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Cimatu cites importance of biotechnology

Biotechnology sheds a gleaming light of hope that there are still interventions that can be done to resuscitate the economy and society.



Published 3 hours ago
on November 24, 2020 04:00 AM
By [Francis Wakefield](#)



Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Roy Cimatu underscored the importance of promoting biotechnology and its benefits to the public amid the devastating socioeconomic impacts of the ongoing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the recent typhoons to hit the country which destroyed infrastructure/agriculture and affected millions of Filipinos.

Cimatu made the remark as the DENR — through its Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) — lead this year's celebration of the 16th National Biotechnology Week (NBW) starting 23 to 27 November.

NBW has been annually celebrated every last week of November through Presidential Proclamation 1414 since 2004.

This year's NBW celebration has a theme: "Bioteknolohiya: Pagbangon at Pag-asa tungo sa Matatag na Komunidad, Kapaligiran at Ekonomiya" to adapt with the current events under the new normal.

Cimatu said biotechnology "sheds a gleaming light of hope that there are still interventions that can be done to resuscitate the economy and society."

He said with the Philippines confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic which is said to have originated from wildlife, they see intersectional nature of ecological issues affecting public health and safety and the global economy.



Cimatu cites importance of biotechnology

“With COVID-19 and typhoons “Quinta,” “Rolly,” “Siony,” “Tony” and “Ulysses,” happening in the same year, hopelessness seems abound. But through biotechnology, we want to show that there are still opportunities for growth and for refreshing changes in our contemporary world,” Cimatu said.

Cimatu said moreover, deforestation, illegal fishing activities, and all forms of levels of water, land and air pollution caused by human activities have brought a series of severe consequences affecting food security, and overall societal well-being, especially of the vulnerable communities in the Philippines.

He said this is where biotechnology steps in.

“At DENR, we have developed techniques for mass propagation of tree seedlings using biotechnology. We are also using Hi-Q VAM₁, in producing quality seedlings for the National Greening Program and other environmental rehabilitation initiatives,” Cimatu said.

“Biotechnology has also been a significant tool in monitoring environmentally pollution in the country,” he added.

Cimatu said globally recognized genetic innovations have also been developed by Filipino scientists and experts from local institutions and organizations, and these have the strong potential to boost sustainable development for the Philippines.

“However, biotechnology modernizations are occasionally met with doubts which we cannot simply disregard. This skepticism is being addressed through the Biotechnology Regulatory System called the National Committee on Biosafety of the Philippines or NCBP,” Cimatu said.



New environment bureau building inaugurated



MARKER. Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu recently unveils a marker during the inauguration of the new P39-million Environmental Management Bureau building in the City of San Fernando. (Contributed photo)

IAN OCAMPO FLORA

November 23, 2020

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO -- Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu led the inauguration of the new Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) building that houses the operation center for real-time air and water quality monitoring of the bureau in the region.

The new building is deemed essential in the continuous improvement of environmental services and enforcement of environmental laws, rules and regulations in Central Luzon.

The P39-million worth four-storey building, located in the regional government center in Pampanga, also houses the Bureau's environmental laboratory.

The environment czar urged the human resources of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the region to continuously monitor the compliance of industries to environmental laws and to intensify measures to rehabilitate Manila Bay areas in Bataan, Bulacan and Pampanga.

Paquito Moreno, executive director of the DENR regional office, lauded the efforts of the EMB Central Luzon for the innovations done in the building and for making its laboratory facilities functional, which elevate the department's programs towards clean air, clean water and proper waste management.

"The need to grow, maintain and sustain this building as an icon of environmentalism in Central Luzon remains a challenge, but with the well-founded culture of professionalism among the ranks of EMB, this structure shall hone frontliners in the protection of the environment," Moreno said.

The EMB implements policies and programs on environmental management, including mandates of the Philippine Environmental Impact Statement system, through the evaluation of application for the Environmental Compliance Certificates of projects.



'Dredging makatutulong para maiwasan ang pagbaha sa Cagayan Valley'

ABS-CBN News

Posted at Nov 23 2020 09:42 PM



Nalubog ang ilang lugar sa Cagayan Valley region dahil sa mga tubig na nanggaling sa mga karatig-lalawigan at pagpapakawala ng tubig sa Magat Dam. *Philippine Coast Guard via AP*

Para maiwasang maulit ang malawakang pagbaha sa Cagayan Valley, nakipagdayalogo ngayong Lunes si Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu sa mga lokal na opisyal ng rehiyon para pag-usapan ang mga hakbang na dapat gawin.

Isa sa mga panukala ang dredging o pagpapalalim ng mga bahagi ng Cagayan River na bumabaw na dahil sa mga naanod na lupa.

"If this can't completely reduce flooding, at least mabawasan," ani Cimatu.

Isinusulong din ang pagpapalawak ng makipot na bahagi ng Cagayan River mula Alcala hanggang Lal-lo.

Pabibilisin umano nito ang pagdaloy ng tubig-ulan palabas ng Cagayan River.

"As an analogy, kung iisipin natin ang daloy ng trapiko sa EDSA, mayroon kang anim na lane, sa harapan mo naging 2 lanes. Biglang babagal ang takbo ng trapiko. Ang tubig, ang pagkakaiba, tumataas," paliwanag ng geologist at marine scientist na si Fernando Siringan.

- [What causes severe flooding in Cagayan province?](#)

Sa isang pag-aaral, lumalabas na sa pagpapalawak ng Cagayan River Channel sa bahagi lang ng Alcala, nasa P250 milyon ang gagastusin.

"I don't know how our towns will progress if we experience massive flooding every year," ani Alcala Mayor Tin Antonio.

Ayon sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources, dapat ding palakasin ang reforestation o pagtatanim ng mga kagubatan.



'Dredging makatutulong para maiwasan ang pagbaha sa Cagayan Valley'

Iniutos ni Cimatú na ihinto ang ilegal na small-scale mining, at ang pagsuspende sa special tree cutting permit sa Sitio Bit-ang, Barangay Runruno sa bayan ng Quezon, Nueva Vizcaya, kung saan 4 ang namatay sa landslide noong kasagsagan ng Bagyong Ulysses.

- ['Worse than we prepared for': Cagayan LGU nabulaga sa malawakang baha](#)

Nag-abot naman ng pakikiramay at pakikiisa ang mga kinatawan ng United Nations (UN), Germany, at Netherlands sa rehiyon.

Nakipagpulong sina UN Resident Coordinator Gustavo Gonzales, German Ambassador to the Philippines Anke Reiffenstuel, at Netherlands Ambassador to the Philippines Saskia de Lang kina Cagayan Governor Manuel Mamba at ibang lokal na lider para alamin ang sitwasyon at kung paano makatutulong.

15 quarry operators in Albay found with permit violations

By Mar Serrano November 23, 2020, 6:53 pm



LEGAZPI CITY – At least 15 quarry operators extracting aggregates around Mayon Volcano were found to have violated their permits and were recommended for appropriate sanctions, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB) said on Monday.

In a phone interview, Guillermo Molina, MGB regional director, said the eight groups of Task Force Quarry investigators sent by Environment Sec. Roy Cimatu found out that of 106 operators granted permits, 15 did not comply with provisions of their license to operate issued by the provincial government of Albay.

Quoting investigation report, he said nine operators were found extracting sand and gravel in areas outside of their designated areas while the other six operators either have no permits or were operating with expired permits.

He said, “quarry regulations dictate that an operator is allowed to extract aggregate in river channels not to exceed five hectares of a town”.

Documents gathered named some operators that could be meted with sanctions as Sanrho Builders, John Michael Freno, Lawrence Lubiano, NFH Construction, WCD Construction and Supply, AMEG Construction and Supply, Maria Lourdes Leoncito, Sunwest Construction (Legazpi), and Sunwest Construction (Daraga).

Molina said of these quarry operators, only Sunwest construction has an Industrial Sand and Gravel (ISAG) permit that allows stockpiling of extracted aggregates while the rest are considered commercial quarry operators permitted to haul and load their extracted sand and gravel materials.

Molina said based on the finding of the Task Force, the matter would be endorsed to the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), which could recommend the suspension of the issued Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) or for the violators to undertake rehabilitation in the areas where quarry practices were violated.

The Task Force sent by Cimatu to determine whether the quarry operators indeed violated provisions in their issued ECC and business permits took more than a week (Nov. 7-15) to complete its probe.



15 quarry operators in Albay found with permit violations

Upon consultation with the local government units, it recommended the lifting of the suspension order that was issued after lahar flows flooded villages during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Rolly, on those that are compliant with the ECC and permits. At least six people were reported to have died in the lahar flooding incident.

The task force said the finding indicates that sand and gravel extraction is situated in areas which, considering their geological and geomorphological settings, are highly prone to lahar flows.

It said the lahar deposit outside the channel confines in Guinobatan, Camalig, Tabaco City, Legazpi City is largely due to “natural processes”.

There were mining practices such as extraction outside the active river and lahar channel, over and improper extraction near existing dikes and flood controls and creation of artificial pits as well as stockpiling inside the active lahar channel that could have a significant impact in the long term and could alter the structures of the channel and would contribute to lahar flows, the Task Force noted.

It recommended the immediate relocation of residents severely affected by lahar flows in the villages of Bantayan in Tabaco City, and Travesia and San Francisco in Guinobatan town.

It also recommended a detailed study for the lahar flows that occurred in Guinobatan, Camalig, and Daraga, particularly within and along the channels in the villages of Maninila, Quirangay and Mi-isi to understand the factors that contributed to its occurrence.

It likewise recommended a further study on the erosional and depositional sites on the foot slopes of Mayon Volcano to determine the most suitable areas for sand and gravel quarrying and extraction.

Further, the Task Force batted for a policy that quarrying and extraction should only be made in the areas that get a steady supply of sand and gravel materials while areas that experienced significant net erosion should be excluded from such operations. *(PNA)*



14 quarry operators sa Albay lumabag sa batas

By [Mer Layson](#)(Pang-Masa)

- November 23, 2020 - 12:00am



“Based doon sa aking information, na-finalized na ‘yung report, ang initial report diyan we have already identified at least 14 quarry operators na talagang nag-violate ng environmental laws natin,” pahayag ni Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones.
STAR/File

MANILA, Philippines — Labing-apat na quarry operators ang natuklasang lumabag sa batas pangkapaligiran ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

“Based doon sa aking information, na-finalized na ‘yung report, ang initial report diyan we have already identified at least 14 quarry operators na talagang nag-violate ng environmental laws natin,” pahayag ni Environment Undersecretary Jonas Leones.

“Yung siyam diyan, nakita namin ang operators talagang nag-exceed na sila sa area na allowed sa kanila. Umakyat na sila. ‘Yung apat naman, talagang nag-o-operate with expired permits,” dagdag nito.

Sinuspinde na ang quarry operation na lumabag sa batas.

Ang imbestigasyon ay isinagawa matapos humagupit ang Bagyong Rolly kung saan lumubog sa lahar ang 300 kabahayan sa Barangay San Francisco sa Guinobatan.



MGB-2 asks LGUs to relocate residents in high-risk areas

Published November 23, 2020, 2:20 PM

by [Liezle Basa Inigo](#)

CAGAYAN—The Mines and Geosciences Bureau in Region 2 (MGB-2) has asked local government units to check their respective comprehensive land use, and disaster risk reduction and management plans.



