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By Business Mirror

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By Ted Cordero

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PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

[DBM proposes P453.1B budget for 2023 Climate Change Expenditures](#)

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) has proposed Php453.1-B climate change expenditures in the 2023 National Expenditure Program (NEP) submitted to Congress. Government programs/activities/projects in the 2023 NEP for climate change include avoidance of deforestation, monitoring of national and local climate change mitigation actions, conservation and protection of existing watershed and protected areas, support to research on climate change adaptation, conduct of trainings on community-based climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, among others.

THE MANILA TIMES

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By William Dar

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farmers and fishers who have to contend with the strong typhoons and rains visiting the Philippines.

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[Marcos Jr. proposes P453.1-B climate change spending plan for 2023](#)

By Ramon Royandoyan

The Marcos Jr. administration is proposing a P453.1 billion budget for climate change expenditures that, analysts think, left much too to be desired.

[SEC approves ACEN's green bond offering](#)

By Ramon Royandoyan

The Securities and Exchange Commission approved ACEN Corp.'s ASEAN green bonds program. The Ayala-led energy firm is looking to offer P30 billion worth of ASEAN green bonds. This type of 'sustainable' finance comprise bonds and sukuk, a sharia-compliant bond instrument, wherein proceeds will be used to exclusively finance or refinance green projects. These bonds comply with ASEAN green bonds standards.

RAPPLER

[Proposed P118-M budget cut threatens CHR's vital work](#)

By Jodesz Gavilan

MANILA, Philippines – Commission on Human Rights Executive Director Jacqueline de Guia expressed concern that the proposed cut in the CHR's 2023 budget may pose more challenges in the conduct of their vital work against state abuses, especially in the aftermath of the administration of Rodrigo Duterte.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS MIRROR

Science, arts merge for climate action in Eastern Visayas

By Business Mirror

BAYBAY CITY, Leyte—Students, teachers and officials of the Visayas State University (VSU) in Baybay City, Leyte, together with representatives from Eastern Visayas civil society and local governments, joined a two-day event that was held at the school recently in order to build climate-change resilience in the region through science and the arts.

The event, titled “Klima Eskwela: Climate Science, Adaptation and the Arts,” was organized by ICSC, The Climate Reality Project Philippines (Climate Reality Philippines), and the VSU Regional Climate Change Research and Development Center (RCCRDC), ICSC said.

“Climate change is already happening in different regions around the world and on multiple levels. We are all affected, whether we come from rich or from developing countries. Everyone has to participate and do their part,” said Lourdes Tibig, a Filipina climate scientist and Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC) advisor.

“In the Philippines, there is still a disconnect in government systems in terms of adapting to and mitigating climate change. Local communities sometimes lack access to the needed resources,” Tibig said.

“There is no going back regarding the changes happening in the climate system, which is why we have to do whatever we can to contribute to the efforts to address climate change,” she added.

For years, the Eastern Visayas region has been at the forefront of climate impacts, both slow onset impacts—such as sea level rise, increasing sea surface temperatures, and ocean acidification—and extreme weather events.

The region was the first to be hit by Super Typhoon Yolanda (international code Haiyan) in 2013.

Dr. Eduardo Mangaoang, director of the VSU RCCRDC and member of the National Panel of Technical Experts of the Climate Change Commission, presented the study that aims to bring Climate and Disaster Risk Finance and Insurance (CDRFI) to Yolanda-affected communities.

He pointed out the importance of building on local resources and opportunities, and the need for proper coordination among stakeholders with local governments at the helm, in order to ensure the effective and sustainable implementation of CDRFI in Eastern Visayas, ICSC added.

“While the idea of insurance for disaster-related purposes is locally appreciated, there is a certain degree of skepticism among locals on its reliability and assurance of claim if ever receivables are due,” Mangaoang said.

“If CDRFI is to be implemented in the region, we need a simple, doable, and localized process to make it more accessible to all,” he added.

Local government, civil society, academia and youth representatives from Eastern Visayas signed an agreement to put people first and at the center of climate financing, especially those most at risk.

“We affirm the primacy of the humanitarian imperative: that action should be taken to prevent or alleviate human suffering arising out of disaster or conflict, and that nothing should override this principle,” they said in the document.

