

REGIONS

Group dares DENR exec: Sue air monitoring company – if you can

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MANILA, Philippines – An environment advocate group has dared an official of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to file cases against an air monitoring company — or just resign from his post.

According to the Limpyong Hangin Alang sa Kaugmaon sa Toledo (LAHAT), a clean air advocate from Toledo City in Cebu, DENR Undersecretary Benny Antiporda should make good on his threat to sue Air Visual for supposedly releasing reports that the country's air quality was getting worse.

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However, the group said on Sunday that it doubted that Air Visual was lying, given that they had also called out government officials on the issue.

“LAHAT challenges USec Antiporda to sue the environment and climate justice groups who raised the issue of poor air quality in the Philippines alongside with the Air Visual Report,” Cebu Chapter Convenor Teody Navea said in a statement.

“The legal case against this group would mean DENR's seriousness of the Philippines' air quality. But if Usec. Antiporda will not make serious his threat to sue, it would be better if he will resign from his position,” he added.

In an interview with CNN Philippines, Antiporda said that such organizations keep creating reports discrediting the Philippines without presenting proof. However, LAHAT noted that they were unfazed by Antiporda's threats, saying that the DENR had not acted on complaints about air pollution in their area.

In Air Visual's air monitoring report for 2019, the Philippines was ranked 48th in its list of the countries with the most polluted air, with an air quality index (AQI) of 14.62, for a moderate ranking.

A Barangay Cabitoonan official said that they have asked DENR for assistance, as they have been allegedly suffering from polluted air due to coal power plants in the area.

"Many of us have long expressed this issue to the DENR even before any formal report that many of us in Toledo are suffering from dirty air due to the Aboitiz coal-fired power plants," Allan Baterna said.

"The department has ignored us despite numerous instances when we brought the casualties, deaths, and injuries brought about by dirty air to their attention," he added.

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