PHOTO VIA LIEZLE INIGO/ MANILA BULLETIN

The appeal was made by MGB-2 Chief Geologist Felicitas Piligan after the series of landslides and floods experienced in the Cagayan Valley region due to successive typhoons which hit the country recently.

Piligan noted that there were several areas in region that they have assessed, and identified as high risks.

She also advised that the residents or settlers in these areas be immediately relocated.

Among the high risk areas identified by MGB-2 were those in Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino and Cagayan provinces where deadly landslides occurred.

Piligan said she was hoping that the local government units will consider their recommendations to avoid another tragic incidence.

“One of the reasons for the landslides was the over saturation of the soils caused by the series of heavy downpour,” she said.



Mining allowed for municipality's interest — MacArthur mayor



Published 7 hours ago
on November 24, 2020 12:40 AM
By [Elmer Recuerdo](#)



MACARTHUR, Leyte — Following criticism from the public after a mining company has started initial work before its operations go full blast, MacArthur Mayor Rudin Babante on Monday clarified that he has the best intention for his constituents when he decided to support the company.

In a statement, Babante noted he is confident that the operations of MacArthur Iron Projects Corporation (MIPC) — which runs the local operation of Strong Built Mining Development Corporation (SBMDC) — can bring the progress that has eluded the town for over three decades now.

SBMDC holds a 25-year Mineral Production Sharing Agreement with the local government for blacksand mining in Leyte. The MPSA — which was signed in July 2007 — covers 7,411.55 hectares of land spanning the towns of Dulag, Mayorga, MacArthur, Abuyog and Javier.

The mining company is extracting magnetite, a mineral used in the production of steel, where the ores will be shipped primarily in China.

Mines and Geosciences Bureau regional director Leo Van Juguan, on the other hand, said mining is one the priority projects of Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu.

“The purpose for this is if we can put it into production and we can have employment and generation of income both for the national and local government and as long as the environmental concerns are addressed, we will support it,” Juguan told Daily Tribune.



Mining allowed for municipality's interest — MacArthur mayor

Babante, meantime, stressed that the ongoing mining activity in Barangay Maya, MacArthur complied with all the requirements with permits from the national and provincial government and the barangay.

He added 300 local residents are already gainfully employed by the mining company at this point when its operation remains limited.

"I only have in mind the best interest of my constituents. I want to see real progress happening in our town during my term," Babante said, adding that the mining company is already constructing a pier on its shoreline, which, he said can be maximized to attract investments to his municipality.

"Investment will now come because of the pier. We can now invite investors from Mindanao, Cebu and other parts of the region," Babante said.

Babante also denied insinuations in social media that he received millions of pesos in bribe money from the mining company in exchange for his support.



DILG: PNP, LGUs, DENR to crack down on illegal logging, quarrying to protect environment

Published November 23, 2020, 10:43 AM

by [Chito Chavez](#)

The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) has ordered the local government units (LGUs) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday to coordinate with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in the crackdown of illegal logging and unlawful quarrying and in the conduct of tree planting programs in the aftermath of the series of typhoons that caused destruction and flooding in many parts of the country.



(Mike U. Crismundo / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

DILG Secretary Eduardo M. Año said that all LGUs and PNP units in the country must prioritize the protection of the environment.

“We must act quickly and in a whole-of-society fashion to protect our remaining forests around the country, otherwise, we are creating and causing more disasters for our country,” Año said.

“The flooding brought by Typhoon Ulysses is a harsh reminder that we are failing at doing our level best to protect the environment, especially our remaining forest cover. Kayat inaatasan ko ang lahat ng PNP units at LGUs na pigilan ang illegal logging at illegal quarrying sa kanilang mga nasasakupan (That is why I compelled all the PNP units and the LGUs to stop illegal logging and illegal quarrying in their respective jurisdictions),” he added.

Año said “the widespread flooding in Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Marikina, Rizal and in other parts of the country should be a wake-up call to all of us that we must protect our remaining forest cover, preserve our rich biodiversity, and allow our forests to regenerate and grow again.”

The DILG secretary added that all LGUs and PNP units must reactivate their local Anti-Illegal Logging Task Forces in coordination with the Provincial and Community Environment and Natural Resources Office of the DENR.



DILG: PNP, LGUs, DENR to crack down on illegal logging, quarrying to protect environment

The Task Forces were created under Executive Order 23, s. 2011 composed of the DENR, DILG, DND, AFP, PNP, and the LGUs.

He also reminded all LGUs “that under DENR Memorandum Circular 2011 all municipal/city mayors, through their respective barangay captains, are to conduct upland monitoring to ensure that no illegal logging, kaingin, and other forms of forest destruction take place within their jurisdictions with the directive to report to their Regional Task Forces (RTFs), through the Provincial Governor and/or the DILG Regional Director,” incidents of forests destruction especially slash and burn farming (kaingin) and illegal logging activities.”

“All LGUs must reactivate their local Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force and be decisive in implementing the anti-illegal logging campaign and implementation of environmental laws and programs within their localities,” he said.

Año also directed the PNP to set up checkpoints and arrest illegal loggers who violate the Revised Forestry Code with strict emphasis on Section 79 stipulating the “Unlawful Occupation or Destruction of Forest Lands and Grazing Lands.”

Under Section 79, any person who “causes any damage to the timber stand and other products and forest growth found therein” shall be punished under the said Code while Section 89 of the same Code states that “Philippine National Police shall arrest even without warrant any person who has committed or is committing in his presence any of the offenses defined in this Chapter.”

He warned that illegal loggers will be criminally charged for violating the Forestry Code of the Philippines (P.D. 705) and Republic Act No. 9175, the Chainsaw Act of 2002, among others. “It is imperative that we must stop the wanton destruction of our remaining forest resources not only for our sake but also for future generations who will suffer the consequences of our inaction,” Año said.

He also urged all LGUs “to deploy more forest guards and the DENR to deploy more foresters to monitor our forests and engage local communities and civil society organizations in reforestation programs, particularly the National Greening Program.”



MITIGATING FLOODS | Interior orders crackdown on illegal logging, quarrying to prevent floods

November 23, 2020 , 01:50 PM

(November 23, 2020) – President Rodrigo Duterte has ordered local governments and the national police to crack down on illegal logging and illegal quarrying operations in the country after these activities were blamed for the massive flooding seen in more than four decades on the main island of Luzon early this month, the interior secretary said on Monday.

Eduardo Año said the president has also directed to speed up the planting of 200 million trees to prevent a repeat of floods after a series of typhoons barreled through the main island of Luzon, which destroyed billions of pesos worth of public infrastructure and crops and killed 73 peoples.

“We must act quickly and in a whole-of-society fashion to protect our remaining forests across the country otherwise we are creating and causing more disasters for our country,” said Año.

He said the widespread flooding in Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, and Bicol regions as well as in Marikina City and Rizal province was wake-up call for the government and the people should protect the remaining forest cover, preserve the rich biodiversity, and allow the forests to regenerate and grow again.

“The flooding brought by Typhoon Ulysses is a harsh reminder that we are failing at doing our level best to protect the environment, especially our remaining forest cover. Kayat inaatasan ko ang lahat ng PNP units at LGUs na pigilan ang illegal logging at illegal quarrying sa kanilang mga nasasakupan,” he said.

Año said that all LGUs and PNP units must reactivate the local Anti-Illegal Logging Task Forces in coordination with the provincial and community environment and natural resources office.

The task force was created under an executive order, composed of the DENR, DILG, DND, AFP, PNP and the LGUs.

He likewise reminded all LGUs that under DENR Memorandum Circular 2011 all municipal/city mayors, though their respective barangay captains, to conduct upland monitoring “to ensure that no illegal logging, kaingin and other forms of forest destruction” take place within their jurisdictions.

Local officials and police were asked to report to the regional task forces (RTFs), “through the provincial governor and/or the DILG regional director,” incidents of forest destruction especially slash and burn farming (kaingin) and illegal logging activities.

He also directed the PNP to set up checkpoints and arrest illegal loggers who violate the Revised Forestry Code with strict emphasis on Section 79 stipulating the “Unlawful Occupation or Destruction of Forest Lands and Grazing Lands.”

Under the said section, any person who “causes any damage to the timber stand and other products and forest growth found therein” shall be punished under the said Code while Section 89 of the same Code states that “Philippine National Police shall arrest even without warrant any person who has committed or is committing in his presence any of the offenses defined in this Chapter.”



MITIGATING FLOODS | Interior orders crackdown on illegal logging, quarrying to prevent floods

Año said that illegal loggers will be criminally charged for violating the Forestry Code of the Philippines (P.D. 705) and the Republic Act No. 9175 or the Chainsaw Act of 2002, among others.

“It is imperative that we must stop the wanton destruction of our remaining forest resources not only for our sake but also for future generations who will suffer the consequences of our inaction,” said Año.

Ano also directed all local officials to deploy more forest guards and the DENR to deploy more foresters to monitor our forests and engage local communities and civil society organizations in reforestation programs, particularly the National Greening Program.

(Kiko Demigillo/MM)



DILG: Some mayors involved in illegal logging, mining

By [Neil Jayson Servallos](#)(Philstar.com)

- November 24, 2020 - 12:00am



Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said there were cases wherein mayors either directly or indirectly benefited from illegal mining and logging.

MANILA, Philippines — Several mayors are allegedly involved in illegal logging and mining operations in their towns, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) disclosed yesterday as the agency ordered a crackdown on violators of environmental regulations.

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said there were cases wherein mayors either directly or indirectly benefited from illegal mining and logging.

“There were instances like that, but not all (mayors). There are those who aren’t directly involved, but they know of their existence,” Año said in a radio interview, referring to the illegal activities that have been partly blamed for recent massive flooding.

“Maybe (operators of these illegal activities) funded their (mayors’) campaigns or supported their candidacies,” Año added.

Catastrophic flooding, landslides and other calamities spawned by the recent typhoons have again directed government attention to illegal logging, mining and other activities that violate environmental regulations as they have been blamed for major damage and casualties.

While Año did not say what the government would do about the alleged hand of local officials in the illegal activities, he implored the public to take the elections seriously.

“Our citizens need to learn and vote for those who are serious and have no connections to anything illegal. We need to pick, otherwise we would be experiencing these things over and over again,” he said.

Año said he had also ordered all local governments and police nationwide to start a crackdown on illegal logging and quarrying, and expedite tree-planting operations.

DILG: Some mayors involved in illegal logging, mining

“The flooding brought by Typhoon Ulysses is a harsh reminder that we are failing at doing our level best to protect the environment, especially our remaining forest cover,” he said in a statement.

The DILG order requires local leaders and police to reactivate local anti-illegal logging task forces and reminds mayors to conduct upland monitoring against illegal logging and other forms of forest destruction.

Officials also ordered the setting up of police checkpoints to hamper the operations of illegal loggers.

Police were directed to arrest illegal loggers, who can be criminally charged for violating the Forestry Code of the Philippines (PD 705) and Republic Act No. 9175 or the Chainsaw Act of 2002, among others.

“It is imperative that we must stop the wanton destruction of our remaining forest resources not only for our sake but also for future generations who will suffer the consequences of our inaction,” he said.

Año also urged all local governments to deploy more forest guards and for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to deploy more foresters to monitor the country’s forests and engage local communities and civil society organizations in reforestation programs.

Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) officials said the more than 70,000 beneficiaries in Bicol that were affected by the coronavirus pandemic and displaced by the three recent typhoons would receive cash assistance from the government as mandated by Republic Act 11494 or the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act (Bayanihan 2) that was approved last Sept. 20.

Johanna Vi Gasga, DOLE-Bicol spokesperson, said that their main office has released to Bicol P200 million for the Tulong Panghanapbuhay Para sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers or TUPAD, and P150.115 million for the COVID-19 Adjustment Measures Program or CAMP, projects funded under Bayanihan 2.

Gasga said that a TUPAD beneficiary will receive P5,000 for 16-day work that would include cleaning the debris left by the typhoons.

Of the 40,000 TUPAD beneficiaries, according to Gasga, 10,000 of them come from Albay with P50-million allocation; 9,600 from Catanduanes; 6,000 apiece from Camarines Sur and Camarines Norte, with P30-million budget each province; 4,400 from Sorsogon, with P22-million; and, 4,000 from Masbate, with P20-million allocation.

Gasga said that the TUPAD program recipients are informal or marginalized workers, including self-employed, underemployed and other workers who do not have a payslip as basis for their work payment, adding that “only one person is qualified in one household.”

“The P5,000 is computed from the minimum wage in Bicol of P310/day for 16 days and four hours work for every TUPAD beneficiary,” Gasga told The STAR.



DILG: Some mayors involved in illegal logging, mining

She said that DOLE has tapped as accredited co-partners the local government units (LGUs), provincial governments, state universities and colleges (SUCs) and workers' associations.

These accredited co-workers will be tasked to identify and profile the target TUPAD beneficiaries, Gasga added.

DSWD funds

Quezon City Rep. Alfred Vargas, House appropriations committee vice chairman, yesterday urged the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) to use the agency's P83-billion unused funds to assist victims of the recent typhoons.

Vargas said the government should use the remaining DSWD funds to provide assistance to affected towns and cities instead of leaving the amount unused until yearend.

"The DSWD should go all out and spend up to the very last cent of its funds to ease the poor's suffering, especially as this challenging year draws to a close. We should make our countrymen who are devastated by the latest calamities feel that the government is here and cares for them," he stressed.

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon recently disclosed that the DSWD has failed to utilize some P83 billion for various programs from the agency's 2019 budget and this year despite the COVID-19 pandemic and several devastating typhoons and other calamities hitting the country.

The case of undisbursed funds – equivalent to nearly half of DSWD's P175-billion proposed budget for 2021 – was raised by Drilon on Tuesday night during plenary deliberations in the agency's appropriations.

Bulk of the unspent appropriations – around P75 billion – was in the agency's 2020 budget.

Among the programs whose funding or implementation was not completed are the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program at P48.3 billion; Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations at P13.7 billion and Social Pension Program, P3.9 billion.

He said the DSWD's failure to release the funds for various programs happened when around five million Filipino families went hungry in the past three months, while around 7.7 million Filipinos lost jobs and livelihood due to the pandemic.

Vargas said DSWD's assistance will go a long way to help Filipinos who lost their homes and livelihood due to Typhoons Quinta, Rolly and Ulysses in the middle of the pandemic.

Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian called for more than a 100-percent increase in an item in the proposed P4.506-trillion national budget for 2021 that will fund the electric cooperatives (EC)'s repair of damaged power lines and infrastructure.

DILG: Some mayors involved in illegal logging, mining

In sponsoring the National Electrification Administration (NEA)'s proposed budget, Gatchalian proposed an additional P550 million in the P200-million allocation for the Electric Cooperatives Emergency and Resiliency Fund (ECERF) next year.

"I would like to state for the record as early as now that with the onslaught of the natural calamities this year, I will be proposing that this amount be increased since the total damage to electric cooperatives from the Taal eruption and Typhoons Ambo, Quinta, Rolly and Ulysses already amount to P829 million as of Nov. 16," said Gatchalian, chairman of the Senate energy committee.

ECERF, under RA 11039, was institutionalized last year as a ready fund that can be tapped by ECs for faster restoration of electricity and power facilities damaged by natural calamities. Funds under ECERF are being administered and managed by the NEA.

Senators are also pressing for the immediate desilting and dredging of Laguna de Bay as well as other rivers and waterways to help prevent flooding in Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

Sen. Richard Gordon proposed that desilting the Laguna de Bay would increase the lake's holding capacity for rainwater and floodwater, which would spare surrounding communities from being submerged during the typhoon or rainy season.

He recalled that Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto earlier offered a \$30-million assistance from his government to the Philippines for the rehabilitation and water treatment of Laguna Lake. He added a formal offer was made during his bilateral meeting with Locsin.

Hungary is known to have the expertise and capability in terms of water management and treatment, the senator said.

Laguna de Bay, with total surface area of 900 square kilometers, is the biggest lake and one of the most important inland bodies of water in the country. It is also the second biggest inland freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

Sen. Manny Pacquiao suggested that all tributaries in flood-prone areas be dredged by at least 10 meters, especially those in low-lying and catch-basin areas in Metro Manila, Bulacan, Pampanga and Pangasinan.

Pacquiao, who chairs the Senate committee on public works, said aside from constructing flood control systems, the Department of Public Works and Highways and DILG as well other concerned government agencies should launch a massive dredging program of all rivers and other water tributaries to contain floodwaters during heavy rainfall caused by typhoons and the monsoon. — **Edu Punay, Cecille Suerte Felipe, Paolo Romero, Cet Dematera**



‘Ilang mga mayor, dawit sa operasyon ng illegal mining, logging’ – DILG chief

By [Bombo Bam Orpilla](#)

-November 23, 2020 | 6:30 PM

Ibinunyag ni Interior Sec. Eduardo Año na mayroon umanong mga mayor ang dawit sa operasyon ng ilegal na pagmimina at pagtotroso.

Pahayag ito ni Año kasunod ng nangyaring malawakang pagbaha sa ilang mga bansa dulot ng nagdaang mga bagyo, na sinasabing pinalala ng naturang mga ipinagbabawal na aktibidad.

Ayon sa kalihim, may mga opisyal ng lokal na gobyerno ang direkta at hindi direktang nakikinabang mula sa illegal mining at logging.

Kasabay din aniya ng kanyang utos na crackdown sa naturang mga gawain, nanawagan si Año sa mga otoridad at sa Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na maging mahigpit kahit na sa mga lokal na opisyal.

Pinayuhan naman ng opisyal ang mga residente na maging matalino sa pagboto ng mga local government officials at piliin lamang ang seryoso sa paggampan sa kanilang trabaho.



Mga mayor dawit sa illegal mining, logging

By Abante News Online — Last updated Nov 23, 2020

Featured News

Ibinunyag ni Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año na ilang mga alkalde ang sangkot at nakikipagsabwatan sa mga illegal miners at loggers kaya malayang nakakapagsagawa ang ito ng operasyon sa kanilang mga nasasakupang lalawigan.

Ang operasyon ng illegal mining at logging ang itinuturong dahilan ng mga trahedyang sinapit ng bansa sa kasagsagan ng mga nagdaang bagyo.

Sinabi ng kalihim na ilang lokal na opisyal din ang direkta at hindi direktang nakikinabang sa nasabing mga iligal na gawain.

“Merong mga instance na ganun, pero ‘di naman lahat. Merong hindi naman siya kasabwat, pero alam niya. Alam mo na, baka nagbibigay din ng pondo sa kampanya, sumusuporta sa kandidatura,” ayon pa sa kalihim.

Tiniyak naman ni Ano na kakalusin niya ang mga tiwaling opisyal ng pamahalaan kasabay ng panawagan niya sa ibang law enforcement agency at sa Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) na maging mahigpit kahit sa mga opisyal pa mismo ng gobyerno.

Kasunod ito ng dinanas na malawakang pagbaha sa Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Marikina, Rizal at iba pang bahagi ng bansa sa gitna ng pananalasa ng mga Bagyong Quinta, Rolly at Ulysses.

Sinisi ng ilang opisyal ng pamahalaan at pribadong sektor ang talamak na operasyon ng iligal na pagmimina at pagtotroso bilang dahilan ng nangyaring pagbaha.

“Dapat paigtingin ito nationwide sa pangunguna dapat ng DENR supported by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Dapat istrikto talaga tayo. Walang perso-personalidad dito, kahit politician ka,” diin pa ng kalihim.

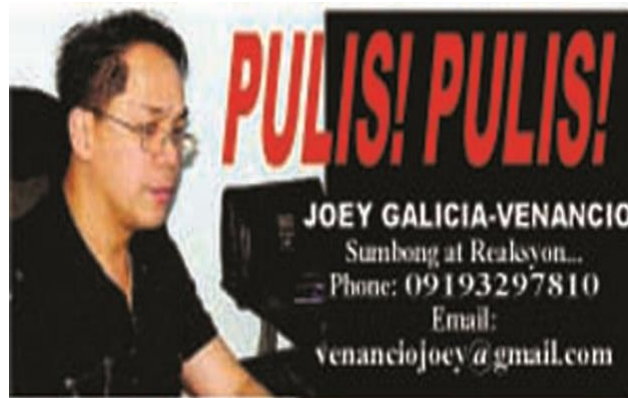
Dahil dito kung kaya’t pinayuhan niya ang mga botante na maging matalino sa ihahalal at piliin ang mga siguradong seryoso, at walang bahid ng koneksyon sa anumang iligal na gawain. (Mia Billones/Dolly Cabreza)



Giyera vs illegal logging at mining seryosohin

OPINION

On Nov 23, 2020



INANUNSYO ng Department of Interior and Local Government ang kanilang giyera laban sa illegal mining at logging sa buong bansa partikular sa mga lugar na lumulubog sa baha at putik tuwing umiiyak ng malakas ang kalangitan.

Seryosohin sana ni DILG Sec. Eduardo Año ang paha-yag niyang ito, hindi press release lang o hindi ningas-kugon lamang.

Ano na nga pala ang nangyari sa nationwide clearing operations sa mga bangketa ninyo, Sec. Año, Sir? Parang wala namang nabago sa mga kalye sa Metro Manila eh, doon parin ang mga illegal parking at obstructions.

Kala ba natin eh makakasuhan dito ang mga mayor na hindi nagpatupad sa clearing ops?

Anyway, dito muna tayo sa bagong kakaharaping gi-yera ni Sec. Ano na isang retired AFP Chief! Sana nga'y magamot niya ang stage 4 nang kanser ng illegal logging at mining na ugat ng malawakang pagbaha tulad ng nangyari sa lalawigan ng Rizal, Laguna, Marikina City sa Metro Manila, at sa mga probinsiya ng Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Albay nitong mga nagdaang bagyo ng Quinta, Rolly at Ulysses.

Pero dapat kasali sa giyerang ito ni Sec. Ano ang Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) dahil ang ahensiyang ito ang nag-aapruba sa pagmimina at pagpuputol ng mga puno.

Kaya nga ang kaagad inatasan dito ni Pangulong Rody Duterte para matigil itong illegal mining at logging ay si DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu na isa ring retired Army General.

Kung seseryosohin lang nina Sec. Año at Sec. Cimatu ang pakikidigma sa mga rapist na ito ng kalikasan tiyak na masusugpo nila. Political will ang kailangan dito. Dahil karamihan ng nasa likod ng illegal logging at mining ay government officials din.

