

# New QC jail will have skills center, power station, cafeteria

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At daytime, inmates at the Quezon City jail can move around in a courtyard, which also serves as a basketball court, at the male detention facility's ground floor.

It is a different story, however, by nightfall when prisoners fight for every inch of sleeping space at the courtyard, on stairways and inside their cramped cells.

Located in Kamuning district, the facility for male detainees occupies a measly 3,000 square meters, or 0.3 hectare, of land. The jail, which houses 4,247 detainees, is ideally meant to hold only 600 to 800 inmates.

The female dormitory, which has 950 detainees, is housed at Camp Karingal in Barangay Sikatuna, where it shares space with the headquarters of the **Quezon City Police District**.

The Quezon City jail once gave the problem of prison congestion in the country a human face, with images of shirtless, sweaty inmates, sleeping a few inches apart on concrete floors and steps, captured in photographs.

### Better conditions

But inmates at the Quezon City jail may begin looking forward to better living conditions while in detention, as the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) begins the construction of a new facility to house its rapidly swelling population.

Envisioned to function as its own community—equipped with health centers and livelihood areas—the new city jail will rise on a 2.4-hectare lot on Payatas Road at Barangay Bagong Silangan. Once completed in 2020, it will be BJMP's biggest facility for its detainees.

For both BJMP and local government officials, the construction of the new jail was a “realization” of a dream for more humane surroundings for both detainees and jail personnel.

During the groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday, Jail Director Deogracias Tapayan, BJMP chief, said the new facility would “lessen the clamor about scarcity in space and ventilation.”

“It gives hope to all ... The end goal is to secure the citizens of Quezon City by transforming lives inside jails,” Tapayan said, noting the importance of the detainees' reintegration to society.

BJMP records showed that 35,967 detainees were in its facilities in Metro Manila, for a congestion rate of 587 percent.

Quezon City jail's female and male dormitories were the fifth and sixth most congested jails in the National Capital Region, respectively. Supt. Ermilito Moral, Quezon City jail warden, pegged the congestion rate at the male dormitory at 1,373 percent.

Topping the list was Navotas City jail, with a congestion rate of 3,979 percent, followed by Caloocan City jail, with 2,225-percent rate.

As of June, a total of 143,972 suspects were crammed inside 486 jails nationwide, for a congestion rate of 578 percent. Despite the whopping figure, this was already slightly lower

than the 612 percent recorded at the end of 2017.

#### P1.4-B facility

Once completed, the P1.4-billion facility in Payatas can accommodate over 4,400 detainees, both men and women. It will also house a clinic, a multipurpose area, basketball courts, and a livelihood and training area.

Also to be built are facilities for power generation, garbage collection and waste management, as well as a cafeteria. Aside from the complex itself, the city government will also build a police station, a fire station and a barangay health center on at least a hectare of land. In 2015, a 3.4-ha, tree-filled property was acquired by the Quezon City government from private landowners for P120 million. A portion of this property was later donated to the BJMP.

Mayor **Herbert Bautista** said he had ordered a tree inventory prior to the construction. He said trees that would be cut would be used to build chairs and tables for establishments in the jail complex.

Moral said the facility would be beneficial to the 150 personnel of the Quezon City jail, where the low number allows a ratio of only one jail officer to at least 28 detainees.

#### Security

“With the new facility, the security of our personnel will not be compromised and we can exercise more control,” he said. “Riots can also be avoided since we can now provide more livelihood activities and recreation programs for them, given the wider space.”

At the Quezon City jail, gang riots, sparked by lack of decent space, have become more common. Jail officials had attributed the violence to the inmates’ “more irritable” attitudes.

In February, nine inmates were injured after they launched makeshift arrows and used their plywood beds as shields in a five-minute riot at the jail’s courtyard. The “weapons” they used were made from materials taken from their crumbling building.

In November last year, two inmates died following another riot, this time after dirty water was accidentally splashed on sleeping inmates on the ground floor.