Arts and humanities also play an important role in climate action. In this sphere, the youth have been stepping up, according to Climate Reality Philippines branch manager Nazrin Camille Castro.

On the second day of Klima Eskwela, young artists and youth leaders of Baybay City brainstormed ideas for a mural as part of the “Poets for Climate” project of the branches of Climate Reality in the Philippines, Africa and Canada. The leaders will create the mural in the coming weeks, ICSC said.

“We trust that the artists will incorporate what they have learned in the first day of the learning session—including their insights on the latest climate science findings, and the experiences of the most vulnerable sectors in Baybay City—into the mural they will develop and its call to action,” Castro said.

“We could use the recent extreme weather events to put a spotlight on climate change impacts plaguing vulnerable countries, like the Philippines, for many years now. And there is no better way to showcase the similarities, diversity and connectedness of these lived experiences than through the arts. When we act collectively, we will definitely have a bigger impact,” Castro added.

The research study led by the VSU RCCRDC was done under the global Multi-Actor Partnership (MAP) project, which aims to provide spaces for discussion and discourse around CDRFI.

Recently, ICSC organized a workshop for MAP in Asia, where representatives from the Philippines, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Indonesia and Sri Lanka agreed to make climate finance in the region more pro-poor, equitable, and people-centered.

Poets for Climate supports the global poetry and arts campaign “When Is Now,” organized by the Climate Vulnerable Forum, ICSC, and The Agam Agenda.

To date, it has generated more than 60 poems from around 40 climate advocates across the globe and unveiled murals in several cities worldwide, including in Iloilo and

Isabela in the Philippines to demand for urgent action among global leaders in the upcoming 27th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, ICSC said.

GMA NEWS ONLINE

[DBM earmarks P453.1B for climate change expenditures under 2023 budget](#)

By Ted Cordero

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) on Wednesday said it has earmarked P453.1 billion climate change expenditures in the proposed P5.268-trillion national budget for 2023.

In a statement, the DBM said the government programs, activities, or projects in the 2023 National Expenditure Program (NEP) for climate change include the following:

avoidance of deforestation,
monitoring of national and local climate change mitigation actions,
conservation and protection of existing watershed and protected areas,
support to research on climate change adaptation,
conduct of trainings on community-based climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, among others

The DBM said climate change expenditures is in line with the budget message of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to fund climate change expenditures focused on food security, water sufficiency, ecosystem and environmental stability, human security, climate smart industries and services, knowledge and capacity development, and sustainable energy.

“Climate change, as they say, is already here with us to stay. The Philippines in fact is the third most vulnerable country to the impact of climate change, according to the 2017 World Risk Report,” said Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman.

“We must therefore act decisively to avert the adverse effects of climate change. Government has in fact increased climate change expenditures from P289.7 billion in 2022 to P453.1 billion in 2023,” she added.

The DBM said there are eight strategic priorities of the 2023 national expenditures for climate change, namely food security, water security, ecosystem and environmental stability, human security, climate smart industries and services, sustainable energy, knowledge and capacity development, and cross-cutting.

The Budget Department said the President has vowed to increase the funds for climate change programs and activities by an average of at least 15% yearly.

The implementing units for climate change programs are as follows:

Department of Agrarian Reform
Department of Agriculture
state universities and colleges
Department of Energy

Department of Environment and Natural Resources
Department of Foreign Affairs
Department of Health
Department of Information and Communications Technology
Department of the Interior and Local Government
Department of Justice
Department of Labor and Employment
Department of National Defense
Department of Public Works and Highways
Department of Science and Technology
Department of Social Welfare and Development
Department of Tourism
Department of Transportation
National Economic and Development Authority
Office of the Press Secretary
other executive offices
Civil Service Commission
Commission on Human Rights

Also included are local government units and government corporations, according to the DBM.

MANILA BULLETIN

[DBM raises climate change budget](#)

By Chino S. Leyco

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) increased the funds for the government's climate change programs and activities next year in line with President Marcos' directive.

In a statement on Wednesday, Sep. 7, Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman said the government's climate change expenditures rose to P453.1 billion next year from P289.7 billion in 2022.

"Climate change, as they say, is already here with us to stay. The Philippines in fact is the third most vulnerable country to the impact of climate change, according to the 2017 World Risk Report," Pangandaman said..

