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Sack Bambang and Hendarman

The poster said it all: Anggodo in the uniform of the National Police chief. Circulated through cell phones and cyberspace, and brandished in street protests, this was the new image of the otherwise respected police chief — that the entire police force could be bought so easily, no matter how much respect they reaped through the arrests and slaying of terrorists.

Any such respect vanished on Nov. 3, when the Constitutional Court aired the wiretapped conversations of businessman Anggodo Widjojo. He was heard wheeling and dealing with high-ranking police officers, prosecutors and other suspected “dealers” to get his brother off the Corruption Eradication Commission’s (KPK) hook. Figures in the billions were mentioned in the recordings, only confirming the chronic and pervasive public distrust in the ability of the law enforcers to deliver justice — except to the highest bidder.

The “gecko versus crocodile” movement was born, inspired by the chief detective identified in the recordings, Comr. Gen. Susno Duadji. Susno finally lost his job, together with 24 other officers, after being defended for weeks by National Police chief Gen. Bambang Hendarso Danuri.

“Do you think he’s a car?” joked the general in response to whether Susno was “retreating”. This was just a day before President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono was expected to announce his decision last Tuesday on the recommendations of his fact-finding team, tasked for two weeks to investigate the alleged conspiracy against the KPK.

Susno, we’re told, remains an officer in a “non-job” position.

Deputy Attorney General Abdul Hakim Ritonga, also identified in the recordings, had tendered his resignation; but only a day after Yudhoyono’s announcement did the attorney general say he would “propose” Ritonga’s dismissal to the President.

Who or what are these “very kind” leaders really protecting? Or would the dismissals of Susno and Ritonga reveal even wider, seeping rot within both institutions?

In his response to the recommendations from his fact-finding team, about the only order Yudhoyono gave was for the revamping, including “corrective” measures, of all law enforcement agencies. Given all the horrendous — but not surprising — findings of the team, we urge corrections from the top down.

National Police chief Bambang and Attorney General Hendarman Supandji must step down, to allow a clean break in cleaning up their institutions.

For both the police and state prosecutors went on about their business as usual in a flabbergasting manner even after Yudhoyono had announced his decision, however lame it sounded to most people. The Constitutional Court announced Wednesday that the KPK deputies had won their case — that the KPK law was wrong to rule that KPK leaders be terminated once they were declared defendants in a case, ignoring presumption of innocence.

A case for maintaining biological diversity

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JAKARTA

The glass of clean water you drink is probably purified by a wetland or the root system of an Indonesian forest. The medicine you take may also have come from nature’s warehouse of services and the trees around your house actually work to trap dust, dirt, and harmful gases from the air you breathe. This list goes on.

Our natural ecosystems perform fundamental life-support services and represent the biological diversity that is the fruit of billions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans.

In simple terms the value of biological diversity can be compared with financial markets. A diverse portfolio of species stocks, as with business stocks, provides a buffer against fluctuations in the environment (or market) that cause declines in individual stocks.

This stabilizing effect of a “bio-diverse” portfolio is likely to be especially important as environmental change accelerates with global warming and other human impacts.

It is therefore outrageous that this web of life, of which humans are an integral part, is being rapidly eroded by human action. Species created over billions of years are being destroyed at an alarming rate which is 1000 times higher than the natural rate shrinking nature’s basket of goods and services.

Indonesia is particularly endowed with a very high level of this biodiversity, spread over its 1.8 million square kilometer of land and of 5.8 million square kilometer of water area. The country is among the 17 mega-diverse countries of the world in terms of its rich biological diversity.

The country holds 12 percent of

mammals, 16 percent of reptiles and 17 percent of birds placing it in the top rank globally. This rich biodiversity is protected through a complex network of biosphere reserves, wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, ecotourism parks, forest parks and hunting parks spread over 28 million hectares.

Considering that in 1981 this protected network of life was limited to only 7 million hectares, the recent expansion is a wonderful achievement for the country.

Outside the protected landscape the Indonesian Ministry of Environment has also increased the number of floras and faunas being bred in captivity from 171 species in 2006 to 416 species in 2008.

Despite these major successes the country is not immune to the global trends in which human activities are creating the greatest wave of extinction of species since the natural disaster which wiped out the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

The past few hundred years, humans have increased species extinction rates by as much as 1,000 times the background rates that were typical over Earth’s history of 6 billion years.

The latest government data about deforestation rate, including degradation and fragmentation, states that deforestation rate in 2000-2005 stood at 1.08 million hectares and is expected to spread to 1.6 million hectares per year in future.

Worryingly for biodiversity, lowland forest, which is the most diverse area for biodiversity, is the most threatened forest due to conversion of land use, moving farm, irreversible forest management, development of infrastructure, mining, fires and various illegal activities.

This is worrying for the government as an estimated 40 million Indonesians living in rural areas depend on the biodiversity around forests for their sustenance.

For example, studies indicate that the total annual economic value of

some environmental services in Maros Karst Regions Pangkep (KKMP) touches Rp 2 trillion (about US\$220 million) per year.

Obviously, there is no substitute then to reverse this negative trend of biodiversity loss and the government is considering ambitious plans, such as increasing marine conservation area from 4.7 million ha to 20 million ha by 2020.

Such plans of course depend upon not only the Indonesian people but also on the attitude of the global community. The biggest bottleneck to biodiversity destruction globally is lack of appreciation of the value and importance of this natural resource.

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Private companies, landowners, fishermen, and farmers take most of the actions that affect biodiversity industry related to the above mentioned stakeholders can therefore play an important role by recognizing the extent to which they actually rely on natural resources and how their work affects ecosystems.

Governments have traditionally been considered solely responsible for managing the public services of ecosystems, but it is now clear that markets can also contribute to this task, often without spending public money.

One initial option is to take voluntary action, the importance of which cannot be underestimated in view of the current crisis in the financial and related industry. Including environmentally sustainable and socially ethical practice by setting shared standards is a recognized good practice.

Of course, self-regulation is a privilege, not a right so maintaining the public trust through proper monitoring and compliance mechanism is essential to keep the privilege of self-regulation.

Alternatively, companies may extend to a “life cycle” analysis of its raw material supply chains, employee lifestyle choices, and the biodiversity impacts of how customers use and dispose of their products. Benchmarks may be defined internally or relative to other leading firms in the same (or another) sector.

In the case of companies with a relatively large “footprint” on the land or seascape — such as energy, mining, agriculture, forestry or fisheries — conservation action may be linked explicitly to the environmental impacts of the companies’ operations.

Several interesting and innovative mechanisms are currently being tried, such as carbon offsets, standards and certification etc. to make industry biodiversity friendly in their operations.

The CBD supports promotion of such new ideas and practices and has taken two decisions in 2006 (Brazil) and 2009 (Germany) for actively engaging business in biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and sharing of benefits.

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