

# Ombudsman orders Samar DENR worker charged for bribe attempt

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*By Nestor L. Abrematea*

Catbalogan City, Samar — An employee of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) based here has been ordered charged by the Office of the Ombudsman for Visayas for demanding a bribe from a woman whose jeepney filled with illegal lumber was seized by CENRO.

Deputy Ombudsman for the Visayas Paul Elmer Clemente found Angelito Villanueva guilty of simple misconduct and was ordered suspended without pay for six months.

Clemente also found probable cause to charge Villanueva with violation of Section 7(d) of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Officials and Employees (Republic Act No. 6713).

Investigation found that in April 2013, Villanueva as hearing officer, demanded a bribe from a woman in exchange for her jeepney's release and for not filing a case against her.

"Villanueva told her that they would delay the processing until such time that she would be able to produce the amount demanded," the Ombudsman noted.

When Villanueva sensed that the complainant will not give in to his demand for a bribe, the CENRO officer filed a case against her in April 2014.

In its decision, the Ombudsman said "the delay in the filing of the criminal case establishes that while performing his official duties, Villanueva indeed solicited from complainant a certain amount of money."

According to Clemente, "the delay was cunningly designed by respondent Villanueva to buy time for complainant to produce the solicited amount and that the eventual refusal by complainant to give in to Villanueva's demand prompted him to cause the filing of the criminal case."

"When an officer or employee is disciplined, the object is not the punishment of such officer or employee but the improvement of the public service and the preservation of the public's faith and confidence in the government," he said.

The Office of the Ombudsman directed the DENR secretary to implement the suspension order.

CENRO Officer Marcialito Torres was not available for comment on the serving of the suspension order from DENR Central Office in Manila.

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