President Marcos earlier vowed to increase the funds for climate change-related expenditures by an average of at least 15 percent yearly.

Under the 2023 proposed nation budget, climate change expenditures include avoidance of deforestation, monitoring of national and local climate change mitigation actions, conservation and protection of existing watershed and protected areas.

It also included are support to research on climate change adaptation, conduct of trainings on community-based climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, among others.

"This is in line with the budget message of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to fund climate change expenditures focused on food security, water sufficiency, ecosystem and environmental stability, human security, climate smart industries and services, knowledge and capacity development, and sustainable energy," she said.

There are eight strategic priorities of the 2023 national expenditures for climate change.

These are food security, water security, ecosystem and environmental stability, human security, climate smart industries and services, sustainable energy, knowledge and capacity development, and cross-cutting.

Implementing units are the Department of Agrarian Reform, Department of Agriculture, state universities and colleges, Department of Energy, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Department of Foreign Affairs.

Other implementing agencies are Department of Health, Department of Information and Communications Technology, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Justice, Department of Labor and Employment, and Department of National Defense.

Also included are Department of Public Works and Highways, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Tourism, Department of Transportation, and National Economic and Development Authority.

Lastly, Office of the Press Secretary, other executive offices, Civil Service Commission, and Commission on Human Rights. local government units and government corporations.

INTERAKSYON

[Waste collection drive: 5 Metro Manila malls where you can donate plastic waste](#)

By James Patrick Cruz

Most of the plastic waste end up in landfill or the ocean due to the lack of recycling facilities in the country.

In the Philippines, there are only 10,730 materials recovery facilities (MRFs) as of 2018, **World Wide Fund for Nature – Philippines** said. These MRFs only cater to 14,000 out of the 42,046 barangays.

Amid the waste pollution concern, a social enterprise and snacks company partnered with a mall in Quezon City to allow mall goers to donate their plastic which will be transformed into upcycled products.

The year-long waste collection drive commenced last August at the **Eastwood Mall**.

Other Megaworld Lifestyle Malls in Metro Manila, such as **Lucky Chinatown Mall, McKinley Hill, Uptown Bonifacio**, and **Arcovia City** will also soon have the same waste collection program.

The collected plastics in these malls would be turned into eco-lumber and eco-boards, which can be used to make outdoor furniture, bike racks, benches, tables, and others, social enterprise **The Plastic Flamingo (PLAF)** said.

“This ensures that we are able to recycle plastic and at the same time help reduce the use of precious resources like wood or minerals to make furniture or even shelters,” PLAF CEO **Erika Reyes** stressed.

From 2020 to 2021, the snack company **Mondelez International – Philippines** and PLAF collected 43 tons of plastic. For this year, PLAF and Mondelez International seek to collect 20 tons and turn them into usable eco-boards.

Plastic pollution in the country

The Philippines, an archipelagic nation, was frequently listed among the top contributors to ocean plastic pollution, along with China, Vietnam, and Indonesia.

According to a study of **The Ocean Cleanup** published by Sciences Advances last year, the country is home to 28% of the rivers responsible for ocean plastic pollution.

Aside from causing harm to marine wildlife, plastic waste also has a significant effect on climate change and global warming as “about 99% of plastic is made from chemicals

sourced from fossil fuels,” according to the Center for International Environmental Law.

Early this year, environmental groups called on countries to support the creation of a negotiating panel with a mandate to prepare an international treaty to combat the plastic crisis.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[OPINION] [High-maintenance ‘beach’ should go](#)

Two years after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) stirred unnecessary controversy by dumping crushed dolomite on a 500-meter stretch of land along Manila Bay, the agency will finally study the environmental and social impact of the P389-million “beach nourishment” project that critics have slammed as a massive waste of public funds.

Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga made this assurance during the recent House deliberations on the DENR’s 2023 budget when ACT Teachers Rep. France Castro demanded updates on the five-year Manila Bay rehabilitation program.

Yulo-Loyzaga, a known environmentalist and chair of the International Advisory Board of the Manila Observatory before joining the Marcos Jr. administration, said the DENR was “looking very closely” at the impact of filling part of Manila Bay’s naturally gray shoreline with crushed dolomite to mimic the famous white sand beaches of Boracay.

The DENR, she said, would “continue to evaluate it ... using our scientific evaluation, as well as the social vulnerability evaluation that we intend to implement.”

This is a welcome—albeit long delayed—departure from the stance taken by former DENR chief Roy Cimatu, who had consistently brushed aside pointed criticisms against the project, as well as warnings of its potential risks to public health and the environment.

Under Cimatu’s watch, the DENR also stubbornly refused to conduct a thorough and scientific study to justify the continued dumping of dolomite at a cost of P28 million to taxpayers for the mineral and for “geo interventions” intended to prevent the dolomite from being washed out to sea. Instead, the former official merely justified it as a “beautification project beneficial to the environment.”

The dolomite beach project was described as an “enhancer” of the Manila Bay rehabilitation project launched in 2019 in accordance with the Supreme Court directive for government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve the bay.

The DENR, however, admitted that the artificial beach—which then presidential spokesperson Harry Roque claimed was needed for the mental health of a pandemic-weary people—was not part of the original Manila Bay Sustainable Development Master Plan adopted by the National Economic and Development Authority to “restore the water quality of Manila Bay.”

More tellingly, DENR Undersecretary Jonas Leones admitted during the House hearing in 2020 that “the process for environmental impact assessment was not followed”—with consequences now keenly being felt.

Oceana, an international non-government organization dedicated to protecting the world's oceans, revealed that the dolomite dumped in the area from September to December 2020 had already been reclaimed by the sea. With the "beach" eroded by at least 300 square meters between December 2020 and February 2021, there was a need to continuously replenish the area near the Baywalk strip on Roxas Boulevard with dolomite shipped all the way from Cebu.

Oceana vice president Gloria Estenzo-Ramos also emphasized that the project is just a "band-aid" solution and will not significantly contribute to the improvement of Manila Bay as mandated by the Supreme Court. Concerns are more deep-rooted and would need more extensive solutions, such as reducing chemical, organic, and plastic pollution, installing water treatment facilities, and banning the cutting of mangroves.

As early as 2020, the University of the Philippines Marine Science Institute (UP-MSI) similarly urged the government to rethink its ill-advised beautification project, saying that the sand "will only erode, given the hydrodynamic conditions of the bay."

Even with the breakwater, rising sea levels and larger waves during typhoons, especially with climate change, can penetrate and pound the baywalk area. "Continuously replacing the sand will be even more expensive," the UP-MSI pointed out.

Last month, the heavy flooding in the streets of Manila that stranded thousands of commuters was initially blamed on the erosion of the dolomite beach, although the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority has since backtracked and shifted the blame on the ongoing construction of three pumping stations in the area.

Despite that turnaround, the repeated and expensive "nourishment" of the dolomite beach after every typhoon points to the inescapable conclusion that the erosion of the artificial beach is inevitable—and unacceptable, given our limited resources and an economy still struggling to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

All eyes are now on the new DENR leadership to once and for all evaluate the dolomite beach in Manila and get scientific studies on its environment impact done as quickly as possible.

Should it be determined that the beach project is doing more harm than good, it shouldn't be a difficult decision to immediately and permanently shut it down and use the millions of pesos devoted to its maintenance for the country's more pressing needs.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

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“We must therefore act decisively to avert the adverse effects of climate change. Government has in fact increased climate change expenditures from Php289.7-B in 2022 to Php453.1-B in 2023,” the Budget Chief further said.

There are eight strategic priorities of the 2023 national expenditures for climate change. These are food security, water security, ecosystem and environmental stability, human security, climate smart industries and services, sustainable energy, knowledge and capacity development, and cross-cutting.

President Marcos Jr. earlier vowed to increase the funds for climate change programs and activities by an average of at least 15% yearly.

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THE MANILA TIMES

[Building a resilient PH food system](#)

By William Dar

While there are a lot of people celebrating the entry of the "ber" months because that ushers in the Yuletide holidays, the last four months of the year can be miserable for farmers and fishers who have to contend with the strong typhoons and rains visiting the Philippines.

And if that was not enough, the summer months in the succeeding can cause droughts in some parts of the country, affecting anew the livelihood of farmers and fishers. Although we should be thankful that El Niño episodes do not happen every year. We also should be very thankful, at least at this point, that instead of our rivers drying up like those in parts of Europe and China, the Philippines still has river systems that do not go extremely dry because — ironically — of the strong rains and typhoons that visit our country during this period of the year.

The water from the strong typhoons and rains can also benefit the agriculture sector in the summer months, if these are harvested or impounded with simple systems or used to recharge aquifers or groundwater resources. But sad to say, I see not much of these solutions applied widely in the country.

The result is large swaths of farms, both for crops and aquaculture, getting wiped out during the rainy season and the summer months, especially during El Niño episodes. Let me also mention that La Niña episodes can worsen storms during the rainy season. And this severely affects our food supplies.

A report released by the World Food Programme (WFP) in November last year showed that the Philippine food system is vulnerable to extreme weather disturbances, and disclosed the following findings:

1. From 2020 to 2050, rice fields and area hosting vegetable farms face risk from increased rainfall and flooding, for both irrigated and rain-fed areas;
2. Hazards from the sea, such as sea-level rise, storm surge and saltwater intrusion, will impact significantly both coastal and freshwater fisheries, citing the vulnerability of the Visayas the Mindanao;
3. For corn production, there are areas that are more suitable for the crop;
4. For bananas, the areas of Southern Luzon, Visayas and Southern Mindanao were identified as viable for the commodity; and
5. Garlic, which is imported in large quantities, will remain suitable for cultivation in the Philippines while onion production will be "positively affected" and eggplant "negatively affected."

When the paper was released, the WFP said in a statement that in the past decade, extreme weather conditions caused P463 billion in damage to the Philippines, of which P290 billion, or 62.7 percent, was to agriculture.

To deal with the effects of climate change on our food system, I agree with the findings of the WFP paper that we should "shift from recurrent crisis response to forward-looking climate risk management." This means that we should be proactive and not reactive in dealing with the challenges presented by climate change to our food system.

The last part of the WFP paper further states: "Solutions that address medium- to long-term climate risks are necessary to complement the groundbreaking disaster risk management initiatives being implemented in the Philippines at the moment, with key innovations being scaled-up including forecast-based anticipatory actions to mitigate losses and damages from predictable climate hazards, and the development of last-mile climate information services that enable smallholder farmers to make informed decisions against climate variability and change."

Solutions at hand

Moving forward, building resilient food systems can be decomplexified or be made less complex as the solutions are very much at hand, and some do not need rocket scientists to apply even at the grassroots. What needs to be done going forward is to put into place those solutions before the worst takes place.

Reforestation is still a popular and a viable solution to help our food system become more resilient to climate change, and I recommend the sustained implementation of the National Greening Program, targeting the 119 proclaimed watersheds. Without forests and watersheds, the rains brought by storms and typhoons flow unimpeded to the rivers and plains, causing massive damage to farming and fishing areas. Lack of forest cover also washes out precious topsoil from the mountains, resulting in siltation of rivers and water bodies that also feed irrigation systems.

And besides trees, the planting of bamboo must be strongly pushed as bamboo grows faster, can rejuvenate itself after commercial harvesting and is used as a raw material over a wider range of products compared to trees.

Water impounding, aquifer recharging and rainwater harvesting are also solutions that need to be applied more widely in the Philippines, and these are not complex solutions with lots of information for those readily available from articles over Google and videos on YouTube.

To the more scientific approach, geomapping to identify areas prone to flooding and drought should be applied nationwide, also with the aim of making farmers more productive and increasing their incomes.

Developing and dispersing crop varieties that are resilient to both flooding and drought should also be pushed more aggressively, and I believe that Filipino scientists and scientific institutions are not short on knowledge and expertise in developing those.

And since climate change affects most, if not all, sectors in the country, a whole-of-nation approach is needed to address its challenges and must involve civil society, the government and the private sector.

We must also act immediately and not wait for more episodes of extreme weather events wreaking havoc on our food system.

So, as the "ber" months pass and powerful storms visit our country, let us also be reminded of the need to start building a more resilient Philippine food system teeming with rich farmers and fishers, and agribusiness enterprises. And we must start acting now!

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Pangasinan to host first salt congress

By Gabriel L. Cardinoza

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan: The country's moribund salt industry may get the shot in the arm it badly needs when stakeholders from different parts of the country gather here in November for the first national salt congress.

