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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2017 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and its attached agencies 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), listened to the presentation on the proposed FY 2017 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Department of Energy (DOE).</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Corazon Nuñez-Malanyaon (1st District, Davao Oriental) sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DENR.</p> <p>At the outset, Environment Secretary Regina Paz Lopez presented the principles underlying the policy direction of the DENR under her stewardship. She said the country can eradicate poverty if its natural resources are used in a way that will have inclusive benefit and will promote the common good.</p> <p>Lopez also said the DENR will shift from a mere regulatory agency, issuing permits and licenses, to an agency that will truly perform its mandate of conserving, managing and developing the country's environment and natural resources. She added that she will also transform the DENR workforce into a pool of committed personnel to ensure that programs and policies are properly implemented.</p> <p>Presenting the DENR's budget, Undersecretary for Policy and Planning Marlo Mendoza said that under the 2017 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DENR and its attached agencies will get a total of P28.67 billion, an increase of 31.2% compared to their 2016 budget of P21.84 billion.</p> <p>The DENR's budget for 2017 is distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of the Secretary – P23.7 billion; Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) – P2.21 billion; National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) – P1.37 billion; Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) – P1.16 billion; National Water Resources Board (NWRB) – P129 million; Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) – P92 million. <p>Mendoza said the DENR's major programs and targets for 2017 are the enhancement of the National Greening Program (NGP); intensification of the forest protection program, environmental protection program, and biodiversity conservation program; and the promotion of responsible mining.</p> <p>Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija) inquired on the 84.6% increase in DENR's budget for personnel services. Undersecretary for Staff Bureaus Demetrio Ignacio Jr. said it is mainly due to the personnel's salary increase under the second tranche of the salary standardization for government employees.</p> <p>On the query of the House Members on the unused funds of the DENR amounting to billions of pesos in the past years, Mendoza explained that these are funds supposedly for foreign-assisted projects which did not push through.</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Energy (DOE) 	<p>Sought to comment on the policy direction of the DENR with regard to the mining industry, Lopez stressed that the Department is guided by the principle that mining activities should uphold social justice, with the welfare of the people and the environment as the main consideration. She lamented that at present, only 18% of the income from mining goes to the coffers of the government while 82% goes to mining companies.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City), Undersecretary for Environment Leo Jasareno said that the policy of the DENR pertaining to small-scale mining or “minahang bayan” is basically founded on RA 7076 or the “People’s Small-Scale Mining Act.”</p> <p>MAGDALO Party-List Rep. Gary Alejano requested the DENR to clarify the official position of the government with regard to the ratification of the Paris Agreement, which aims to “combat climate change and accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future.” (UNFCCC website)</p> <p>Undersecretary for Environment and International Environmental Affairs Jonas Leones said that at least 16 agencies have endorsed the ratification of the Agreement. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), however, is still reviewing the Agreement and will submit its recommendation to the President afterwards.</p> <p>The DENR officials answered the queries of the House Members regarding mining-related concerns in their respective districts.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay) sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DOE.</p> <p>Presenting the DOE’s proposed budget for 2017, Assistant Secretary Patrick Aquino said the DOE is set to receive P2.66 billion, which is 42% higher compared to its current budget of P1.87 billion. Of this amount, 69% or P1.82 billion goes to maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE); 17% or P440.94 million to personnel services (PS); and 14% or P389.89 million to capital outlay.</p> <p>Among the major accomplishments of the DOE from 2015 up to the first semester of 2016, presented by Aquino based on DOE’s strategic directions, are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing energy security – developed indigenous and renewable energy sources; Promoting clean energy - launched the Auto-LPG Program, Natural Gas Vehicle Program for Public Transport, and E-Trike Project; Ensuring sufficient energy supply - engaged 270 new players in various downstream oil industry activities, bringing in an aggregate investment of P50.73 billion; coordinated with other energy agencies and stakeholders in implementing mitigation measures to address the impacts of El Niño; and served as the lead agency in securing energy facilities in relation to the bombing incidents in Mindanao, and in the May 2016 national and local elections; Expanding energy access – achieved household electrification level at 89.6% or 20 million households (as of December 2015); Promoting energy efficiency as a way of life –issued a Department Circular on “Philippine Energy Standards and Labeling Program” and Memorandum Circular on “Directing the Use of Energy Efficient Lightings in Roadways,” and launched the “EC Energy” campaign; Pursuing transparency initiative –launched the Energy Virtual One Shared System (EVOSS), a web-based monitoring system that facilitates the approval process of applications in the energy sector; and Strengthening international cooperation – gave vital support and participated in the 12th APEC Energy Ministers Meeting and
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<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>		<p>associated meetings hosted by the Philippines in Oct 2015 in Mactan, Cebu.</p> <p>Aquino likewise presented the DOE's strategic directions for 2016 up to 2030 and the thrusts and priorities for 2017 which revolve around ensuring energy security, expanding energy access, promoting a low carbon future, encouraging more investments in energy infrastructure and facilities, and strengthening consumer welfare and protection.</p> <p>Asked by Rep. Rodante Marcoleta (Party-List, 1-SAGIP) on the initiatives being undertaken by the DOE to create a condition wherein new industry players can come in, Aquino said the Department has streamlined the approval process for applications to the energy business.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) relative to the relentless power outages nationwide allegedly due to the collusion of several generation companies, Aquino said the DOE has formed a Technical Audit Committee that will look into the operational status of power plants. He agreed to provide the Committee with a copy of the report on the matter.</p> <p>Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija) appreciated the intention of the DOE to put the issue of the possible revival of the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) to public consultation. Aquino, however, emphasized that there is no clear policy direction yet regarding the reopening of the BNPP at the moment.</p> <p>Rep. Carlos Roman Uybarreta (Party-List, 1-CARE) proposed the earmarking of a Guaranty Fund under the General Appropriations Act (GAA) that will help electric cooperatives (ECs) in their restoration and recovery efforts in the aftermath of a calamity. He noted that the government's subsidy for restoration and rehabilitation activities usually come in late such that the ECs resort to securing loans either from the National Electrification Administration (NEA) or from private institutions the cost of which is passed on to the consumers in the form of higher electricity costs.</p> <p>The DOE was requested to submit to the Committee the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of programs/projects for the development of indigenous and renewal energy and the corresponding budget allocations; • Proposed legislative agenda for the 17th Congress; • List of power projects, prospective proponents, and investments involved ; and • List of assets already privatized and the amount involved, and how the proceeds were utilized.
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