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News Release

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Villar warns massive trading of 'tuko' will allow dengue mosquitoes to thrive

Sen. Manny Villar today expressed apprehension over the hunting of geckos, which he said will allow dengue virus-carrying mosquitoes to multiply, hurting the government campaign to control the fatal disease.

Villar, chairman of the Senate Committee on Trade and Commerce, said the reported massive trading of geckos, locally known as 'tuko,' poses a threat on the population of this type of reptile that feeds on insects such as mosquitoes.

"Recent reports stating the rise in hunting and selling of these reptiles because of their high cost in the international wildlife market coincide with the rise in the number of dengue patients now being monitored by the Department of Health (DOH)," Villar said.

Data from the latest Disease Surveillance Report of the DOH-National Epidemiology Center (NEC) from the period January-June 2011 estimated dengue cases nationwide at 27,000.

He noted that much of the interest in these reptiles was generated by a claim that geckos can cure cancer, asthma, tuberculosis, impotence and even Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Although in a recent press statement, DOH said the use of geckos as cure for AIDS or asthma was unproven and had no scientific basis.

"The public must be guided accordingly on the medicinal worth of geckos if there's any. Baka sa halip na gumaling sila ay lumala pa ang kanilang karamdaman dahil sa kumakalat na bali-balita," Villar said.

According to reports, 500 grams of geckos, which is commonly found in households and their surrounding areas, sell from P50,000 to P500,000. Trading of geckos is primarily done online through networking sites and other internet-based marketing networks where a sale is made to the highest bidder.

"Although geckos are not classified as either critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable, it is now under threat from over collection which can ultimately lead to vulnerability or extinction," he said.

Villar added the government must act in order to save the specie from threats because existing wildlife plays a role in the balance of nature.

Villar filed Senate Resolution No. 538 urging the Trade and Commerce committee to conduct an inquiry on the reported massive trading of geckos for the purpose of crafting measures that will protect the specie from threats, ensure their survival and maintain the unique balance of our ecosystem.

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