RP experiencing 'abnormal summer'

by HELEN FLORES
Philstar.com

IT shouldn't be raining in summer, and the intermittent rains could be an indication of climate change, the chief of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) warned.

Pagasa administrator Prisco Nilo said that the prevalence of various rain-producing weather systems like the cold front, intertropical convergence zone (ITCZ) and low-pressure area during this time of the year is "abnormal."

Heavy rains poured over Metro Manila last April 20 brought by the tail-end of a cold front which is affecting Central and Southern Luzon and the Visayas.

Nilo said the cold front would continue to affect the National Capital Region in the next 24 hours.

Nathaniel Cruz, Pagasa deputy director for operations and services officer-in-charge, earlier said that if rains would continue to prevail this April, Filipinos could expect an early onset of the rainy season.

The usual onset of the rainy season is during the second or third week of May.

Cruz noted that Metro Manila received "above normal" rainfall last month, with total amount of rainfall recorded in Metro Manila from March 1 to 29 topping 100 millimeters, way above the 22-millimeter monthly precipitation in Metro Manila over a 30-year period.

Cruz said the above normal rain experienced in Metro Manila and other parts of the country could also be due to the "La Niña-like" condition persisting over the Pacific Ocean.

La Niña is a weather phenomenon that is characterized by excessive rainfall.

Meanwhile, in a weather bulletin last April 21, Pagasa said that aside from the tail-end of a cold front, the ITCZ is also affecting Mindanao.

Pagasa said Central and Southern Luzon and the Visayas would experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rains and isolated thunderstorms.

Mindanao and Palawan, on the other hand, would have mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms.

The rest of the country would be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms mostly in the afternoon or evening.

Pagasa said light to moderate winds blowing from the southeast and southwest would prevail over Luzon and the Visayas and coming from the northeast and northwest over Mindanao. The coastal waters throughout the archipelago would be slight to moderate.

Confront environmental crisis, says GMA

PRESIDENT Arroyo called for a "committed individual response" from Filipinos to help confront the "crisis in the environment."

Mrs. Arroyo said climate change is "as critical, if not even more critical, as the need to solve the global financial crisis."

"In spite of all the efforts of government, there is still a need to ensure that every citizen should contribute in reducing carbon emissions," she said in a statement ahead of the global Earth Day celebration on April 22.

The President is chair of the Presidential Task Force on Climate Change (PTCC).

Presidential Adviser on Global Warming and Climate Change Heherson Alvarez said Mrs. Arroyo is spearheading a week-long Earth Day celebration with the theme "*Earth Survival: Climate Change Solutions.*"

In Baguio City, environmentalists leading the observance of World Earth Day tomorrow are urging the government to halt destructive projects in the country.

Citing that the Philippines still remains as "the hottest of ecological hotspots being one of the countries which have the most devastated environment," Kalikasan PNE said the archipelago has one of the fastest biodiversity loss in the world that remains unchecked.

To qualify as an ecological hotspot, a region must meet two strict criteria: it must contain at least 1,500 species of vascular plants as endemics, and has lost at least 70 percent of its original habitat.

Clemente Bautista, national coordinator of Kalikasan PNE, said more than 50 percent of our biodiversity is endemic to the country and the country has lost more than 93 percent of its original habitat.

Environmental groups claim that based on records, legal commercial logging by foreign and local companies primarily caused the deforestation in the country while commercial mining projects are one of the major threats in environmentally critical areas such as watersheds and forests.

Even the Ecological Waste Coalition (EcoWaste) lamented the operation of dumpsites near environmentally-critical areas, which it said has been permitted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), which is supposed to encourage the protection and preservation of the ecosystem.

Members of EcoWaste donned black veils and gathered in front of the DENR office along Visayas Avenue "to mourn" the failure of the government to curb threats to water safety.

Meantime, Sen. Loren Legarda pushed for the need for all countries to address the impact of disasters by reducing risks caused by climate changes around the world. *(Philstar.com)*

Speaker: No choice but to act on reply bill

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

THE House of Representatives has no choice but to act on the right of reply bill because it has been transmitted by the Senate to the chamber, Speaker Prospero Nograles said last April 21.

Nograles made the statement as he met representatives of media groups and networks opposed to the bill, led by the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, over lunch.

The Senate version of the bill, authored by Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr., was passed on third reading and was transmitted to the House last year. The House version has passed the committee level and is up for plenary debates.

Nograles said members of the House have two options on the bill.

"One, we can concur absolutely with the Senate version, or two, we can concur with amendments, then it goes to bicam (bicameral conference committee)," he said.

Asked if a third option could be not acting on the bill, he said, "That's not my style. I always bite the bullet. I will put everything on the table."

Nograles said he would consult with House leaders on what to do with the measure.

Sonny Fernandez, NUJP secretary general, said there was no need for the bill because the right of reply is inherent in the job of journalists.

Media groups are protesting the bill, which will compel them to print or air the reply of anyone who feels slighted by criticism in the same space and with the same prominence within three days.

They pointed out that the Constitution forbids Congress from passing any law that would abridge freedom of speech and of the press.

Before the dialogue with Nograles, the NUJP and the College Editors Guild of the Philippines (CEGP) held a brief protest outside the south gate of the Batasan Complex.

Aside from the NUJP and the CEGP, other groups who attended the dialogue were the Philippine Press Institute (PPI), Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), TV-5, ABC-CBN, GMA Network, and the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines.