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DILG : LOCAL EXECES BEHIND BORACAY WOES

LGUs warned they are 'accountable for crisis,' face criminal charges

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Local officials who have jurisdiction over Boracay, the country's premier tourist destination, face criminal charges for allowing wanton violation of environmental and building rules that led to President Duterte condemning the world-famous resort island as one big cesspool.

Eduardo Año, officer in charge of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), said local governments were "accountable for the crisis" in Boracay. "They should have enforced environmental laws and their own local ordinances,"

Año, former Armed Forces chief of staff, said in a statement.

Año said the local government of Malay, the town in Aklan province that has jurisdiction over Boracay, should cooperate with a probe being conducted by the DILG and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Glaring violations

Año said glaring violations of environmental and building rules, like establishments being built too near the sea, "would not be possible without building and construction permits issued by the LGU (local government unit)."

The DILG investigation, ac-

ording to Año, is poring into the liability of local officials who issued the permits that allowed violators of environmental and building rules to operate businesses.

He said another glaring evidence of neglect on the part of local officials were structures built in areas classified as forest land. "Why did the barangay issue the necessary clearances? This we intend to find out and soon," he said.

Año said he was sure that administrative and criminal charges would be filed against officials as a result of the investigation. "We will go where the evidence brings us," he said.

According to Año, the DILG was also working closely with the DENR and the local government of Malay for a massive cleanup in Boracay and the full enforcement of environmental laws there.

Cleanup drive

The DENR has given Boracay establishments, which release untreated wastewater and sewage into the sea, two months to either connect to the sewage treatment plant of Boracay Island Water Company or install their own wastewater treatment facilities.

Local governments should "shape up without waiting to be rebuked." INQ

* Dept. of Interior and Local Government (DILG)