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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">• Office of the President (OP) • Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO)	<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 OP, PCOO, DENR, DA, and NIA.</p> <p>Rep. Ungab said that by tradition, the Committee has accorded the courtesy to co-equal branches of the government during budget deliberations, which it did when the Office of the Vice President and the Judiciary recently presented their respective budgets. Thus, he said, the Committee extends the same courtesy to the Office of the President by promptly approving its budget proposal for FY 2020.</p> <p>The proposed FY 2020 budget of the OP amounts to P8.20 billion, which is 21.07% higher than its current budget of P6.77 billion. By expense class, the OP's proposed 2020 budget will be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P1.07 billion; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P6.70 billion; and capital outlay (CO), P427.46 million.</p> <p>Reps. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay) and Ferdinand Gaité (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) manifested that they will raise questions about the OP's proposed 2020 budget during the deliberations at the Plenary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jose Enrique "Joet" Garcia III (2nd District, Bataan), sat as the presiding officer during the PCOO's budget briefing.</p> <p>PCOO Secretary Jose Ruperto Martin Andanar said that under the FY 2020 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the PCOO and its attached agencies are set to receive a total budget of P1.70 billion, which is 12.23% higher than their current budget of P1.51 billion.</p> <p>In terms of allocation by office, PCOO's proposed budget will be distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PCOO Proper - P449.10 million;• Bureau of Broadcast Services (BBS) - P413.13 million;• Philippine Information Agency (PIA) - P404.02 million;• Presidential Broadcast Staff (Radio-Television Malacañang) - P232.30 million;• News and Information Bureau (NIB) - P127.11 million;• Bureau of Communications Services (BCS) - P60.56 million; and• National Printing Office (NPO) - P11.50 million. <p>Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Bureau-C Assistant Director Elena Regina Brillantes informed the body that only P11 million is allocated to NPO because it has a revolving fund which it can use to fund its operations. The</p>

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- Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)

allocated amount is enough, she said, considering that for years 2017 and 2018, the NPO used its revolving fund instead of the budget allocated to it under the General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Meanwhile, Andanar reported that P1.7 million was spent for its Press Freedom Caravan or Truth Caravan held in Bosnia, Switzerland, and Belgium last February 11 to 26, 2019. The same amount was also spent during the Truth Caravan held in the United States of America last June 24 to July 19, 2019. The Truth Caravan aims to inform the people, both here and abroad, of the position of the government on major issues confronting the country as raised by various quarters.

Replying to the query of Rep. Michael Edgar Aglipay (Party-List, DIWA) on the status of the government's information dissemination campaign on federalism, PCOO Assistant Secretary Ana Maria Paz Rafael said that there is no advice yet from the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) as to when to push through with the campaign. The PCOO and the DILG are the lead agencies in the government's information dissemination campaign on federalism.

Party-List Reps. France Castro (ACT-TEACHERS) and Arlene Brosas (GABRIELA) criticized the Philippine News Agency (PNA), the official news agency of the government under the supervision of the NIB, for releasing to the media or publishing unverified information or "fake news" against progressive organizations in the country. Andanar denied that the PCOO observes a policy of red-tagging opposition groups, adding that the agency always strives for balance and fairness in news reporting.

NIB Director Virginia Arcilla-Agtay also defended the PNA saying that the latter is acting in accordance with its mandate and that the news it publishes are based on the statements of their sources.

On the query of Rep. Sarah Jane Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN) pertaining to the PCOO's campaign against disinformation and fabricated news, Andanar said that the PCOO and the PIA have established the "Youth for Truth," a nationwide movement that engages the youth in stopping the spread of fake news through the social media.

The PCOO and its attached agencies were requested to submit the documents that were asked of them by the Committee Members during the meeting.

Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jose Antonio "Kuya Jonathan" Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DENR.

DENR Secretary Roy Cimatu said that under the FY 2020 NEP, the DENR and its attached agencies are set to receive P25.49 billion, which is 16% higher than their current budget of P21.96 billion.

The DENR's proposed budget will be distributed as follows:

- DENR Office of the Secretary (OSEC) - P19.93 billion;
- Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) - P2.43 billion;
- National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) - P1.49 billion;

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- Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) - P1.36 billion;
- National Water Resources Board (NWRB) - P168 million; and
- Palawan Council for Sustainable Development Staff (PCSDS) - P113 million.