The three-day event, which was organized by the Pangasinan State University (PSU), is set on November 23 to 25 and will revolve around the theme "Recognizing the Salt Industry Toward Salt-Sufficient Philippines."

The congress will put together current research and technological developments on salt production into the limelight and will provide an avenue for various stakeholders to collaborate towards a productive, innovative, competitive and resilient Philippine salt industry, said Dexter Buted, PSU president, in a welcome message posted in the salt congress website (<https://saltcongressph.org>).

Topics to be discussed in the congress include the proposed Philippine salt industry roadmap, potential areas for salt production, ASIN Law and other related laws, the status of salt importation, environmental issues and plans on salt production, best practices in salt production and available technologies for salt production.

Also tapped for collaboration and possible partnership for salt-related initiatives were state universities and colleges from salt-producing provinces in the country.

These are Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University, Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College, Mariano Marcos State University, Bataan Peninsula State University, President Ramon Magsaysay State University, Occidental Mindoro State College, Marinduque State College, Palawan State University and the University of Antique.

"The decline in yield and quality of Philippine salt is primarily due to the lack of innovation in the industry as reflected by old technologies and traditional production processes that are still in practice," Buted said.

The drop in salt production began to be felt as early as 15 years ago. Salt industry sources said that 40 years ago, the Philippines was self-sufficient in salt. But now, the country is importing 93 percent of its salt requirements.

Salt farmers blamed climate change, limited research on the salt industry, and the conversion of salt farms into residential and commercial areas as among the culprits.

THE PHILIPPINES STAR

['Dirty' energy, outdated air quality standards keep Filipinos at risk from air pollution](#)

By Gaea Katreena Cabico

Health professionals and environmental advocates on Wednesday urged the government to combat air pollution that is harming the people and the planet by swiftly transitioning away from fossil fuels and updating the country's air quality standards.

On the third International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies, advocates of public health and environment called for a rapid transition from fossil fuel energy sources, and to clean and renewable energy.

The burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas is not only a major driver of climate change, but it is also a main source of air pollution.

"We need to save lives and we need to save our planet... The urgency of the impacts of climate change is now. We have to act now, including this whole issue of air pollution related to our energy policy," said Ramon San Pascual, executive director of Health Care Without Harm Asia.

Air pollution from burning fossil fuels leads to premature deaths, heart attacks, respiratory disorders, stroke, and asthma.

According to a 2019 study of the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, pollution from coal was responsible for an estimated 640 air pollution-related deaths, 1,300 cases of childhood asthma, 149,000 days of work absence, and 240 preterm births in the Philippines.

A separate study by Greenpeace in 2020 estimated that air pollution-related premature deaths in the country reached 11,000 to 27,000 in 2018 alone.

"Pakiramdam po namin ang aming pakikibaka sa coal ay maihalintulad namin pagma-martsa sa kamatayan dahil sa araw-araw na nararanasan ng mga komunidad sa Bataan dahil sa pollution," said Derek Cabe, an anti-coal advocate from Bataan.

(We feel that our fight against coal can be likened to marching to death because of the daily experiences of communities in Bataan due to pollution.)

Improve air quality standards

Air pollution from various sources has increased even after the passage of the Clean Air Act of 1999. Health and environment advocates note the country's clean air standards and policies have fallen behind international best practices.

"It's on the backburner because we're always looking at other issues. For example: Boracay, Manila Bay, flooding issues. But the impacts of climate change that manifest in

air pollution caused by extractive industries such as fossil fuels are not given attention because there's a huge industry," San Pascual said.

Advocates called on authorities to strictly implement policies, administrative orders and ordinances that accompany the Clean Air Act, and require Health Impact Assessments and Health Impact Clearance Certificates for all development projects.

They also urged the government to prioritize raising the country's emission limits to the current standards set by the World Health Organization.

The particulate matter (PM) 2.5 concentration limit set by the Philippines—25 microgram (μg) per cubic meter—is higher than the limit of 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ set by the WHO in 2021. Fine particles, called PM2.5, are considered particularly harmful because they can penetrate deep into the lungs or cardiovascular system.

They added that investing in and strengthening the country's air quality monitoring systems, and making them accessible to the public are necessary interventions.

