

Indonesian official sees similarities with PHL plight in protecting women in conflict

THE PHILIPPINES and Indonesia have similar struggles in ensuring that women in conflict zones are protected and have an adequate say in negotiating peace, an Indonesian official said.

"I think both Indonesia and the Philippines still have a long way to go" to ensure affirmative measures are in place, according to Andy Yentriyani, chairperson of Indonesia's National Commission on Violence against Women, said in a video call with *BusinessWorld* on Oct. 29.

She said in Indonesia, it is still difficult to win recognition for women's leadership.

"In various conflicts where the community has a very hierarchical structure, where women do not possess any decision-making authority, it is very important to have affirmative measures in place," Ms. Yentriyani said.

She noted some success stories where women made it to the negotiating table, citing Central Sulawesi, where female leadership resulted in a "more lasting peace" following episodes of inter-religious community violence.

She said that in Aceh, women have been involved actively in bringing communities together even under military rule.

"Their leadership currently also influences how the Aceh government is able to provide... protection for human rights and women's rights," she added.

Ermelita V. Valdeavilla, chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Women, said in a speech at the International Conference on Women, Peace, and Security in Pasay that the goal is gender parity in leadership.

She said such parity can be achieved "by adopting temporary quotas as provided in CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women); by accelerating women's capacity development for peacebuilding; and by making resources available to women peacebuilders."

The conference was organized in observance of the 25th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which called for increased women's participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, and the protection of women's rights in conflict zones. Ms. Valdeavilla said that in 2023, "only 26% of peace agreements mentioned the women's agenda."

If women are only marginally represented in the negotiation and decision-making, this invisibility will persist, Ms. Valdeavilla said. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**



Flexible power bill payments eyed for storm-hit consumers

THE Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) said it is looking into proposals to provide relief for consumers in storm-hit areas, including staggered-payment schemes for electricity bills.

The statement issued on Wednesday follows a Presidential directive to avoid disconnections in parts of the country hit by Severe Tropical Storm Kristine.

In a statement, the ERC said it is "currently developing measures that would allow for staggered payment options for electricity bills" to provide relief for storm survivors.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. ordered the ERC to enforce a moratorium on disconnections for the October-December period, according to a statement issued by the Presidential Communications Office on Tuesday.

Mr. Marcos specified measures like "flexible payment options to ease the financial



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burden on affected communities and support their recovery efforts."

Jesse Hermogenes T. Andres, ERC's officer-in-charge chairperson and chief executive officer, appealed to distribution utilities (DUs) to take similar measures.

"In consideration of the coming holiday season, DUs should observe a moratorium on the disconnection of electricity service of distressed consumers," the ERC said.

ARTA launches AI-powered electronic complaint system

THE Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) said it launched on Wednesday an electronic complaints management system (e-CMS) to allow direct filing of complaints online.

At the Ease of Doing Business Conference, ARTA Secretary Ernesto V. Perez said that the e-CMS will also make use of artificial intelligence (AI) in receiving and handling complaints.

"As you know, ARTA has a twin mandate: one is to enable and capacitate all government agencies to comply with the ease of doing business law, and the second is to investigate and file charges in case of violations of the law," Mr. Perez said. "The e-CMS facilitates filing, sorting, managing, drafting reso-

lutions, and tracking the status of public complaints," he said.

He said that as the launch of the e-CMS is expected to increase the number of complaints the agency will be receiving. As such, ARTA is seeking more staff to handle the increased volume.

"Our proposal (is) to further strengthen the mandate of ARTA because, as we will be launching this e-CMS, we anticipate that we will be deluged with complaints and we do not have enough lawyers to handle them," he said.

"We have a high turnover rate because our lawyers transfer to the private sector... So I hope that we are able to not only add lawyers but at least upgrade the

salary grade of our lawyers," he added.

At the conference, ARTA Deputy Director General for Legal Geneses R. Abot said ARTA has so far received 23,325 complaints since 2018.