Oo! Hindi magkakaroon ng malawakang mining, quarry at logging kung walang bendisyon o 'di kasabwat ang mayor, gobernador, kongresista, at mga opisyal ng DENR. Mismo!

Kaya pag tinotoo nga ni Sec. Año ang kampanya niyang ito, siguradong walang makagagalaw na politiko, gayundin sa DENR kapag pinaimbestigahan ni Sec. Cimatu ang kanyang ilang opisyal na nakikipagsabwatan sa mga kumpanya ng pagmimina, quarry at logging.

Hindi sana ningas-cogon lang ito, Secs. Año at Cimatu, mga Sir.

Subaybayan!



DILG chief says small time illegal loggers continue to operate

Published November 23, 2020, 3:50 PM

by [Chito Chavez](#)

Department of Interior and Local Government Secretary Eduardo Año admitted Monday that numerous small time illegal loggers continue to operate and are mostly arrested with the prominent illegal loggers having already made their headway in the 1970s and 1980s “all over the country.”



DILG Secretary Eduardo Año
(PCOO / FILE PHOTO / MANILA BULLETIN)

In an interview over GMA News, Año explained why mostly small time illegal loggers are nabbed by the law enforcement agencies.

He also pointed out that there are instances where the mayors are involved in illegal logging operations themselves.

Comparable somewhat to an indecent proposal, Año noted that some rogue mayors have connived with the illegal loggers in exchange for election funds or full support for their candidacies.

Describing it as an unfortunate reality, Año emphasized that the electorate should shun the election of corrupt public officials who are involved in all sorts of illegal activities.

The DILG chief also noted that some local chief executives (LCE) are giving concessions for unlawful operations like illegal quarrying.

In the case of illegal mining, Año explained that these operations are done discreetly which are almost out of the eyes of the law enforcers.

He added that the illegal mining operators are forced not to seek the government's assistance in times of danger out of fear of their activity being uncovered.



DILG chief says small time illegal loggers continue to operate

“If the operation is legal they are protected by the State. Mabilis ang response (The response is fast),” Año said.

Año traced the proliferation of illegal logging operations to the construction boom in the country as there is a great demand for timber.

He noted the demand for “hardwood” of affluent families for their furniture has become the “driving force” of the illegal loggers who totally disregard the negative consequences of their greed.

Año detailed that among the ill effects of illegal logging are deforestation, loss of biodiversity, emission of greenhouse effect, and destructive flooding.

To save the balding forests, Año stressed the need for a massive “reforestation and national greening program” as these would result in the return of the watershed.

Año cited the importance of being “wholistic” as running after illegal loggers should be complemented by other relevant programs.

He also called for the strict enforcement of the law where it is equally applied to influential personalities like politicians.

Año pushed for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) to be deputized as they can even reach the mountains and to include the forest rangers in the anti-illegal logging task force.

He backed the proposal to arm forest rangers but stressed that including them in the task force to implement the anti-illegal logging operations is much better.

Año said that the undermanned forest rangers may become the target of the New People’s Army (NPA) and other terrorist groups if they will solely enforce the illegal logging operation law.

The PNP has conducted 2,467 anti-illegal logging operations and arrested 5,985 from Nov. 1 to 21.



Gov't agencies crafting unified protocol on dams' spilling ops

By Christopher Lloyd Caliwan November 23, 2020, 3:55 pm



DILG Secretary Eduardo Año. (File photo)

MANILA – Concerned government agencies are now working on a synchronized protocol on the release of water from dams, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año said on Monday.

"For now, the NDRRMC (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council), NIA (National Irrigation Administration), DOST (Department of Science and Technology) and PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration) and other agencies are having consultations and coordination on how to control the release of water from dams before or during a typhoon. We are now working on a single protocol," Año said in a radio interview.

This protocol would be implemented by the NDRRMC, Año said.

"So hopefully we can come up with a good protocol. This would be under the NDRRMC so that only one agency would be in charge of this matter and that before a typhoon, we can already release water from dams," he added.

Meanwhile, Año has directed local government units (LGUs) and the Philippine National Police (PNP) to implement a crackdown on illegal logging, illegal quarrying and expedite the planting of trees in coordination with the Department of the Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

He said all LGUs and PNP units across the country must prioritize the protection of the environment, especially for a disaster-prone and stricken nation such as the Philippines.

"We must act quickly and in a whole-of-society fashion to protect our remaining forests across the country otherwise we are creating and causing more disasters for our country. The flooding brought by Typhoon Ulysses is a harsh reminder that we are failing at doing our level best to protect the environment, especially our remaining forest cover," Año said in a statement.



Gov't agencies crafting unified protocol on dams' spilling ops

He said that widespread flooding in Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Marikina, Rizal, and other parts of the country should be a wake-up call for the people to protect the country's remaining forest cover, preserve rich biodiversity, and allow forests to regenerate and grow again.

He added said that all LGUs and PNP units must reactivate their local Anti-Illegal Logging Task Forces in coordination with the Provincial and Community Environment and Natural Resources Office of the DENR. The Task Forces were created under Executive Order 23, s. 2011 composed of the DENR, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of National Defense, Armed Forces of the Philippines, PNP, and the LGUs.

He likewise reminded all LGUs that under DENR Memorandum Circular 2011 all municipal/city mayors, through their respective barangay captains, are to conduct upland monitoring "to ensure that no illegal logging, kaingin and other forms of forest destruction" take place within their jurisdictions with the directive to report to their Regional Task Forces (RTFs), "through the Provincial Governor and/or the DILG Regional Director," incidents of forests destruction especially slash and burn farming (kaingin) and illegal logging activities.

"All LGUs must reactivate their local Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force and be decisive in implementing the anti-illegal logging campaign and implementation of environmental laws and programs within their localities," he said.

He also directed the PNP to set up checkpoints and arrest illegal loggers who violate the Revised Forestry Code with a strict emphasis on Section 79 stipulating the "Unlawful Occupation or Destruction of Forest Lands and Grazing Lands."

Under the said section, any person who "causes any damage to the timber stand and other products and forest growth found therein" shall be punished under the said Code while Section 89 of the same Code states that "Philippine National Police shall arrest even without warrant any person who has committed or is committing in his presence any of the offenses defined in this Chapter."

He said that illegal loggers will be criminally charged for violating the Forestry Code of the Philippines (P.D. 705) and the Republic Act No. 9175 or the Chainsaw Act of 2002, among others.

"It is imperative that we must stop the wanton destruction of our remaining forest resources not only for our sake but also for future generations who will suffer the consequences of our inaction," he said.

He also urged all LGUs to deploy more forest guards and the DENR to deploy more foresters to monitor our forests and engage local communities and Civil Society Organizations in reforestation programs particularly the National Greening Program," he said. **(PNA)**



DILG chief presses drive vs illegal logging



By [Darwin Pesco](#)

November 24, 2020

Interior Secretary Eduardo Año on Monday ordered the reactivation of local anti-illegal logging task forces as he pressed local government units (LGUs) and the police to go after illegal loggers.

“All LGUs must reactivate their Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force and be decisive in implementing the anti-illegal logging campaign and implementation of environmental laws and programs within their localities,” the DILG chief said.

Año directed the PNP to set up checkpoints and arrest illegal loggers.

“It is imperative that we stop the wanton destruction of our remaining forest resources not only for our sake, but also for future generations who will suffer the consequences of our inaction,” he said.

He called on LGUs to deploy more forest guards, and asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to assign more foresters to monitor forests and carry out reforestation programs.

Año also ordered LGUs and the police to stop illegal quarrying.

He directed LGUs and the Philippine National Police to give priority to the protection of the environment.

“We must act quickly and in a whole-of-society fashion to protect our remaining forests, otherwise we are creating and causing more disasters,” Año said in a statement.

The massive flooding in Cagayan Valley, Bicol, Marikina, Rizal and in other areas should be a “wake-up call” for the protection of remaining forest cover “and allow our forests to regenerate and grow again,” he added.

He bared that various government agencies would create a synchronized protocol on the release of water from dams to protect communities during typhoons.

The protocol would be implemented by the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC), Año said.

“Ito ay sa ilalim ng NDRRMC para isa lang ‘yung talagang magkukumpas at bago pa ‘yung bagyo pwede na tayong mag-release ng tubig (It will be under the NDRRMC, so that only one will have control, and before the storm comes, we may release water),” he explained.

The NDRRMC continues to consult officials of the National Irrigation Authority, the weather bureau and the Department of Science and Technology, among others.



ILIGAL NA PAGMIMINA, PAGTOTROSO ITINUTURO NG DILG NA SANHI NG PAGBAHA

written by [Lyn Aurora Legarteja](#) November 24, 2020



Ibinunyag ni Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Eduardo Año na mayroong ilang alkalde na sangkot sa ilang ilegal na operasyon ng pagmimina at pagtotroso na siyang dahilan ng malawakang pagbaha sa ilan lugar sa bansa nitong nagdaang mga bagyo.

Nilinaw naman ni Año hindi naman lahat ay nakikinabang o kasabwat talaga ngunit alam aniya ng mga ito ang mga nangyayaring ilegal na pagmimina at pagtotroso.

Inihalimbawa pa nito ang posibleng pagtanggap ng mga opisyal ng pera mula sa mga illegal mining at logging na ginagamit naman ang pondo sa kanilang mga kampanya.

Dahil dito, iginigiit ng kalihim na dapat maparusahan ang lahat ng masasangkot sa ilegal na pagmimina at pagtotroso maging pulitiko man ito o may katungkulan sa gobyerno.

Hinihimok din ni Año ang mga residenteng naapektuhan ng matinding pagbaha kamakailan na maging matalino sa pagboto sa mga lokal na opisyal at dapat na wala umanong bahid na koneksyon ang mga ito sa anomang ilegal na gawain.



DILG orders crack down on illegal logging, calls for planting of trees

(Philstar.com)

- November 23, 2020 - 6:34pm



Rescuers pull a rubber boat carrying residents through a flooded street after Typhoon Vamco hit in Marikina City, suburban Manila on November 12, 2020.

AFP/Ted Aljibe

MANILA, Philippines — In the aftermath of the destruction caused by three typhoons in as many weeks, local governments and the national police have been told to crack down on illegal logging and hasten the planting of trees in their areas, the interior department said Monday.

Interior secretary Eduardo Año disclosed in a statement issued Monday afternoon that units of the Philippine National Police have been directed to set up checkpoints and arrest illegal loggers who violate the Revised Forestry Code, particularly Section 79 stipulating the “Unlawful Occupation or Destruction of Forest Lands and Grazing Lands.”

“The flooding brought by Typhoon Ulysses is a harsh reminder that we are failing at doing our level best to protect the environment, especially our remaining forest cover. This is why I am directing all PNP units and local governments to put a stop to illegal logging and illegal quarrying in their localities,” Año said in mixed Filipino and English.

“All local government units must reactivate their local Anti-Illegal Logging Task Force and be decisive in implementing the anti-illegal logging campaign and implementation of environmental laws and programs within their localities,” he added.

Año in his statement also urged local executives to install forest guards and asked the DENR to deploy foresters to push for reforestation programs in local communities.

This comes after tropical cyclones Quinta, Rolly and Ulysses ravaged most areas in the country, with the latter yielding P12.9 billion in damages to agriculture and infrastructure according to latest figures from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Cagayan



DILG orders crack down on illegal logging, calls for planting of trees

province, among the areas hardest-hit by Ulysses, has been under a state of calamity for the past week, with countless Filipinos still seeking assistance as they try to rebuild their lives.