Role of health workers

Dr. Imelda Muriel-Mateo, president of the Philippine College of Chest Physicians, urged her fellow healthcare professionals to advocate for clean air.

"When doctors, nurses, hospitals, and health systems take public stances on air pollution and climate change, it can reframe these issues as questions of public health and help move public opinion and policy," Mateo said.

"The voices of health workers are critical in promoting actions that address air pollution and its impacts on health," she added.

Marcos Jr. proposes P453.1-B climate change spending plan for 2023

By Ramon Royandoyan

The Marcos Jr. administration is proposing a P453.1 billion budget for climate change expenditures that, analysts think, left much too to be desired.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said the proposal was in sync with President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s agenda of funding climate change expenditures spotlighting eight key areas: food and water security, environmental sustainability, and climate smart industries and services.

Leonardo Lanzona, economist at Ateneo De Manila University, said the national government should have prioritized the climate crisis years earlier. As an emerging economy, the Philippines is a low carbon emitter considering developed countries were heavy polluters early in their industrialization.

“I think climate change should have been prioritized much earlier. As it is, the task has become more difficult and more costly. In any case, it is good to begin now. My only concern is how the government will consider the disruptions that can emerge from this program,” he said.

The DBM highlighted that the Marcos Jr. administration boosted the budget allocation for climate change spending by 56% year-on-year to P453.1 billion for next year.

CloseClose

Broken down, most departments raked in sizable increases in their climate budget allocations in the 2023 iteration. The proposed climate change budget of the Department of Agriculture grew 31% or P7.35 billion, to P31.09 billion for next year.

The allocation for the Department of Public Works and Highways grew 33.8% to P288.55 billion, which was the largest proposed budget for any department next year.

The second highest allocation will flow to the Transportation department. Their allocation grew a whopping 454% to P108.64 billion for next year.

Zyza Suzara, executive director at iLead, a public finance think tank, said while the increase is a welcome development, the numbers still need to be contextualized.

“We cannot objectively say whether these allocations are sufficient or insufficient without the government quantifying how much investments are needed to build resilience over a certain time horizon. Aggregate figures are meaningless if they do not talk about them vis a vis time-bound plans and investment requirements,” she said in a Telegram message.

Suzara explained that allocations for climate change adaptation, a stance taken on by the national government considering its status as a developing economy, need to be coordinated with other existing policy frameworks, such as the Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation and Disaster Risk Reduction Roadmap.

“The CCA-DRR is going to expire this year. The current administration can probably make updating that a priority and from there, determine how much is really needed for climate change adaptation,” she said.

For Sonny Africa, executive director of nonprofit IBON Foundation, this year’s proposed climate change expenditures was an attempt of Marcos Jr. administration to make themselves “green.”

“Unfortunately the ‘climate change expenditures’ seem more of a public relations exercise to ‘greenify’ the administration’s image for the international community rather than a real concern for the environment,” he said in a Viber message.

Africa floated the question of whether these projects were directed towards addressing the climate crisis, citing the P265 billion for water sufficiency and P169 billion for flood control, which account for 59% and 37% of the total allocation.

“The hollowness of the administration’s concern is also belied by their eagerness for more mining investments and operations,” Africa added.

Going deeper, he spotlighted that the 2023 version of the Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing revealed that the budget for “environmental protection” was slashed 16.2% to P20.9 billion for next year. Likewise, Africa pointed out that the Department of Environment and Natural Resources’ budget was cut 9%, which would amount to two years of budget cuts already.

The DBM said Marcos Jr. wants to increase funding for climate change programs by an average of 15% yearly.

SEC approves ACEN's green bond offering

By Ramon Royandoyan

The Securities and Exchange Commission approved ACEN Corp.'s ASEAN green bonds program. The Ayala-led energy firm is looking to offer P30 billion worth of ASEAN green bonds. This type of 'sustainable' finance comprise bonds and sukuk, a sharia-compliant bond instrument, wherein proceeds will be used to exclusively finance or refinance green projects. These bonds comply with ASEAN green bonds standards.

ACEN may offer the green bonds in tranches within three years, starting with an initial package worth P10 billion due 2027.

The offer is expected to bag ACEN proceeds totaling P9.87 billion, which the company will use for eligible projects in line with its Green Bond Framework, according to the SEC.

