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PRE-PLenary CONFERENCES ON THE FY 2017 BUDGET

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Pre-plenary conferences on the proposed FY 2017 budget and plans and programs of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Agriculture (DA) and the agencies within the purview of the Cabinet Secretary, namely the National Food Authority (NFA), Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA), and National Irrigation Administration (NIA) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), held pre-plenary conferences with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the agencies within the purview of the Cabinet Secretary, Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC), and Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) prior to the deliberation of their proposed budgets in the plenary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Magnolia Antonino (4th District, Nueva Ecija) presided over the pre-plenary conference on the proposed FY 2017 budget of the DA and the agricultural bodies being handled by the Cabinet Secretary.</p> <p>Rep. Tom Villarin (Party-List, AKBAYAN) inquired on the steps being undertaken by the DA to curb illegal fishing in Philippine waters, particularly by foreign vessels.</p> <p>Secretary Emmanuel Piñol said that the DA is intensifying its efforts to protect the marine environment, particularly against illegal fishing operations, through its “<i>Bantay Dagat</i>” (Sea Patrol) Program. <i>Bantay Dagat</i> operates under the supervision of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) of the DA in coordination with concerned government offices, local government units (LGUs), and volunteer organizations.</p> <p>Piñol added that the West Philippine Sea Task Force Against Illegal Fishing (WPS-TFAIF) was also created following reports of unabated illegal fishing off the western seaboard of Luzon. The task force is headed by the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), with the participation of the LGUs and local fishermen.</p> <p>Rep. Villarin asked if there is a need to create a separate department or agency that will focus on the protection of the country’s coastal areas and the development of the fisheries and aquatic sector. Piñol said the creation of a separate entity may be one of the options, but he added that perhaps it is just a matter of creating additional plantilla positions in the BFAR for it to be more effective in pursuing its mandate. He revealed that around 70-80% of BFAR’s current manpower complement is hired on job order basis.</p> <p>On the plans of the NFA regarding the lifting of quantitative restrictions (QR) on rice imports next year as part of the country’s commitments under the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement, NFA Deputy Administrator Vic Carina said that there is a need to amend RA 8178 (Agricultural Tarrification Act of 1996) to comply with the lifting of the QR.</p> <p>However, Piñol said the DA has recommended a two-year extension of the imposition of QRs in a bid to buy more time for local farmers to prepare for free trade in agriculture. He averred that local farmers</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) 	<p>are not yet ready to compete with their Asian counterparts, citing the average rice yield per hectare in the country of about 3.9 metric tons and the average cost of P11 per kilo of palay, as compared to Vietnamese rice farmers whose average production is 7 tons per hectare, at an average cost of P6 per kilo.</p> <p>Rep. Carlos “Charlie” Cojuangco (1st District, Tarlac) asked the PCA about its plans relative to the utilization of the coco levy funds. Piñol said that the President has already made instructions to utilize the coco levy fund for the scholarship of the children of coconut farmers and for the rehabilitation of the coconut industry.</p> <p>Piñol also apprised the Committee of the “free irrigation” policy (no irrigation fees will be collected from farmers) of the Duterte administration which will be implemented by the NIA starting next year.</p> <p>The NIA, NFA and PCA were requested to submit their respective legislative agenda for the 17th Congress.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo (1st District, Lanao del Norte) presided over the pre-plenary conference on the proposed budget of the OPAPP.</p> <p>OPAPP Secretary Jesus Dureza said that under the FY 2017 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the OPAPP is set to receive P8.06 billion, which is 949.93% higher than its current budget of P767.91 million. Nearly the entire 2017 budget of OPAPP or P7.16 billion will be utilized for the implementation of the <i>PAYapa at MASaganang PamayaNAn</i> (PAMANA) Program. The program is primarily aimed at promoting peace in conflict areas through socio-economic development interventions.</p> <p>Dureza discussed the six-point peace and development agenda of the OPAPP in pursuit of its mandate, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB); Implementation of the remaining commitments under the Government of the Philippines-Moro National Liberation Front (GPH-MNLF) Peace Agreement; Signing and implementation of peace accords with communist insurgents; Immediate conclusion of the peace process with the Cordillera People’s Liberation Army (CPLA) and the Rebolusyonaryong Partido ng Manggagawa-Pilipinas/Revolutionary Proletarian Army/Alex Boncayao Brigade (RPMP-RPA-ABB); Peace-promoting socio-economic development interventions in conflict affected areas; and Building of a culture of peace and conflict sensitivity. <p>Dureza informed the Committee that the OPAPP is currently in the process of reconstituting the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) either by way of amending RA 9054 (Organic Act for the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao), enhancing the MNLF Peace Agreement of 1996, or revising the proposed Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) filed during the 16th Congress.</p> <p>With regard to the peace negotiations with the Communist Party of the Philippines/New People’s Army/National Democratic Front (CPP/NPA/NDF), which have been stalled for several years, Dureza said that formal talks have already resumed, with Labor Secretary Silvestre “Bebot” Bello III as head of the government panel. He added that a unilateral ceasefire agreement has also been put in place.</p>
