

DSWD starts distribution of hot meals, canned goods

by NIKKO DIZON
Inquirer.net

Manila, Central Luzon, Calabarzon, Mimaropa, Bicol and the Cordillera Administrative Region, the agency said.

The DSWD said that it was serving 233 evacuation centers in Metro Manila housing 33,248 families or 170,344 persons; two in Region 1 with 71 families or 241 persons; 26 in Region 3 serving 3,444 families or 16,292 persons; 96 in Region 4-A serving 9,610 families or 45,689 persons; and one in Region 12 with 15 families or 75 persons.

Of the evacuation centers in 17 cities in Metro Manila, 42 were in Quezon; 24 each in Valenzuela and Caloocan; 23 in Taguig; 19 in Pateros; 15 in Mandaluyong; 14 in Manila; 13 each in Pasig and Las Piñas; 12 in Malabon; 11 each in Makati and Muntinlupa; 5 in Marikina; 3 in Parañaque; 2 in Navotas; and 1 each in Pasay and San Juan. ■

Villar opens Ondoy relief hotlines, drop-off center

FOLLOWING the most devastating typhoon in recent memory, Senator Manny Villar has set up 24-hour hotlines, dubbed Tulong Villar Relief Assistance Hotlines, and designated a drop-off center for people who want to help those affected.

“Although floods have generally receded, many areas remain under water,” said Villar. “We need to quickly extricate our countrymen who have suffered so much already. Those in evacuation centers also need our help.”

With the cooperation of the Nacionalista Party and its supporters, the Villar group has already seen to the needs of almost 18,000 individuals affected by Ondoy. Said Atty. Adel Tama-

no, NP spokesman: “Senator Villar and popular TV personality Willie Revillame yesterday flew by chopper to deliver food and supplies to residents trapped by floods in Marikina, Cainta, and Pasig. Later, they joined myself and Rep. Gilbert Remulla in distributing water, rice, noodles, and canned goods to a Quezon City barangay.”

Villar is heading a systematic three-pronged effort to assist victims of Ondoy, which ravaged much of Southern Luzon, particularly Metro Manila. It submerged many areas of the metropolis with unprecedented speed and severity, killing more than 80 people and displacing 330,000 as it dropped a month’s worth of rain in a day.

A total of 40 teams with trucks have been sent out to rescue stranded individuals, and distribute relief goods to various evacuation centers in Bulacan, Angono, Manila, Mandaluyong, San Juan, Quezon City, and other hard-hit locations particularly Cainta and Marikina.

Donations and supplies from anyone wishing to help are accepted at all entrances of Star Mall Edsa corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City. “Right now, the most important thing is to help as many people as we can. We have the capability to make sure your donations reach those who most need them. Let’s work together at this most trying time,” Villar said. ■

Namfrel chief quits; Cuisia takes over

by KRISTINE L. ALAVE
Inquirer.net

MANILA – Former Ambassador Henrietta de Villa has resigned from her post as chairperson of the National Citizens’ Movement for Free Elections (Namfrel), a poll watchdog accredited by the Commission on Elections to conduct quick count of votes.

In a letter dated September 24 to Namfrel vice chair Jose Cuisia Jr., De Villa said she was stepping down to devote more time to her work as head of the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), which focuses on voters’ education.

The PPCRV is allied with the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines.

With De Villa’s resignation, Cuisia will serve as Namfrel’s acting national chair.

De Villa cited “personal differences” with some members of the group but that they parted on

“amicable” terms. She declined to elaborate.

With automated voting and counting in the 2010 elections, Namfrel said it would no longer conduct quick counts. Instead, it would audit the election results, it said.

De Villa said her new focus, voters’ education, would be vital in the upcoming polls.

She became Namfrel chief in July 2008, before the automated polls in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao. She is also a member of the Comelec Advisory Council.

Four other Namfrel members resigned because they were planning to actively campaign for presidential aspirant Sen. Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III. They were former Ambassador Narcisca Escaler, Ramon R. del Rosario, Edward Go and Alberto Lim.

“It’s very important that Namfrel will be nonpartisan,” De Villa said. “If they want to join Namfrel after the elections, they can do so.” ■



RELIEF. A family receives relief goods from a Coast Guard helicopter in Cainta, Rizal. Philstar.com photo by Jonjon Vicencio

Aquino defies Church, backs controversial bill

by ANNA VALMERO
Inquirer.net

MANILA – Senator Benigno “Noynoy” Aquino III said on Monday he remains firm in supporting the passage of House Bill 5043 or proposed Reproductive Health and Population Development Act even if it means the Catholic church and pro-life groups will not support his presidential bid for 2010.

Aquino said the bill can pave the way for parents’ education in taking responsibility for the growth of their children. The country’s population can balloon to more than 92 million, according to a forecast by the National Statistics Office.

“Whatever they say about my position on the RH bill, I am sticking to it despite the pressure from certain quarters. If I get the support or not of the Church and pro-life groups [for my presi-

dential bid in 2010], it is secondary for my advocacy to get everybody educated on reproductive health,” he said.

“Parents must be reminded they have a responsibility with their children,” Aquino stressed. “I need not go far to see a mother with children having only 10 months gap in between and with the next generation suffering the same poor conditions.”

But even with a law on reproductive health, Aquino said parents should be given independence to decide on how many children they want and whether or not to use natural or artificial methods of contraception.

Aquino said he is not “comfortable” that the government will provide a specific budget in support of artificial family planning. “And it is not right to tell patients that only artificial methods can be used for family planning,” he added. ■

‘Ondoy’ damage on schools reach P73M – DepEd

by ALEXANDER VILLAFANIA
Inquirer.net

MANILA – Damage to the country’s public schools by tropical storm “Ondoy” (international name Ketsana) has reached P73.870 million, according to the Department of Education.

As of 6pm, DepEd’s Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office Rapid Disaster Assessment Report (RA.D.A.R) covered six regions, including the National Capital Region (NCR), Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Regions I, II, III, IV-A and IV-B.

Metro Manila was assessed the greatest damage with nearly P35 million worth of damages to 42 primary and secondary schools, up from just P16.8 million versus the DepEd’s original estimate early Monday.

DepEd continues to receive reports from other provinces for the latest reports on the disaster.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said in a statement that the agency is assessing if the suspension of classes on Tuesday would be extended.

Lapus said they will report on Tuesday morning if an extension of suspension of classes would be implemented. ■

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