

JUNE 2020 NEWS UPDATES

Maria Ressa and Reynold Santos Jr. vs Wilson Keng (Philippines)

On 15 June 2020, Rappler's Executive Editor and CEO Maria Ressa and former researcher-writer Reynaldo Santos Jr. were found guilty of violating Republic Act 10175 or the Cybercrime Prevention



Act specifically for cyber libel by the Manila Regional Trial Court Judge Rainelda Estacio-Montesa.

The content of the cyber libel case written by Santos was defaming Wilfredo Keng, a businessman, over a May 2012 article which revealed that the then-Chief Justice Renato Corona had a penchant of using luxurious vehicles of several personalities. In the same article, Keng was allegedly had been under surveillance by the National Security Council

for involvement in human trafficking and drug smuggling based on an intelligence report.

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), the 2012 article is not covered by the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012; the law was not enacted until September of that year or 4 months after the publication of the story. However, the DOJ said the 2012 article was "republished" in February 2014, for editing a typographical error: from "evaTion" to "evaSion. With this, it falls under the Cybercrime law. Citing a 1988 Supreme Court case, it said that under the "multiple publication rule," a single defamatory statement, if published several times, would lead to as many offenses as there are publications.

In 2017, five (5) years after the article was first posted and three (3) years after it was supposedly republished, Keng filed the cyber libel complaint.

The court has dispensed the penalty of six months to six years imprisonment, Ressa and Santos are allowed to remain free after earlier posting bail. In addition, Ressa and Santos were ordered to compensate businessman Wilfredo Keng P200, 000 in moral damages and P200, 000 in exemplary damages.

Ressa and Santos are the first journalists to be found guilty of cyber libel in the Philippines.

References:

Navallo, M. June 14, 2020. How correcting a typo got Maria into trouble: The cyberlibel case vs Rappler. Retrieved from <https://news.abs-cbn.com/spotlight/06/14/20/how-correcting-a-typo-got-maria-into-trouble-the-cyberlibel-case-vs-rappler>

Torres-Tupas, T. June 15, 2020. Rappler CEO Maria Ressa, writer found guilty of cyber libel. Retrieved from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1291681/rappler-ceo-maria-ressa-writer-guilty-of-cyberlibel>



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31st Meeting of the AICHR



Photo by ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights

On 9-10 June, AICHR had their 31st Meeting through a video conference, the agenda was to finalize the AICHR Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025, which will be submitted to the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) for approval. The AICHR also discussed the Priority Programmes and Activities of AICHR 2021 and agreed on the Annual Report of AICHR 2020 and the AICHR's Statement to the AMM.

AICHR's programs and activities in 2020 will now mainly focus on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic. These activities will cover thematic issues such as right to development, right to remedy, rights of children, human rights-based, gender sensitive, and child-friendly approach to handle trafficking in person and to prevent and counter extreme violence. Following the recommendation of AICHR's activity on Rights-Based Approach to Regional Management Strategy for an Effective Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), AICHR Representatives exchanged views on the proposal for the establishment of a task force to develop a regional framework for an effective EIA in the ASEAN Member States.

References:

June 11, 2020. Press Release 31st Meeting of the AICHR, 9-10 June 2020, Video Conference. Retrieved from <https://aichr.org/news/press-release-31st-meeting-of-the-aichr-9-10-june-2020-video-conference/>



JUNE 2020 NEWS UPDATES

ASEAN Update



On 4 June 2020, the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting adopted the Hanoi Plan of Action on Strengthening ASEAN Economic Cooperation and Supply Chain Connectivity in Response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan aims to boost the region's economy and supply chains amid the disruption caused by the pandemic.

As agreed by the ASEAN Members states the Hanoi Plan of Action will be implemented to counter the adverse impact of the pandemic by ensuring that the markets for essential goods remain open and economic cooperation among the region. In addition, the prospects of a post-pandemic economic recovery plan were discussed including the proposal by the ASEAN Business Advisory Council to establish a high-level special commission in dealing with the current crisis.

On 18 June 2020, ASEAN had their 15th Coordinating Conference on the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community (ASCC), this year the three ASEAN pillars and all sectoral bodies conducted a mid-term review of the ASCC Blueprint 2025 implementation, a review on the sectoral work plan 2016-2020 and are also developing the work plan for the next five-year period.

The body commended the joint efforts of the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Health and other sectoral bodies and to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and possible development of post-pandemic recovery plan.

On 26 June 2020, Viet Nam as the chair will host the 36th ASEAN Summit. The ASEAN Member states agreed to meet on an online platform due to unprecedented circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting's agenda will focus on moving towards a direction for building the ASEAN community and discussions on how to continue the region's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in addition to how ASEAN can enjoy a recovery as quickly as possible.

References:

June 6, 2020. ASEAN Economic Ministers adopt action plan to increase resilience amid pandemic. Retrieved from <https://asean.org/asean-economic-ministers-adopt-action-plan-increase-resilience-amid-pandemic/>

June 18, 2020. ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community convenes 15th coordinating conference. Retrieved from <https://asean.org/asean-socio-cultural-community-convenes-15th-coordinating-conference/>

June 23, 2020. Viet Nam prepares to launch 3th ASEAN Summit on June 26. Retrieved from <https://english.vov.vn/politics/vietnam-prepares-to-launch-36th-asean-summit-on-june-26-415273.vov>