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DENR asked to identify polluters of Bulacan rivers

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MANILA, Philippines -- Caloocan City Mayor Enrico Echiverri asked the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) on Thursday to investigate the real source of pollution of two Bulacan rivers following their inclusion on a list of the most polluted places drawn up by a foreign institute.

Echiverri's request stemmed from the statement of Marilao Mayor Epifanio Guillermo that the sources of the dirty water of the rivers of Marilao and Meycauayan City are the cities of Valenzuela and Caloocan.

The two Bulacan cities were included in the "Dirty 30" list of the most polluted places in the developing world recently released by the New York-based Blacksmith Institute.

Guillermo had said earlier that industries based in nearby Metro Manila and garbage thrown by residents of Bagong Silang, Caloocan City contributed to the degradation of the rivers of Marilao and Meycauayan.

According to Echiverri, it is important to determine the sources of the contamination and waste materials in order to safeguard the rivers and nearby residents, and to penalize those responsible for the effluence.

He said he formally requested the DENR to conduct a thorough investigation in order to determine the sources of the pollution that has contaminated the waterway.

He also denied that the solid and chemical wastes that that have contaminated the Marilao River originated from his city.

"It is improbable that the solid and chemical waste materials came from Caloocan, since there are no factories and industrial plants located near the river that are within the boundaries of the city," Echiverri said.

Valenzuela City Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian also disputed Guillermo's allegations that the city's waste was being dumped in the two rivers.

"It's impossible that our waste would flow towards Marilao, because they are our upstream and we are downstream," Gatchalian said.

Echiverri also disclosed that a neighboring two-hectare dump situated in Barangay (village) Kaingin in Bulacan could be affecting the present condition of the Marilao River .

The Marilao River marks the boundary between Caloocan City and San Jose Del Monte in Bulacan.

In the World's Worst Polluted Places for 2007, the Blacksmith Institute stated that "Industrial waste is haphazardly dumped into the Marilao, Meycauayan, and Obando River system, a source of drinking and agricultural water supplies for the 250,000 people living in and around" the Meycauayan-Marilao area.

"The river system is extremely polluted due to wastes received from tanneries, gold and precious metals refineries, the largest lead smelter in the Philippines, and numerous municipal dumpsites," the report said.

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