



TYPHOON TRACKERS. Ateneo de Naga University Information Technology students (L-R), Ronie Amata, Neithan Casano, and Japsh Vincent Abejero (left) join in photo local weather specialist Michael V. Padua and, iTyphoon head Magno Edilberto Conag III and his wife Maan Borja Conag during the formal launch of the ITyphoon. Photo by GERALD O. ENGUERO

A new typhoon-tracking application was recently introduced in Naga City for users who need constant updates regarding weather disturbances, particularly in places prone to flash floods, landslides and other calamities brought about by the frequent visits of typhoons, low pressure areas and other weather systems. Magno Edilberto Conag III, president of Nueva Caceres Technology Solutions, Inc. (Nueca Technologies), explained that the software iTyphoon is a application that anyone with a smartphone or a tablet gadget can download for free through their own webpage www.nueca.net and the Apple application store for downloadable softwares.

The first version of the application created by Magno and his other teammates under Nueca Technologies, had its first soft launch September 8 of this year. Magno's team's iTyphoon was soon formally launched last October 13 at La Piazza of Avenue Plaza Hotel here.

As residents of typhoon-prone Bicol, Conag and his team chose to develop the software around the weather system in order to provide free invaluable information to the public and alert them regarding possible calamities that may bring damage to life and property.

Free app

The iTyphoon can be downloaded for free with iPhones, iPads and other iOS and smartphones, Conag said.

The application uses updates and other information derived from www.typhoon2000.com prepared by David Michael Padua, head of Typhoon Preparedness Center at Naga College Foundation and dubbed "Mr. Typhoon" of Bicol Region owing to his accurate forecasts of weather systems during the past years.

The available version of iTyphoon has features for basic information (Philippine name, international name, strength and gustiness), background, and tracking of existing typhoons with a real-time map of the Philippines with both the location of the user and the typhoon can be pinpointed.

Conag said that it can only be downloaded by devices ran by iOS and Android because the developers have not developed the program to be available to all handsets due to lack of funds to purchase the needed hardware through which they would be able to launch the application.

"iTyphoon is initially available in the Android and iOS platforms, but we intend to expand into the other platforms, as well, such as Windows, Meego, Java, Symbian, Bada and RIM," Conag added.

User-friendly and neat

Caesar Noel Salvan, IT Head and Assistant Manager of Business Development Department of Japan-PNB Leasing and Finance, was among the first people to download the application on his Identity Tab E301.

“Even now that I am here in Manila, I can monitor the weather in Naga City where my family is,” Salvan said. “As long as there is GPS (Global Positioning System) signals, I can practically check the location of a certain weather disturbance anywhere.”

Diego Buenaflor, organizer at Manila-based 180 Cinema Film Festival and businessman, said that the version one of iTyphoon was easy and fast to download on his Samsung Galaxy Tablet when he came to notice it a month ago.

He said that it was user-friendly and neat that he could easily know the location of a typhoon around the Philippines. He was especially pleased with the fast updates that he gets every time he uses the iTyphoon.

“The application is very clean and works smoothly,” Buenaflor added. “I think it is very helpful to anyone.”

Marlon Razon of the President’s Office of the Ateneo de Naga University, said that he finds using the iTyphoon on his iPad more practical than waiting for weather updates on the radio or television because it can be used anywhere and updates are quickly delivered.

Yet unpopular

The regional office of Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Service Administration (PAGASA) in Legazpi City, Albay, however, remains unaware of the iTyphoon.

A personnel from PAGASA said that they will be willing to look into the features of the application and decide upon a statement once Regional Director Tomas B. Briñas returns from Manila.

The Environment Disaster Management and Emergency Response Office (EDMERO), under the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office of Camarines Sur, was also unaware that the application exists.

Mary Amy Galalac of EDMERO, however, said that although the application may be used as reference at times, the official advisories that they would disseminate and follow will be the ones relayed by the PAGASA since it is the warning system or agency designated by the government.

Damn!

Conag said that the idea of a typhoon-tracking application was hatched in June 4, 2011 after he was inspired by the success story of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg told through the movie ‘The Social Network.’

“I just shouted ‘Damn!’ and jumped up and down in my room in my excitement,” Conag narrated. “It was a moment of illumination and I just felt the need to come

down to the city center and meet the team and do something.”

“What made me shout that powerful word (damn) is that because we know we could do the same thing, but we never thought of doing it because of self-doubt. This is the difference of Zuckerberg from us,” he said.

Conag admitted that the present version of iTyphoon still needs to be improved because it lacks certain features that would give the user the complete information regarding a weather disturbance.

He confirmed that they are already working on a new version which would have additional features such as plotting of previous tracks, forecast tracks, drawing of weather disturbance type, drawing of typhoon coverage and hazard information.

However, Conag added that the next version might no longer be free for users since the group is in need of means to finance its next versions under the iTyphoon project.

He said that he and his team are now looking for partners to support their efforts in order to spare the user from paying for each download of the application.

Zandro Babol, managing partner who takes care of the financial aspects of the project, said that users might have to pay around \$2.99 US for each download if they would not be able to find partners to invest in the project.

Conag said that he hopes to launch the next version for free because he believes that the application is a much needed tool for every person and entity for the protection of lives and property.

The core group of the Nueva Technologies, is composed by Conag and his students Japhet Vincent Abejero, Jonathan Neithan Casano and Ronnie Amata and his wife Marian Gia Borja-Conag.

This mobile application features the following:

Icon – which indicates in real time whether a typhoon or storm is intensifying or weakening;

Summary – indicates Philippine and international name of typhoon, its location, wind speed, gustiness, direction movement, speed, and heading towards what direction;

Background – indicates land fall or over the ocean;

Narrative – brief description of the typhoon's behavior;

Signals – indicates storm warning signal and affected provinces and cities;

Distances – indicates distance and direction with respect to destination, provinces and cities;

Forecast – outlook analysis and 2 to forecast.

The application also has maps which show two locations: 1. Typhoon location denoted by red pin, and 2. User's location, annotated by green pin.

The map may be viewed in standard, satellite or combination. Zoom, pinch and drag gestures are supported.

A reference also helps user to know how to read iTyphoon details. Useful typhoon facts are also included.

During the formal launching, Ateneo de Naga University President Father Jun Primitivo Viray, S.J. took note of the collaboration among the members of the team. He also made special mention of the student team members whom he sees as the future of the full flowering of the IT industry here in the city. With additional report by Gerald O. Enguero

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