"Eligible green projects include those for renewable energy, energy efficiency, pollution prevention and control, environmentally sustainable management of living natural resources and land use, clean transportation, climate change adaptation, and green buildings," the SEC said.

Ayala Corp's energy platform is looking to build 20 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2030. It already produces a renewable energy share of capacity at approximately 80%, which the company says is one of the highest in the Asia Pacific region.

Aside from the Philippines, ACEN already has an estimated 3,000 megawatts of attributable capacity spread throughout Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and Australia.

As of 10:49 a.m. on Wednesday, shares in ACEN were trading down 1.92%, tracking losses in the main index.

RAPPLER

Proposed P118-M budget cut threatens CHR's vital work

By Jodesz Gavilan

MANILA, Philippines – Commission on Human Rights Executive Director Jacqueline de Guia expressed concern that the proposed cut in the CHR's 2023 budget may pose more challenges in the conduct of their vital work against state abuses, especially in the aftermath of the administration of Rodrigo Duterte.

The National Expenditure Program (NEP) submitted to Congress by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) allotted P803,283,000 for the CHR in 2023.

This amount is a reduction of P118,233,000 from its budget in 2022, when it received P921,156,000.

In a statement sent to Rappler on Monday, September 5, De Guia said she hopes Congress will increase the commission's budget as allocation of adequate resources is "a mark of the government's respect for the work of an independent national human rights institution."

Doing so will help ensure that the commission will operate efficiently in carrying out its work, including investigations into alleged human rights violations in the Philippines, she added.

The CHR originally proposed P1.6 billion for its 2023 budget, almost 50% higher than what was included in DBM's NEP.

De Guia is the current officer-in-charge of CHR, as President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has yet to appoint a new chairperson and commissioners of the en banc. The previous en banc's term, chaired by human rights lawyer Chito Gascon until his death in October 2021, ended on May 5, 2022.

Possible reduced operations, unfunded programs

Among those that CHR fears will be affected by the lack of budget are the hiring of more personnel, as it seeks to fill in 210 vacancies, as well as other operational expenses.

From P525,733,000 allotted for personnel services in 2022, CHR is proposed to receive P497,329,000 for 2023. Meanwhile, the budget for maintenance and other operating expenses is down to P305,944,000 from P368,220,000 in 2022.

The commission has long been plagued by issues of lack of manpower, especially as it grapples with investigations into drug war killings, among others, across the country.

Each CHR regional office usually has only five to eight special investigators, with one handling a huge load of cases on top of administrative work. They often have to travel far to conduct their work since the commission's regional bases are situated in central areas.

"CHR, with the proposed additional budget for travel and vehicles, envisioned an improved ability to reach more far-flung areas where our work is equally needed and where most vulnerable, underserved sectors reside," De Guia said.

"A reduced funding will severely limit the investigation and case management programs due to the reduced funding for local travels, fuel and insurance expenses, as well as repair and maintenance of vehicles," she added.

The CHR also said that the reduced budget can affect its ability to provide assistance to victims of human rights violations. They fear that this can severely impact the pursuit of legal cases in the fight for justice for victims, including those killed under Duterte's war on drugs.

Data from the CHR shows that it is currently handling 3,892 cases of drug war-related killings, with a total of 4,529 victims, as of June 2022. Out of the total cases, 2,274 were committed during police operations while 1,618 involved unidentified suspects.

Government data, meanwhile, shows that 6,252 individuals were killed in police anti-drug operations between July 2016 and May 31, 2022. This does not include those killed vigilante-style, which human rights groups estimate to be between 27,000 to 30,000.

No budget for climate change report follow through

The proposed NEP budget also did not include the CHR's proposed funding for its follow through plans in relation to the landmark report of the commission's National Inquiry on Climate Change, the first of its kind.

The CHR report released in May 2022 stated that climate change has negative impacts on Filipinos as it is "adversely affecting the right to life," adding that "neglect in mitigation may be considered human rights violation."

According to De Guia, the funding was meant for the "intended popularization" of the report's findings and recommendations.

"The item aims to contribute to a better understanding of the linkage and interplay between human rights and climate change, and provide a platform for policy development among relevant stakeholders to develop and integrate policies and actions related to human rights and climate change," she said.

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