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Flooding in Cagayan, Isabela

Villar calls for a stop in illegal activities destroying the Sierra Madre

Sen. Manny Villar appealed to put a stop in all illegal activities which continue to destroy the Sierra Madre Mountain Range causing landslides and flash floods in its surrounding areas.

“We are seeing in our midst the effects of the continued destruction of the Sierra Madre. The flooding and landslides in Cagayan and Isabela tells us that if we do not act now to stop this, devastation of greater proportion is coming,” Villar said.

In filing Proposed Senate Resolution No. 157, Villar urged the Committee on Environment and Natural resources to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, on the reported destruction of the Sierra Madre Mountain Range on account of documented developmental aggressions carried against it.

Villar noted that Sierra Madre is classified as a critical conservation priority area in the Philippines because of over-harvesting of resources, mostly by loggers and miners, and other developmental aggressions such as creation of dams, landfills and garbage dump projects.

Logging activities apparently still abound despite an existing logging ban in the areas of Sierra Madre as seen in recent news reports where truckloads of illegally cut hardwood were seized in the towns of Ilagan and San Mariano, Isabela and the presence of operational saw mills in Agos Riverbank in the mountain village of Magsaysay, he added.

Likewise, he filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 240, which directs the Environment Committee and the Committee on Climate Change to look into the alleged reports of illegal logging and transport of logs from the Sierra Madre Mountains.

Reports say the illegally felled log otherwise known as “hot logs” are being transported through the Umiray River, a waterway between Quezon and Aurora provinces.

Villar cited the benefits given by the mountain range acting as an eastern wall for Luzon protecting the island from an average of 26 storms every year.

“The continued degradation of the remaining forest of the Sierra Madre will only escalate the effects of climate change on its surrounding areas and will bring greater destruction if not prevented,” he said.

Sierra Madre is 500 km long, covering 1.4 million hectares of land in Luzon that starts in Cagayan and ends in Quezon Province. It is home to at least 10 million people, which include 11 indigenous groups like Dumagat, Kalinga, Gaddang, and Bugkalot.

The mountain range has the largest remaining old-growth forest cover in the Philippines, representing 50 percent of the remaining forests in the country, and a species diversity accounting for nearly half of the country’s natural wealth.

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