Videos that went viral on social media in the wake of the storm showed residents calling for help in the pitch-black darkness, still trapped on their rooftops as night fell after the worst floods the country has seen in years. Local officials said illegal logging was among the main reasons for the sudden floods.

Citing a memorandum by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Año pointed out that all local chief executives are expected to conduct upland monitoring “to ensure that no illegal logging, kaingin and other forms of forest destruction” take place within their jurisdictions with the directive to report incidents of forests destruction to their regional task forces through the DILG’s regional units.

Even the House of Representatives has announced its intent to probe the circumstances of the massive flooding that submerged the provinces of Cagayan and Isabela during the height of Typhoon Ulysses’ onslaught.

In an earlier statement, House Speaker Lord Allan Velasco called on the lower chamber to look into the decision of the National Irrigation Administration to open the spillway gates of Magat Dam, and if such action was done in accordance with duly established guidelines and protocols.

“We must act quickly and in a whole-of-society fashion to protect our remaining forests across the country otherwise we are creating and causing more disasters for our country,” the interior secretary also said.

“It is imperative that we must stop the wanton destruction of our remaining forest resources not only for our sake but also for future generations who will suffer the consequences of our inaction,” he added.

— **Franco Luna**



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When will we ever learn?

By [BusinessMirror](#)
November 23, 2020



Climate change is a convenient culprit and excuse for certain tragedies but we fail to remember that climate change is caused by human activity and it can also be mitigated by responsible action.

It is literally and painfully obvious—most of all to the survivors of natural calamities—that skewed public policies can also lead to the creation of disasters and the loss of lives and property.

Cagayan Valley residents were surprised when massive floods, which reached over 13 meters high, hit their province during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses, leaving thousands of them stranded on rooftops and in need of rescue.

The usual questions were once again asked: Who was really responsible for the flooding? What steps could have been taken to avoid the calamity? How could it be prevented in the future?

Despite all the questions, the discussions, the blaming even, we cannot begin to comprehend the loss and the suffering of those who have been victims of the tragedy. At the very least though, we should listen to the survivors. Vigorous national attention should be given to their grievances and demands.

Farmers belonging to the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas and DANGGAYAN Cagayan Valley blamed illegal logging and mining for the floods.

Cagayan Governor Manuel Mamba admitted that the floods could not have been due to the spilling from the Magat Dam alone, but was also caused by the “denudation of forests” and “siltation of rivers.”

Indeed, the problem goes beyond dam protocols. If the forests in Cagayan Valley were not denuded, they could have acted as a natural barrier to the floodwater caused by rain dumped by Typhoon Ulysses. Grade school science taught us trees also prevent soil erosion. They would have reduced sediment going into the Cagayan River and increased water absorption into the ground. With few trees acting as frontline defense, the rainwater running down bare mountains swelled the river and raised flood levels.



When will we ever learn?

President Duterte promptly ordered a crackdown on illegal mining and logging activities in the province, even as lawmakers are set to investigate the possible non-compliance with laws, rules, or regulations that may have contributed to the floods.

Is this a bad case of déjà vu?

The country has suffered one tragedy after another as a result of rampant logging and mining yet government officials have done little to prevent the next tragedy. Administrations, both past and present, have responded in a reactive manner that did nothing to prevent further disasters.

In 1991, massive flooding and landslides brought on by a strong typhoon resulted in the deaths of nearly 8,000 people in Ormoc City, Leyte. The Ormoc tragedy, as it became known, was largely blamed on logging and deforestation. Calls for a total logging ban rang loud in the halls of Congress and Malacañang then.

In 2004, hundreds of people died in floods and landslides in Quezon, Aurora and Nueva Ecija after a series of storms. Blame was again cast on loggers who have stripped forests bare and turned lowland villages into death traps. Politicians talked all over again of enforcing a total logging ban.

In 2017, after massive floods devastated Northern Mindanao, President Duterte ordered then Environment Secretary Gina Lopez to “stop all logging operations with no exemptions.”

Former Presidents Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had also ordered similar crackdowns on logging following similar flashfloods.

What do they say about people who do not learn the lessons of history? They are doomed to repeat its mistakes. And so we did. And we will keep repeating them with the same sorry results unless we learn to do better.

We know what we have to do, the right thing to do. The really hard part is doing it.

The main obstacle, of course, is the general corruption in the bureaucracy. Profitable mining and logging enterprises have tentacles that weave their way in and out of government.

Also, for a lot of people in poor communities, mining and logging are the only way to feed their families. So definitely, policy solutions must provide for the creation of alternative jobs and livelihood to encourage support from the people. There must be incentives for compliance that would be more attractive to logging, mining and other illegal and environmentally destructive activities.

Enforceability and economic feasibility issues tell us that being able to pass a law or regulation like a ban is one thing and having it followed is another.

There is no alternative, however, but to do what must be done and undo the damage that our inaction and neglect has already caused the environment.



RISK MITIGATION | Minority lawmaker pushes for science-based solution to prevent future floods in Philippines

November 23, 2020 , 05:49 PM

(November 23, 2020) – The Philippines needs a science-based solution to address the perennial flooding in low-lying areas in the country’s rice granary regions as well as in the capital as a series of typhoons pummeled the main island of Luzon early this month, a minority senator said on Monday.

Senator Risa Hontiveros of Akbayan party-list wanted the Climate Change Commission (CCC) to spearhead campaigns to rehabilitate the country’s coastlines to mitigate the impact of climate change which causes stronger typhoons that could bring death and destruction in communities.

Last week, Hontiveros filed a bill encouraging a national coastal greenbelt program to address flooding concerns through a science-based approach, which includes the planting of a 100-meter mangrove strip in coastal areas, as well as other beach forest species.

“With at least 20 typhoons battering the Philippines in a year, it is imperative to think of innovative, sustainable and cost-efficient ways for us to be able to protect our safety, our properties and communities from devastating natural disasters,” Hontiveros said.

“Let us listen to science.”

The CCC, an office under the Office of the President, was established in 2009 through the Climate Change Act. This agency is tasked to spearhead efforts of the government related to climate change.

Based on her bill, the CCC shall prepare a National Coastal Greenbelt Action Plan (NCGAP), which shall assess and designate priority areas where reforestation and rehabilitation efforts must be created.

This will then serve as the basis of the Local Coastal Greenbelt Action Plan specifying the goals and targets aimed by each locality.

Similarly, the NCGAP shall contain various operational plans explaining how the specific proposal shall materialize. A national panel of technical experts shall also be tapped for guidance in this project.

“Nature-based solutions will not only help us reduce disaster risks. But they will also address our biodiversity crisis,” Hontiveros said.

“Maaagapan natin ang pagkawala ng milyun-milyong uri ng hayop, isda at mga halaman na ngayon ay nanganganib na tuluyang maglaho dahil sa pagkasira ng mga bakawan.”

Other key government agencies will implement the measure alongside the CCC, like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Department of Interior and Local Government, as well as the National Housing Authority.

“The key implementing agencies shall report to Congress on their progress in meeting the quantitative and qualitative targets under the Action Plan for each fiscal year,” according to section 10 of the bill.



RISK MITIGATION | Minority lawmaker pushes for science-based solution to prevent future floods in Philippines

The budget for this program shall be sourced from the appropriations given to each agency mentioned.

“Oras na para bigyang espasyo sa ating mga polisiya at batas ang pagtugon sa climate emergency,” Hontiveros said.

“Tapusin na natin ang pang-aabuso sa ating mga likas-yaman at simulan ang mga programang mag-aalaga at higit sa lahat, magpapalakas ng depensa laban sa mga kalamidad.”

(Beatrice Puente/MM)



ECC to clear Marikina reclamation project – Teodoro

By [Neil Jayson Servallos](#)(Philstar.com)

-November 24, 2020 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines — An environmental compliance certificate (ECC) will clear the issue on whether the reclamation project along the Marikina River was among the factors that caused the widespread flooding in the city during Typhoon Ulysses, Mayor Marcelino Teodoro said yesterday.

Teodoro said the local government has asked for a copy of the ECC from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for the reclamation project undertaken by a private company owned by former mayor and now Marikina Rep. Bayani Fernando.

Teodoro said the documents would be able to clear whether or not the project, an artificial embankment, had caused floodwater to rise during the typhoon.

An ECC, which shows an environmental impact assessment for the reclamation project, is required for such undertaking, he said.

“We are not saying that it was the sole cause (of flooding), but may be it contributed to the flooding in the city and nearby areas,” Teodoro told Teleradyo.

Teodoro earlier said the city government would file an administrative complaint against Fernando’s company.

The mayor said trucks transporting materials for the project bore markings of the Department of Public Works and Highways. The DPWH denied involvement in the project.



Citizen rescues falcon amid typhoon



RESCUED FALCON. The rescued peregrine falcon in San Luis, Aurora, during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses in the province. (Contributed photo)

[IAN OCAMPO FLORA](#)

November 23, 2020

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO -- A peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) was rescued in San Luis, Aurora province during the onslaught of Typhoon Ulysses.

Jessabel Barti, a local resident of San Luis, immediately reported the rescue to the barangay council. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-Community and Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro) of Dingalan also immediately gave proper assistance.

Study shows that the peregrine falcon is a well-respected falconry bird because of its strong hunting ability, high trainability, and versatility. Known as the wandering falcon, a peregrine falcon thrives in a wide variety of habitats, from coasts to high mountains.

The falcon was put under the custody of Cenro for care and shelter. It was later released into the forests of Aurora Memorial National Park after the falcon was found to be in healthy condition.



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Pasig River Coordinating and Management Office - PRCMO

9 hrs · 🌐

TINGNAN: PRCMO IN ACTION SA ESTERO DE PACO

Narito ang sitwasyon sa #EsteroDePaco sa lungsod ng Maynila.

Halos dalawang linggo matapos ang sunod-sunod na pananalasa ng mga bagyo ay hindi patitinag ang ating River Warriors at patuloy na umaaksyon para sa ating mga katubigan at kalikasan.

Walang patid ang kanilang scooping at hauling ng basura at replanting at pagsasaayos ng mga halaman sa linear park easement sa kahabaan ng estero.

Muli, nagpapasalamat po ang PRCMO sa mga katuwang natin sa lokal na pamahalaan ng lungsod ng Maynila, mula sa kanilang butihing alkalde "Yorme" Isko Moreno Domagoso, sa Estero Rangers at Department of Public Services (DPS), at sa mga residente at kawani ng mga barangay.

Tayo po ang patunay na kapag may pagkakaisa, malaki ang pag-asa para sa ating minamahal na Ilog Pasig, Manila Bay, at mga tributaryo nito!

#PRCMO #DENR #PasigRiver #PusoParaSallogPasig





840 tons of 'Ulysses' garbage hauled from Marikina, San Mateo

November 23, 2020, 3:34 pm



(Photo courtesy of MMDA)

MANILA – Over 3,104 cubic meters of garbage, equivalent to 841.34 tons, has been collected as of Sunday from affected areas in Marikina City and San Mateo in Rizal which were left devastated by Typhoon Ulysses, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said.

In a news release, MMDA Chairman Danilo Lim said clearing operations would continue until areas affected by the typhoon are clean and safe.