Cimatu explained that the increase in the budget of the DENR takes into consideration its renewed and intensified efforts to protect the environment to ensure clean air and water, efficient solid waste management, the achievement of the targets under the National Greening Program (ENGP), and other support activities.

Cimatu reported that while the Department has easily achieved some milestones in the massive rehabilitation of the Boracay Island last year, he said that it is not the same with the rehabilitation of Manila Bay wherein the DENR is faced with a daunting task given the complexity of the problem.

The DENR Secretary sought the support of Congress in passing a law creating an enforcement bureau in the DENR to make it more effective in implementing its mandate.

In reply to the query of Rep. Sy-Alvarado on what concrete steps the DENR has undertaken so far to address the water shortage in Metro Manila, Cimatu said that as contingency measures, the DENR has urged the tapping of additional deep wells, "borrowing" of water from Maynilad's water reserve, and tapping of Laguna Lake as a source of raw water.

Cimatu clarified that only the eastern portion of Metro Manila being serviced by Manila Water Company, Inc. has experienced water shortage due to the critically low water level in the La Mesa Dam, which is the main source of water by Manila Water.

Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA) General Manager Jaime Medina manifested LLDA's willingness to assist in tapping Laguna Lake as a water source. However, Medina said that the lake needs to be rehabilitated to improve the quality of water and make it suitable as a water source or for domestic purposes. At present, he said the water quality of Laguna Lake is categorized as Class C, which is suitable for fishery. (As a water source, Laguna Lake must be classified as Class "A.")

Responding to the query raised by Rep. Arnolfo "Arnie" Teves, Jr. (3rd District, Negros Oriental), DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones explained that a company engaged in a project that is seen to pose a potential environmental risk is required to secure an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC) from the DENR prior to its operation. Otherwise, Leones said that a notice of violation will be issued against the non-compliant company and its operation will be stopped.

Quirino Rep. Junie Cua said that in sustaining eco-tourism as a source of revenue for the country, there is a need to protect the remaining forests and the world-class tourist destinations.

Committee Vice Chair, Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma, sat as the presiding officer during the deliberations on the proposed budget of the DA and NIA.

Under the FY 2020 NEP, the DA and its attached agencies and corporations will get a total of P71.84 billion, which is

- Department of Agriculture (DA)

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Irrigation Administration (NIA) 	<p>12.02% higher than their current year's appropriation of P64.13 billion.</p> <p>Agriculture Secretary William Dar said that the proposed budget includes the allocation of P10 billion for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) or the "Rice Fund," created under RA 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law. RA 11203 lifted the quantitative import restriction on rice and replaced it with appropriate tariff rates.</p> <p>Replying to the queries of the Committee Members, Dar said that the Rice Fund aims to help local farmers increase their rice yield and earn higher income by providing them farm machineries and equipment, better quality of rice seeds, and credit and financial assistance, among others. Dar explained that at present, the average cost of producing <i>palay</i> in the Philippines is around P12 per kilo compared to P8 and P6 in Thailand and Vietnam, respectively. He added that the target is to reduce the cost of producing <i>palay</i> in the country to P9 per kilo.</p> <p>Dar also mentioned that to date, the actual revenues from tariffs on rice imports is P9.2 billion. But with the implementation of RA 11203, revenues from rice tariffs are projected to reach P15 billion annually.</p> <p>Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (1st District, Leyte) challenged Dar to increase the agriculture sector's contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Dar said that the DA aims to increase the agriculture sector's contribution to the GDP to 3-4% by 2021.</p> <p>Presenting the proposed budget of NIA for FY 2020, NIA Administrator Ricardo Visaya said that under the FY 2020 NEP, the agency will get P37 billion which is an increase of less than 1% from its current budget.</p> <p>Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante Jr. (6th District, Manila) asked NIA to explain the Commission on Audit's (COA) report in 2018 on the delayed implementation of 299 irrigation projects.</p> <p>Visaya said that of the 299 projects, only 49 are yet to be completed. He explained that the contractors could not immediately start the project because they received the initial payment of 15% of the contract price only in March or April. He also said that the rainy season and inclement weather occurring from June to October also caused the delay in the completion of the projects.</p> <p>The 2018 COA report stated, among others, that the 299 irrigation projects with a total cost of P20.74 billion incurred significant delays of up to 2,287 calendar days due to the poor performance of contractors.</p>
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