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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2020 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the following government offices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Transportation (DOTr) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Isidro Ungab (3rd District, Davao City), listened to the presentations on the proposed FY 2020 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the DOTr, DAR and DOJ.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Micaela Violago (2nd District, Nueva Ecija), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DOTr.</p> <p>DOTr Undersecretary for Finance Garry de Guzman, who made the budget presentation, said that under the FY 2020 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DOTr is set to receive a total budget of P147.02 billion, which is 112.29% higher than this year's budget of P69.25 billion.</p> <p>Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade attributed the huge increase in the total budget of DOTr to the huge increase of its capital outlay (CO), from P43.03 billion in 2019 to P116.55 billion for FY 2020, which will primarily fund the construction and upgrading of roads, railways, and airports.</p> <p>The DOTr's FY 2020 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: Office of the Secretary (OSEC), P133.44 billion; DOTr attached agencies, P12.39 billion; Special Accounts, P1.04 billion; and Retirement and Life Insurance Premiums (RLIP), P211.27 million.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Jose Christopher Belmonte (6th District, Quezon City), De Guzman said that despite the 112.29% increase in the 2020 proposed budget, the Department still needs an additional P2.9 billion to augment the funds for other priority projects such as: the public utility vehicle modernization program; support for the operations of the Inter-agency Council for Traffic (I-ACT); operation of the Philippine Railway Institute; establishment of the Pagasa Island Port in the West Philippine Sea (WPS); and establishment of four new airports to be located in the cities of Laguindingan, Virac, and Ormoc, and in the Province of Antique.</p> <p>Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay) inquired on the courses of action taken by DOTr in resolving the worsening traffic problem in Metro Manila. The DOTr Secretary answered that the Department's response to this problem is in terms of reforms in policies, structures, and systems, such as the review of existing policies and procedures in the issuance of transport franchises and the assignment of routes, and the launch of the motor vehicle inspection system to determine a vehicle's roadworthiness.</p> <p>Tugade also mentioned the following measures to address the traffic problem: ban on loading and unloading points in front of malls and transferring these within the premises of the malls; synchronization of traffic lights; stricter enforcement of parking rules; Metro Rail Transit (MRT) improvements to increase ridership; construction of new railway systems; bus augmentation systems; and the construction of common stations.</p> <p>Asked by Rep. Lagman if granting the President with emergency powers would help address the traffic congestion, Tugade replied in</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) 	<p>the affirmative, saying that it will speed up the implementation of traffic solutions without being unduly hampered by existing procurement and right-of-way laws.</p> <p>Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) inquired about the management of the new railway systems after completion, citing the poor management of the MRT 3 that results in low revenues and ridership.</p> <p>Tugade replied that the new railway systems will be operated and maintained by a private entity once construction or rehabilitation is complete. He also prefers that the government takes on the role of a regulator than an operator to prevent the recurrence of problems that plagued the MRT 3 (the train operating along EDSA).</p> <p>The DOTr was requested to submit the documents required by the House Members.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jose "Pingping" Tejada (3rd District, North Cotabato), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of DAR.</p> <p>DAR Secretary John Castriciones said that under the FY 2020 NEP, DAR is set to receive a total budget of P8.43 billion, which is 3% higher than its current budget of P8.20 billion. By expense class, DAR's 2020 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P4.82 billion; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P3.57 billion; and CO, P39 million. For 2020, DAR will focus on the following programs: land tenure security, agrarian justice delivery, and agrarian reform beneficiaries development and sustainability.</p> <p>With regard to the land acquisition and distribution (LAD) component of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP), the DAR Secretary clarified that the distribution of lands or the certificate of land ownership award (CLOA) to the farmer beneficiaries still continues. However, with the expiration of RA 9700, or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program Extension with Reforms (CARPER) Law in 2014, the Department's mandate to issue notice of coverage (NOC) was also discontinued. An NOC is a document informing a landowner that his/her land is covered by CARP, thus subject for acquisition and distribution to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs).</p> <p>The DAR Secretary assured the Members that the DAR is committed to complete land distribution by 2020 as directed by President Rodrigo Duterte. The DAR distributed a total of 28,573 hectares of land to 25,613 ARBs in 2018 and 8,305 hectares to 5,941 ARBs from January-June 2019, according to Castriciones.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Mujiv Hataman (Basilan) inquired on the status of land distribution in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). DAR Undersecretary Luis Meinrado Pañgulayan said that DAR has yet to come up with a system to implement the LAD component of CARP in the Region.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon), Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante Jr. (6th District, Manila), and Party-List Reps. Carlos Isagani Zarate (BAYAN MUNA) and Arlene Brosas (GABRIELA) expressed concern over the continued conversion of agricultural lands for commercial use. They claimed that this could adversely affect the country's rice self-sufficiency. Castriciones said that although the process for the said conversion has been streamlined, concerned agencies have put in place mechanisms to avoid the unwarranted conversion of agricultural lands.</p>
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