At least 150 personnel are assigned to assist the local governments of Marikina and San Mateo, Rizal, in their clearing operations. The MMDA also dispatched heavy equipment such as dump trucks, and pay loaders.

“Our personnel shall continue rendering assistance to affected residents until local government units’ rehabilitation works are completed. We are always ready to help in restoring normalcy in the affected communities,” Lim said.

Areas of operation in Marikina City are in Barangays Malanday, Sto. Niño and Tañong, particularly Provident Village, while areas of operation in San Mateo, Rizal are in Barangays Guitnang Bayan, Banaba, and Sta. Ana.

Francis Martinez, MMDA Metroparkways Clearing Group head, said it would take several weeks more before Marikina and San Mateo are totally rid of garbage and mud left by floodwaters brought by "Ulysses" last Nov. 12.

Garbage includes broken appliances, furniture, equipment, soiled stuff and clothing. Residents opt to throw these trash away as they are soaked in floodwater.

“Garbage is also starting to emit foul odor so we are fast-tracking its collection. Based on our estimate, we can collect a year’s worth of trash in Marikina City from the thousands of homes affected by the typhoon in the city,” said Martinez.

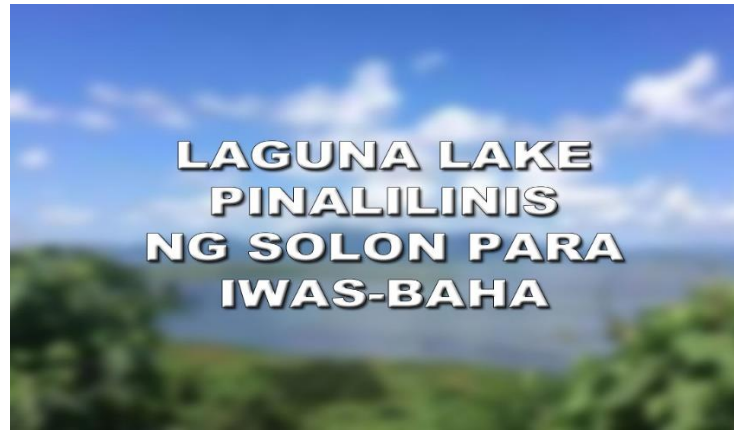


840 tons of 'Ulysses' garbage hauled from Marikina, San Mateo

"Ulysses" caused massive flooding in some parts of Metro Manila and Rizal.

On Nov. 17, Lim distributed face masks, face shields, and relief bags donated by Philippine Hardware Foundation and St. Stephen High School Alumni Association when he inspected severely-damaged areas in Barangay Malanday, Marikina.

At the height of "Ulysses", the agency was one of the first responders to conduct rescue and evacuation operations in Marikina City. San Mateo, Rizal also sought the assistance of the MMDA in its ongoing clearing operations. **(PR)**



LAGUNA LAKE PINALILINIS NG SOLON PARA IWAS-BAHA

[8 hours ago](#) [jake](#)

IPINANAWAGAN ni Senador Richard Gordon sa pamahalaan na magsagawa ng malawakang desilting o paghuhukay at pagbabaklas ng palaisdaan sa lawa upang lumalim ito at maiwasan ang pagbaha tulad ng nangyari sa pagdaan ng bagyong Ulysses.

Sa pahayag, naniniwala si Gordon na kapag nahukay at nalinis ang Laguna De Bay, maiiwasan na ang pagbaha sa Metro Manila at kalapit na Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal at Quezon).

Aniya, tataas ang holding capacity ng lawa para sa tubig-ulan at tubig-baha, maiiwasang lumubog ang nakapaligid na komunidad dito sa panahon ng bagyo o tag-ulan.

“It’s about time that we desilt Laguna De Bay. Kung ide-desilt, lalalim ‘yan. Noong nananalanta ang bagyong Ulysses, umabot ito ng 13.6 above sea level na lagpas na sa maximum critical level nitong 12.50 meters kaya nakadagdag pa ito sa pagbaha,” aniya.

Sinabi pa ni Gordon na dapat magkaroon ng rehabilitasyon sa lawa at baklasin ang lahat ng palaisdaan upang mapaunlad ito bilang tourist attraction at alternatibong sistema ng transportasyon.

“Kasi unang-una, napaka-polluted n’yan. Madumi d’yan so dapat ayusin na ang Laguna De Bay. Ang narinig ko mayroong \$30-Million assistance na ino-offer ang Hungary para sa rehabilitation ng Laguna Lake. Napakaganda ng offer na ‘yan. I suppose na kay (Foreign Affairs) Sec. (Teodoro) Locsin na ‘yan at sa kinauukulan kung tatanggapin nila,” aniya.

Nauna nang sinabi ni Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto na nag-alok ang kanilang pamahalaan ng \$30 milyong assistance sa gobyerno ng Pilipinas para sa rehabilitasyon at water treatment ng Laguna Lake. Aniya, isinagawa ang formal offer sa kanilang bilateral meeting kay Locsin.

Pinakamalaking lawa ang Laguna De Bay na may kabuuang surface area na 900 square kilometer, at isa ring pinakamahalagang inland body of water sa bansa. Pangalawa ito sa pinakamalaking inland freshwater lake sa Southeast Asia. (ESTONG REYES)



Gordon says it's time to desilt Laguna de Bay

November 23, 2020, 2:44 pm



Laguna Lake (Photo: Laguna Lake Development Authority)

MANILA – Senator Richard Gordon called for desilting the Laguna de Bay to prevent another massive flooding that Metro Manila and nearby Calabarzon experienced during Typhoon Ulysses.

Gordon said desilting Laguna de Bay would increase the lake's holding capacity for rainwater and floodwater, which would spare surrounding communities from being submerged during the typhoon or rainy season.

“It’s about time that we desilt Laguna De Bay. *Kung ide-desilt, lalalim ‘yan. Noong nananalanta ang bagyong Ulysses, umabot ng 13.6 above sea level na lagpas na sa maximum critical level nitong 12.5 meters kaya nakadagdag pa ito sa pagbaha* (Desilting will make it deeper. During Ulysses’ onslaught, it reached 13.6 above sea level which is above the lake’s maximum critical level of 12.5 meters and that’s why it contributed to flooding),” he said.

Gordon said the bay should be rehabilitated and cleared of fish pens so it could be developed into a tourism attraction and an alternate mode of transportation.

“*Kasi unang-una, napaka-polluted n’yan. Madumi d’yan so dapat ayusin na ang Laguna de Bay. Ang narinig ko mayroong USD30-million assistance na ino-offer ang Hungary para sa rehabilitation ng Laguna Lake. Napakaganda ng offer na ‘yan.* I suppose na kay [Foreign Affairs] Sec. [Teodoro] Locsin na ‘yan at sa kinauukulan kung tatanggapin nila (That is already polluted, murky so Laguna de Bay should be rehabilitated. I’ve heard that Hungary offered USD30 million for rehabilitation of Laguna Lake. That was good offer. It’s now up to Secretary Locsin and concerned agency if they will accept the offer),” he said.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said his government has proposed a USD30-million assistance to the Philippine government for the rehabilitation and water treatment of Laguna Lake. He added a formal offer was made during his bilateral meeting with Locsin.



Gordon says it's time to desilt Laguna de Bay

Hungary is known to have the expertise and capability in terms of water management and treatment. It has been credited for successfully improving water condition in Lake Balaton, a freshwater lake in the country's western region and the largest in Central Europe. Lake Balaton has since been transformed into a bustling tourist destination.

Laguna de Bay, which has a total surface area of 900 square kilometers, is the biggest lake and one of the most important inland bodies of water in the country. It is also the second biggest inland freshwater lake in Southeast Asia.

Over the years, efforts to rehabilitate Laguna Lake have been delayed due to legal challenges and setbacks.

In 2012, former President Benigno Aquino junked an PHP18.7-billion rehabilitation deal entered into by his predecessor, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, with Belgian firm Baggerwerken Decloedt En Zoon (BDC), citing irregularities. **(PR)**



Pagpapakawala ng tubig sa dam isama sa NDRRMC text alert

By [Gemma Garcia](#) (Pilipino Star Ngayon)

- November 24, 2020 - 12:00am



Paliwanag ni Gordon, chairman at CEO ng Phillippine Red Cross (PRC), na natatantya naman ang dami ng tubig na papakawalan at ang posibilidad ng pagbaha kaya dapat na maging maagap ang pagbibigay ng babala sa publiko.
Ernie Peñaredondo/File

MANILA, Philippines — Inirekomenda ni Sen. Richard Gordon na isama ang pagpapakawala ng tubig sa mga dam sa text alert ng National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC).

Ito ay para mabigyang babala at mahikayat ang mga residente na maaaring bahain na agad lumikas mula sa kanilang mga tahanan.

Sa ngayon ang alert ng NDRRMC ay para lang sa bagyo, lindol at panganib ng storm surge.

Paliwanag ni Gordon, chairman at CEO ng Phillippine Red Cross (PRC), na natatantya naman ang dami ng tubig na papakawalan at ang posibilidad ng pagbaha kaya dapat na maging maagap ang pagbibigay ng babala sa publiko.

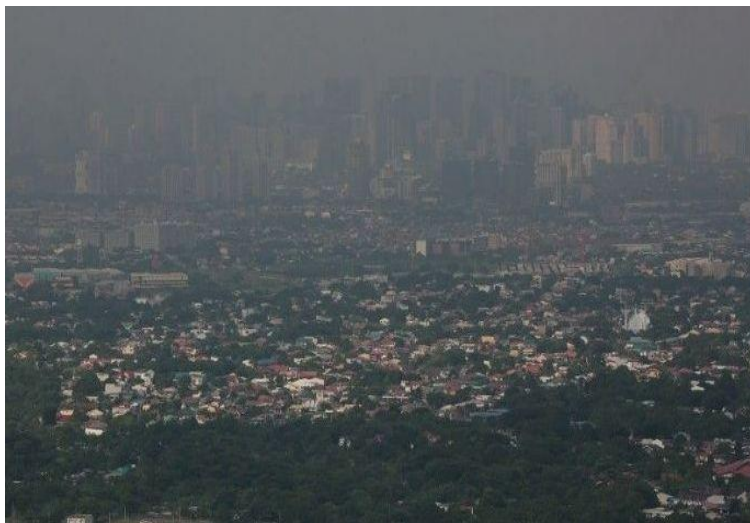
Nauna nang tinukoy na ang dahilan ng malawa-kang pagbaha sa Cagayan Valley, Metro Manila at iba pang bahagi ng Northern at Southern Luzon ay dahil sa pagpapakalawa ng tubig ng mga dam dahil sa pag-ulan dulot ng bagyong Ulysses.

Nilinaw naman ni Gordon na hindi na kailangan pa ng panibagong batas para maiwasan na maulit ang matitinding pagbaha kundi kailangan lang na pagbutihin ng National Irrigation Administration (NIA) ang panga-ngasiwa sa mga dam.

COVID-19 cases sa bansa higit 420,000 sa pagpalo ng global deaths sa 1.4 milyon

(Philstar.com)

- November 23, 2020 - 4:00pm



Litrato ng Metro Manila mula sa mga mga burol ng Antipolo City, bagay na unang nailagay sa community quarantine laban sa COVID-19 noong pang ika-15 ng Marso, 2020

MANILA, Philippines — Isang linggo bago magtapos ang buwan ng Nobyembre, lumalabas na hindi pa rin natitigil ang pagpasok ng mga bagong coronavirus disease (COVID-19) cases sa Pilipinas.

