

P18-B Panay River Basin project to be funded by China

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Business World, Posted on January 10, 2017

ILOILO CITY -- The proposed Panay River Basin Integrated Development Project (PRBIDP), estimated to cost P18 billion, will be bankrolled by a soft loan from China, according to the new National Irrigation Administration (NIA) head.

NIA Administrator Peter T. Laviña, who visited Iloilo City this week, said the PRBIDP, considered as the biggest irrigation project within the next three years, was among the big-ticket items presented by President Rodrigo R. Duterte during his official visit to China in October 2016.

Mr. Laviña said the Chinese expressed eagerness for the project and the terms of the loan, which will be based on the completed feasibility study, is now being assessed.

"But if this will be funded by China, most likely this will be very low interest rates loan or concessional loan," he told the local media here.

NIA-Western Visayas Regional Irrigation Manager Gerardo P. Corsiga said the feasibility study has already been endorsed by the Provincial Development Council of Capiz.

"We will elevate it (feasibility study) to the Regional Development Council (and) we will submit it to the National Economic Development Authority central office for further evaluation," Mr. Corsiga said.

The PRBIDP, to be located in the town of Tapaz, will be bigger than the South Korea-funded P11.2 billion Jalaur River Multi-Purpose Project Phase II in Calinog, Iloilo in terms of coverage area.

It will have two dams -- the Panay High Dam and Panay Afterbay Dam; a high line canal; and a floodway component.

Farms that will be covered are located in 15 municipalities and Roxas City in Capiz as well as in three towns in Iloilo province, namely: Bingawan, Lemery, and San Rafael.

PRBIDP is designed to irrigate 26,800 hectares (ha) during wet season and 18,773 ha in the dry season.

It would also be able to generate hydropower of about 15.6 megawatts.