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Continuation... Appropriations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South-West Integrated Provincial Terminal (SWIPT) - P19.48 million. <p>BUHAY Party-List Rep. Jose Atienza Jr. requested the MMDA to establish a cohesive plan to divert the traffic in the ports of Manila to the ports of Batangas and Subic to decongest the Manila port areas.</p> <p>Rep. Arnolfo “Arnie” Teves Jr. (3rd District, Negros Oriental) compelled the MMDA to set a definite date within which major roads are cleared of illegally parked vehicles and illegal vendors. Orbos assured the Committee that MMDA’s clearing of major roads will be completed before the year ends.</p> <p>Upon hearing that the MMDA has no helicopters for aerial monitoring of the traffic situation, Rep. Vincent “Bingbong” Crisologo (1st District, Quezon City) suggested to MMDA the procurement of at least two helicopters for this purpose. Rep. Vargas also recommended the use of drones for traffic monitoring.</p> <p>On the suggestion of Rep. Manuel Zubiri (3rd District, Bukidnon) to construct pedestrian-friendly walkways, crossways and pathways, Orbos disclosed that he is already coordinating with Public Works Secretary Mark Villar for the construction of elevated walkways.</p> <p>When asked about MMDA’s disaster preparedness efforts, Orbos cited one problem which is the lack of proper equipment and facilities like mobile hospitals to deal with emergency situations. Rep. Zubiri requested the MMDA to submit to the Committee the list of equipment and facilities needed for quick response during emergencies or disasters before the plenary deliberations of MMDA’s budget proposal on September 30.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Metro Manila Development	Briefing on the priority plans and projects in Metro Manila by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Winston “Winnie” Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), listened to the presentation of the DPWH on its priority plans and projects in Metro Manila.</p> <p>DPWH Undersecretary for Planning and Public-Private Partnership Services Maria Catalina Cabral discussed the “Master Plan on High Standard Highway (HSH) Network Development” and the “Roadmap for Transport Infrastructure Development for Metro Manila and its Surrounding Areas.”</p> <p>The master plan and roadmap involve the implementation of various infrastructure projects intended to reduce travel time and decongest traffic in various parts of Metro Manila, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High standard highways and expressways - Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) expressway, North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) and South Luzon Expressway (SLEX) Connector Road, NLEX Harbor Links, Metro Manila Skyway, and Southeast Metro Manila Expressway; • Interchanges, flyovers, and underpasses - Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue-Paseo de Roxas/Makati Avenue Underpass, C-2 (Gov. Forbes St.)/R-7 (España St.) Interchange, Metro Manila Interchange Construction Projects (MMICP), Bonifacio Global City-Ortigas Center Link Road Project, EDSA-Taft Flyover, and UP-Miriam-Ateneo Viaduct along C-5/Katipunan; and • Strengthening of Guadalupe and Lambingan Bridges.

<p>Continuation... Metro Manila Development</p>		<p>Cabral also presented the master plan for flood management, which includes the improvement of selected rivers and drainages in Metro Manila and its surrounding areas.</p> <p>Other proposed projects of the DPWH are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manila Bay Integrated Flood Control, Coastal Defense and Expressway Project; • R7 Expressway; • Pasig-Marikina Expressway; • Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike; • C-5 Kalayaan-Bagong Ilog Improvement Project; • Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project (Phase IV); • Laguna Lakeshore Expressway Dike; • Marikina Dam; • Flood Protection Works in the Marikina River; and • Flood Mitigation Project in the East Manggahan Floodway Area (Stage I). <p>Rep. Manuel Luis Lopez (1st District, Manila) inquired on the DPWH's plans to decongest traffic in the Manila port areas. Cabral said efforts are being done to maximize the use of ports located in Batangas and Subic.</p> <p>On the constant flooding on España, Manila and other roads around the University of Sto. Tomas (UST), Rep. Edward Vera Perez Maceda (4th District, Manila) asked the DPWH how it intends to address the problem.</p> <p>DPWH NCR Regional Director Melvin Navarro disclosed that one of the remedial measures the DPWH had proposed was to build a retarding basin (an excavated area for temporarily storing storm water) in the football grounds of UST but the UST Administration did not allow it.</p> <p>Nevertheless, Navarro said the Blumentritt Interceptor Catchment Area project, which will be completed by the end this year, will help minimize the problem of flooding in the España area.</p>
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