Pumalo na kasi sa 420,614 ang kabuuang bilang ng infections sa Pilipinas, matapos tablan pa nito ang 1,799 pang katao, ayon sa Kagawaran ng Kalusugan ngayong Lunes.

"Sa kabuuang bilang ng mga naitalang kaso sa bansa, 6.1% (25,837) ang aktibong kaso, 91.9% (386,604) na ang gumaling, at 1.94% (8,173) ang namatay," sabi ng Department of Health (DOH) ngayong araw.

"Samantala ay mayroon namang naitalang 135 na gumaling at 50 na pumanaw."

Dito naman natuklasan ang karamihan sa mga COVID-19 cases na bagong balita lang ng DOH:

- Cavite (154)
- Rizal (114)
- Quezon City (99)
- Bulacan (76)
- Laguna (67)

Tinanggal naman na mula sa total case count ang tatlong duplicates sa ngayon, matapos mapag-alamang isa sa kanila ay gumaling na.



COVID-19 cases sa bansa higit 420,000 sa pagpalo ng global deaths sa 1.4 milyon

Kaugnay niyan, ni-reclassify naman bilang deaths ang mga naunang naibalitang paggaling ng 16 katao mula sa COVID-19.

Tanging pitong laboratoryo lang ang hindi nakapagsumite ng kanilang mga datos sa COVID-19 Data Repository System (CDRS) kahapon, ika-22 ng Nobyembre.

"[Y]ung ating mga kaso, patuloy namang na nagpa-plataeu tayo doon sa less than 2,000 per day. Nakikita nakita 'yan," pagtitiyak ni Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire sa pagkalat ng sakit.

"In general this is a good indictment for us. Nakikita natin na nakaaagapay tayo."

Sa kabila niyan, binabantayan ng DOH ang ilang lugar sa ngayon dahil biglang pagtaas ng kaso. Isa na riyang ang Davao City, kung saan nakatira mismo si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte.

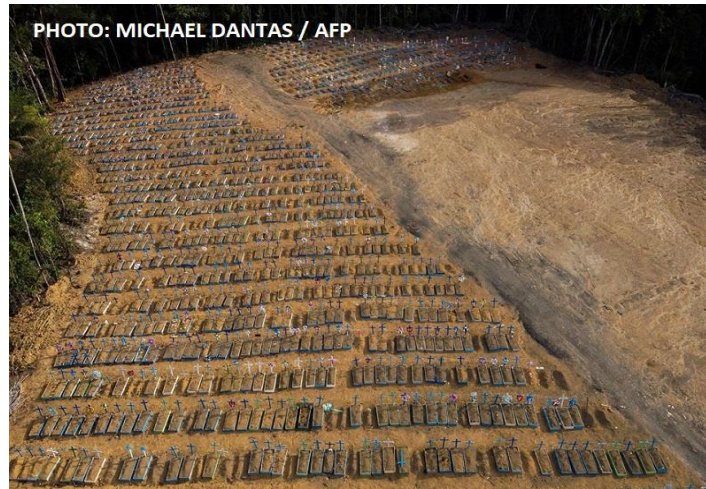
Nariyan din ang Cebu City, ngunit hindi naman daw ito sing-lala ng "critical care utilization" ng Davao na labis daw ang taas sa ngayon.

Ayon sa [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), halos 57.7 milyon na ang nahahawaan ng nasabing sakit sa buong daigdig. Sa bilang na 'yan, 1,377,395 milyon na ang patay. — **James Relativo**



Nasawi sa buong mundo dahil sa COVID-19 nadagdagan ng mahigit 7,000 pa

By Dona Dominguez-Cargullo November 23, 2020 - 01:03 PM



Umabot na sa 1,393,67 ang bilang ng mga nasawi sa COVID-19 sa buong mundo.

Sa huling datos na nakalap ng Radyo INQUIRER, pinakamaraming bilang ng nasawi sa US na umabot na sa 262,696.

Umabot naman na sa mahigit 169,000 ang bilang ng mga nasawi sa Brazil.

Ang death toll sa India ay mahigit 133,000 na.

Habang ang death toll sa Mexico ay umabot na sa mahigit 101,000 na.

Umabot naman na sa mahigit 40.7 million na ang bilang ng mga naka-recover na sa sakit.

Habang nasa mahigit 16.8 million pa ang aktibong kaso.

Narito ang bilang ng mga nasawi sa iba't ibang ng mga bansa:

USA – 262,696

Brazil – 169,197

India – 133,773

Mexico – 101,676

UK – 55,024

Italy – 49,823

France – 48,732

Iran – 44,802

Spain – 42,619

Argentina – 37,002

Read more: <https://radyo.inquirer.net/276527/nasawi-sa-buong-mundo-dahil-sa-covid-19-nadagdagan-ng-mahigit-7000-pa#ixzz6eenxgiEp>

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‘Ulysses’-affected residents get over P131-M worth of aid

By Christine Cudis November 23, 2020, 4:56 pm



MORE HELP COMING. The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) prepares family food packs to be distributed to typhoon-affected families who are staying in evacuation camps. Presidential Communications Assistant Secretary Marie Rafael, along with her family and some volunteers, helped in the repacking of goods on Nov. 21, 2020. *(Photo courtesy of DSWD-CAR)*

MANILA – The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said it is continuously providing assistance to victims of Typhoon Ulysses.

DSWD-Disaster Response Operations Monitoring Information Center (Dromic) said in its latest bulletin that the office has pooled its budget with local government unit (LGU) funds, non-government organizations (NGOs), and private sources, which amounted to more than PHP131,835,834 as of Nov. 23.

Dromic said the agency has been giving food, cash, and psychosocial support to affected families in parts of the National Capital Region, Cordillera Administrative Region, Ilocos Region, Cagayan Valley, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, and Bicol.

According to its assessment, some 995,476 families or 4,079,739 individuals in 6,644 barangays suffered losses from the onslaught of the typhoon.

About 34,232 families or 139,443 individuals are staying inside 670 evacuation centers.

DSWD Secretary Rolando Bautista said the agency has set up ‘friendly spaces’ for children and women inside the evacuation camps.

The agency also assured adequate supply of food and non-food items.

On Friday, DSWD spokesperson Irene Dumlao provided some of their recently released augmentation efforts for the LGUs.

In Cagayan Province, PHP 22 million worth of food and non-food items were delivered by DSWD in Cagayan Valley to affected areas in the region, she said.



‘Ulysses’-affected residents get over P131-M worth of aid

The field office has also started distributing burial assistance amounting to PHP10,000 each to bereaved family in the towns of Alcala, Gonzaga, Gattaran, and Tuguegarao City in Cagayan, as well as in Maddela and Nagtipunan, Quirino.

In addition, the office also sent 1,000 family food packs (FFPs) to Alcala and Enrile, Cagayan.

DSWD Calabarzon, for its part, extended some PHP13.6 million worth of augmentation assistance to the provinces of Rizal, Laguna, and Quezon.

In the Bicol Region, the DSWD office there provided 27,266 family food packs to affected areas in Albay, Camarines Sur, and Camarines Norte, amounting to PHP13.8 million.

In addition, non-food items composed of 13,028 pieces of malong, 300 sleeping kits, and 1,738 laminated sacks were also distributed to affected families and individuals.

Overall, DSWD assistance to the Bicol region climbed to PHP18.7 million.

In the National Capital Region, DSWD-NCR extended 13,430 FFPs and 1,200 sleeping kits to affected LGUs amounting to more than Php7.7 million. **(PNA)**

Creation of Dam Committee now under discussion in NDRRMC — Usec. Solidum

Marje Pelayo • November 23, 2020



MANILA, Philippines — The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) is currently discussing the creation of a committee that will focus on dam operations in the country.

“*Ang usapan sa* [What’s been discussed in the] NDRRMC during the last emergency meeting *ay magkaroon ng isang kumite na permanente na tumingin talaga sa issue ng* [is the creation of a committee that will permanently address the issues in] dam safety operations,” Science and Technology Undersecretary Renato Solidum confirmed in an interview with UNTV.

The creation of such a specific committee is what the NDRRMC sees as a solution to ensure the safe operation of dams across the country in consideration of the surrounding communities.

The NDRRMC is composed of agencies concerned with disasters and emergencies.

Following the deluge in Cagayan and Isabela provinces caused by Typhoon Ulysses, Interior Secretary Eduardo Año proposed the transfer of dam management to the NDRRMC, especially the control on when to release water during the onset of a typhoon.

Many see the release of water from Magat Dam as one reason that worsened the scenario in the said provinces during the typhoon.

Solidum said the proposed committee would not only oversee the releasing of water in dams but every aspect that would ensure dam safety in all forms of disaster such as earthquakes.

The official clarified, however, that the expertise of agencies currently managing the dams like the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and dam operators will still be utilized even after dam management is transferred to the NDRRMC.

What needs further improvement, Solidum said, is risk communication especially the aspect of giving warning signals to communities on potential threats of the dams.

“When it comes to dam operation, *ang makakatulong dito yung* [what will help is the] further enhancement of communication down to everyone *na magamit siguro yung mga* [with the use of] available text blasts *o ano pang magandang pamamaraan na ginagawa* [or other available means that can be utilized],” he stressed recommending early evacuation of residents from areas most prone to disasters once the PAGASA announces the need to evacuate.



Creation of Dam Committee now under discussion in NDRRMC — Usec. Solidum

Meanwhile, the National Power Corporation (NAPOCOR) is now planning to conduct an assessment in rivers and other waterways to determine how time changed their physical features such as their size or capacity.

The NAPOCOR is also considering pushing through with the creation of a National Dam Safety Program (NDSP).

“Mayroon na kaming naging initial na coordination dyan sa NDSP at tuloy-tuloy naman iyon [We had an initial coordination on the NDSP and it’s been ongoing],” confirmed NAPOCOR Dam Management Department Manager Conrado Sison Jr.

“Ang aim is magkaroon tayo ng isang entity or bagay na mag-address nga itong problemang ito [The aim is to have an entity that will address all these problems],” he added. —MNP (with reports from Rey Pelayo)



Senators open to House's push for P5-B hike in calamity fund for 2021

Published November 23, 2020 12:47pm
By DONA MAGSINO, GMA News

At least three senators on Monday agreed with the House of Representative's call to [increase the proposed calamity fund in 2021](#) by at least P5 billion more.

Senator Sonny Angara, chairperson of the Senate Committee on Finance, said he would be amenable to the congressmen's suggestion if they take it up during the the bicameral conference committee meetings.

"[It] shouldn't be a problem to agree on that or maybe even higher given recent events," Angara said in a message.

The House version of the general appropriations bill earmarked P20 billion for the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund or the Calamity Fund.

It was augmented by P1 billion more in the Senate Committee on Finance's report.

During Angara's sponsorship of the proposed P4.5-trillion national budget to the Senate plenary, he mentioned that the Calamity Fund, and the Quick Response Funds lodged under different government agencies would amount to a total of around P27 billion.

Senator Panfilo Lacson also said that aside from the P5 billion increase in the Calamity Fund, he is also pushing for a direct assistance to local government units that were hardest hit by Super Typhoon Rolly and Typhoons Quinta and Ulysses.