"Out of those, 23,000, or 98.29%, were resolved or referred to different agencies... while the remaining 399 cases are still active," he said.

"There is a steady increase in the number of complaints. As of October, we received 5,473, and the year is not yet over. We are expecting again an increase in 2025, which is why it is paramount for us to develop an e-CMS," he added.

The e-CMS will also leverage AI capabilities, including

natural language processing (NLP) and ARTABLE predictive features. The system then will automatically sort and store complaints to ensure that no issue is missed.

Apart from automation, the system will also make use of AI to generate queries based on user intent, analyze sentiment to gauge urgency, recognize entities to provide contextual relevance, and predict possible outcomes.

"With the full implementation of this system, we will be able to receive complaints 24/7, so we expect a large number of complaints that we will receive, and I hope our legal department will be ready for it," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

International exhibit and fire square roadshow address disaster risk reduction at SM Mall of Asia

As the world comes together to observe the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction (IDDRR) 2024 in October, an increased awareness on disaster risk reduction becomes everyone's responsibility in the community. In Manila, the event was commemorated through the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) "Are You Ready?" Exhibition and Fire Square Roadshow. This brings together global leaders, government officials, United Nations (UN) representatives, and civil society organizations to underscore education as a driving force in safeguarding communities from natural and man-made disasters for a safer future.

A POWERFUL PLATFORM FOR CHANGE

The "Are You Ready?" art exhibition, a collaborative effort by one of Asia's leading integrated property developers SM Prime, together with its corporate social responsibility arm SM Cares, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the Philippine government, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, showcased thought-provoking artworks that highlighted the challenges and solutions related to disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific. The exhibition aimed



(L-R): Pasay City Chief-of-Staff Peter Pardo, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Director for East Asia and the Pacific June Kunugi, Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) Director Louie Puracan, SM Prime Holdings Chairman of the Executive Committee Hans Sy, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction His Excellency Kamal Kishore, Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Communications Manager Afrhill Rances



Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and SM Prime Holdings Chairman of the Executive Committee Hans Sy engage in a discussion about the art exhibition highlighting disaster preparedness.



to raise awareness and inspire action to build more resilient communities, aligning with the

theme of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction 2024.

EMPOWERING YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION

A panel discussion, moderated by UNDRR's Rosalind Cook, aimed to address key issues concerning DRR in schools. Panelists discussed the Comprehensive School Safety Framework 2022-2030 and the necessity of empowering the youth to contribute to DRR strategies. Participants emphasized the importance of knowledge and skills-building among students specifically on disaster preparedness.

INTERACTIVE FIRE SAFETY TRAINING

The Fire Square Roadshow, an initiative by the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), provided interactive training on fire safety and prevention. Attendees underwent workshops on

first aid, proper use of fire extinguishers, electrical safety and rappelling, among others. Live demonstrations on rappelling and emergency response showcased the BFP's capabilities in handling emergency situations while educational materials were also provided for children and families on fire safety and emergency preparedness.

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT FOR A SAFER FUTURE

The event demonstrated the power of collaboration in addressing disaster risks. By prioritizing education, empowering youth, and promoting awareness about disaster preparedness, the Asia-Pacific region can work towards

a future where communities are better equipped to mitigate the impacts of disasters and help shape a better future for all.



Future generations prepare for emergencies by learning survival techniques in a simulated disaster.



SM Supermalls President Steven Tan engages in a Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training.



National University (NU) President Dr. Renato Carlos Ermita, Jr. participates in a fire safety demonstration at the Fire Square Roadshow.



Panelists highlight how to empower youth to lead the way in emergency preparedness, emphasizing the key principles of the global agreement on disaster risk reduction.



The "Are You Ready?" art exhibition highlights the stories of the 2004 Indian tsunami survivors.



Students complete a questionnaire reflecting on the art exhibit.