metal artwork, katulad na lang ng orginasasyon para sa rehabilitasyon ng Pasig River.

Samantala layunin din ng nasabing exhibit na itaas ang kamalayan ng publiko sa kahalagahan ng pangangalaga sa kalikasan.

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