He said among the budget amendments he submitted to the Finance Committee was the creation of a separate item amounting to P20 billion under the Allocation to Local Government Units-Local Government Support Fund.

This amount shall specifically be used for post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction effort, according to the senator.

"The Department of the Interior and Local Government has been required to provide my office a list of the itemized PAP's (Programs, Activities and Projects) to be funded by the P20 billion as a requirement for the utilization of the said amount," Lacson added.



Senators open to House's push for P5-B hike in calamity fund for 2021

Senate Minority Leader Franklin Drilon agreed that bigger appropriations should be placed under calamity funds. He said this is a better move than creating a new department for disaster resilience.

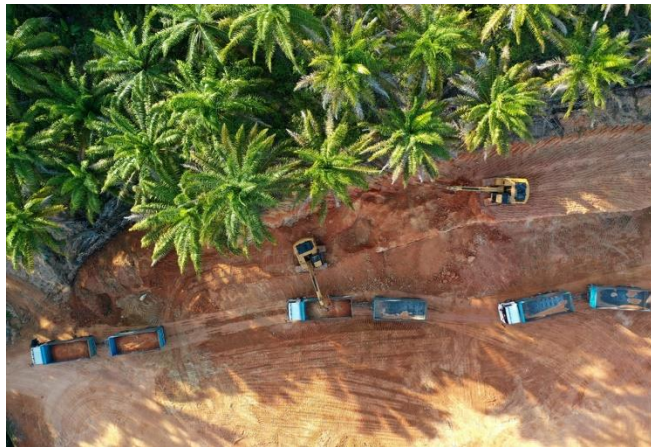
"What we need is additional funds for disaster response or calamity funds, not an additional bureaucracy. You know, you spend P1.5 billion in terms of salaries and MOOEs (Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses) per department you create," he said in an interview on ANC.

The Senate is expected to open the period of amendments for the national budget on Thursday, November 26, with the possibility of approving it on second and third readings on the same day.

If this schedule would be followed, the bicameral conference committee meetings may run from November 28 to December 3, and a bicam report may be signed on December 9. — **RSJ, GMA News**

New rule clears Indonesia's protected forests for agribusiness

Indonesia's environment ministry has issued a new regulation aimed at boosting domestic crop supplies, but critics say it prioritises the interests of agribusiness at the expense of small farmers and the environment.



Land cleared to make way for palm oil in Indonesia. Image: [richcarey](#), [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

By Hans Nicholas Jong, [Mongabay.com](#)

Nov. 23, 2020

Indonesia's dwindling forests may be cleared for farmland under a government-led programme to boost domestic food production, raising fears of a surge in deforestation.

The government's "food estate" programme calls for establishing millions of hectares of new farmland, mostly for rice and other staple crops. To ensure there's sufficient land for the programme, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry issued [a regulation](#) on Oct. 26 permitting protected forest areas to be cleared for that purpose on a "large scale."



[FOOD & AGRICULTURE](#)

New rule clears Indonesia's protected forests for agribusiness

Indonesia's food estate programme to expand new plantations in forest frontiers

Under existing laws, forest areas in Indonesia are off-limits for plantations unless the ministry issues a forest conversion permit to allow farming there. But under the new regulation, plantation operators won't have to apply for such a permit, and the once-protected forests will be redesignated as "forest areas for food security," or KHKP by the Indonesian acronym.

These areas may be developed as food estates for up to 20 years, extended indefinitely thereafter.

The KHKP regulation has drawn immediate criticism from environmental groups, who warn it strips away what few protections still apply to Indonesia's last remaining swaths of biodiverse rainforest.

"The term 'large scale' indicates that this food estate programme will alter the natural landscape in vast areas, thousands of hectares," Nur Hidayati, executive director of the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (Walhi), said at a recent online press conference. "This is very worrying because there have never been cases where large-scale land or forest conversion has created a positive impact on the ecosystem or our environment."

If natural protected forests can be converted into food estates, the world will lose the only tropical forests in the world's richest archipelago.

Emil Salim, former minister of environment, Indonesia

Deforestation concerns

There are 29.7 million hectares (73.4 million acres) of protected forest — an area the size of Italy — across Indonesia, representing a quarter of the country's total forest area, according to [official data](#).

There used to be much more: over the past 20 years, the government degazetted 26 million hectares (64 million acres) of forest, or the size of New Zealand, to be exploited for commercial use, predominantly plantations.

The government designates a forest as protected if it meets [one of six criteria](#), such as being located in a watershed area, or having steep slopes, sensitive soil types and high precipitation intensity, among others.

The ostensible goal of maintaining forests as protected is to prevent floods, control erosion, and maintain soil fertility. But the new regulation threatens these objectives by encouraging the destruction of these valuable ecosystems, says Emil Salim, a former minister of environment.

New rule clears Indonesia's protected forests for agribusiness

"If natural protected forests can be converted into food estates, the world will lose the only tropical forests in the world's richest archipelago with a variety of biological resources, potential food and untouched medicinal ingredients," he [tweeted](#) in Indonesian on Nov. 17. "Now the ecosystem has been changed to monoculture food!"

Daniel Johan, a lawmaker who sits on the parliamentary oversight commission for agriculture, has also criticised the ministerial regulation.

"The biggest concern is that people will flock to and encroach into protected forests to cut down the trees and clear the land, and then this will be legalized by this ministerial regulation," he [said](#). "How do you monitor this on the ground? And we have to talk about the impact of environmental damage, such as landslides and droughts. This should have been considered when making the policy."

Others have flagged the potential for the new regulation to encourage unbridled logging, by waiving timber taxes for logging companies that manage land inside the designated food estates.

"It shouldn't be this way," said Herry Purnomo, a senior scientist at the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

The risk of deforestation is exacerbated by a recently passed deregulation bill, known as the "omnibus law on job creation," that removes a requirement for local governments to maintain at least 30 per cent of each watershed and/or island area as forest area.

Wahyu A. Perdana, who heads Walhi's department for food, water and essential ecosystems, says this effectively frees up Indonesia's forests to be cleared for the food estate programme, with no legal consequences for the local governments that permit it.

Boon for corporate farming

Daniel, the member of parliament, represents a constituency in Kalimantan, the Indonesian portion of the island of Borneo, which the government has included in its plan for the nationwide network of food estates.

In the districts of Pulang Pisau and Kapuas in Central Kalimantan province, the government has identified 165,000 hectares (407,700 acres) of potential farmland. Most of it sits on wetlands that were targeted for an identical initiative, the Mega Rice Project (MRP), in the mid-1990s. The government ultimately abandoned that earlier project, leaving behind a dried-out wasteland that burns on a large scale almost every year.

Across the water, in North Sumatra, the government is eyeing [61,000 hectares](#) (150,700 acres) of land on a plateau that straddles four districts.

New rule clears Indonesia's protected forests for agribusiness

The new regulation and other policies will ensure that much of that land will be farmed by major corporations rather than small farmers, said Herry from CIFOR, citing the emphasis on “large-scale” estates.

“People usually farm on a small scale, so large scale — estates — is usually [developed by] either state-owned companies or private firms,” he said. “So scale does matter.”

The regulation also makes no mention of food security for small farmers, while coddling big investors, said Dimas Hartono, director of Walhi's Central Kalimantan provincial chapter.

“Through this ministerial regulation, we see efforts to eliminate people's rights, which should have been promoted,” he said. “It doesn't say anything about food sovereignty among the people, but food security managed by big investments. People's rights to cultivate their lands aren't stipulated in this regulation.”

That gives big corporations even greater control over Indonesia's land and forests, including the protected forests that were previously off-limits to them. It also ensures that this new farmland will be used for monocropping: growing a single, economically valuable commodity across large areas, including rice.

But if the food estate programme were to promote community-managed farming instead, it could have less of an impact on biodiversity loss, Herry said. Community farms tend to cultivate a wide variety of crops interspersed among trees, in a system known as agroforestry, to ensure year-round harvests. [Agroforestry](#) systems also maintain some of the biodiversity in a given area that would otherwise disappear under a monocrop system.

Jatna Supriatna, a conservation biologist at the University of Indonesia, echoed the view, saying prioritizing agroforestry would allow the protection and rehabilitation of degraded forest areas. He cited the example of shade-grown coffee, which encourages the maintenance of trees. “And as time passes,” he said, “the forests will be healthy.”

Nur from Walhi attributed the food estate programme's push for monoculture crops on policymakers' view of forests as being of no value unless they could be logged and cleared for farmland.

“It's a failure of the government to see forests not as a source of food, so they have to be cut down,” she said.

Why does it have to be protected forest?

The government has responded that only it, and not plantation companies, can propose forest areas that may be degazetted for the food estate programme. It says this should allay any concerns that companies operating illegally inside forest areas may exploit the programme to legitimize their operations.

New rule clears Indonesia's protected forests for agribusiness

It also says the only protected forest areas that may be cleared for the programme are those deemed to have already been degraded and thus are no longer serving any of the environmental criteria used to define a forest. And these conversions can only proceed following comprehensive studies and an environmental impact analysis, said Sigit Hardwinarto, the environment ministry's head of zoning.

"What's most important is that the protected forest areas have to meet the requirement of not having trees no more, or no longer have their functions," he said.

He also said the food estate programme would feature a form of agroforestry, what the government calls "compound land utilization." This will effectively allow designated areas to be used for more than one type of cultivation, from growing food and cash crops, to horticulture, to fish farming.

Herry from CIFOR said this would be a welcome development, but only if the role of small-scale farmers is given greater emphasis across the wider policy.

"If this [programme] wants to be compatible with the public, then it has to be at a small scale," he said. "If it's indeed for companies, then just allocate forests that are already earmarked for companies, such as production forests that may be converted for other uses. These forests are clearly for companies, so there's no overlap and no disguise."

Yanto Santosa, a forestry professor at the Bogor Institute of Agriculture, welcomed the ministry's new regulation, saying it would be a boon for oil palm farmers.

Yanto, who is controversial within the academic community for his views in support of the palm oil industry, said clearing a degraded forest to plant oil palms doesn't constitute deforestation.

"I am very happy because oil palm is supposed to be a food crop and it is a tree as well, even though it's true that it has no timber," he said during a recent online discussion. "We all agree that forests can't be cleared for oil palm, but if they've already been degraded and there is no vegetation, then the [environment] minister said it is allowed, even in protected forest areas."

He said this should only apply to farmers with small plots, not companies running large plantations.

Herry said carbon stock should be the objective measure for how cleared forestland should be replanted, noting that oil palms are notoriously poor at sequestering carbon compared to the old-growth and timber trees of agroforestry farms.

"It's the easiest indicator," he said. "For example, say a forest has a carbon stock of 50 tonnes per hectare. With agroforestry, hopefully it can be increased to 70 tonnes. But if it's replaced by oil palm plantations, it'll decline to 29 tonnes."



New rule clears Indonesia's protected forests for agribusiness

Others, however, still see too much of a risk to allow agricultural activities inside protected forests.

“Has the government conducted mapping and a thorough study on the impact [of the programme]?” said Daniel, the lawmaker. “We shouldn’t let a policy with a wide impact be carried out carelessly without an in-depth study, especially considering that year after year the size of protected forests keeps shrinking.

“There should be many other options than [clearing] protected forests, such as planting on abandoned agricultural fields,” he added. “Why does it have to be protected forest?”

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