

Devt plan zeroes in on justice

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Amid criticisms against the Duterte administration's war on drugs, with one Human Rights report pointing out the alleged lack of due process, the government's draft Philippine Development Plan (PDP) for 2017 to 2022 is pushing for "swift and fair" administration of justice, seeing it as instrumental in giving the citizenry the life it wants.

Chapter six of the draft PDP 2017-2022 posted in the National Economic and Development Authority's website highlights the need to shift the methodology of delivering justice, from the traditional "individual and institution-based" delivery to a "sector-based" approach.

The preliminary report said in the Philippines, the turtle is the symbol of justice, being slow and "arguably selective."

Rather than providing security and protection, the people view the justice system as a maze riddled with traps and obstacles that hinder their quest for justice, it added.

"A systems overhaul, a complete transformation of the historical methodology for delivering justice is thus needed," the paper said.

"At its core is a streamlined interdependence among the justice sector institutions which will nevertheless preserve the constitutionally guaranteed separation of powers. Through the new platform of a coordinated delivery of justice, the end goal will be achieved: justice that is swift, justice that is fair, justice real-time," it added.

To support the strategies under the said PDP draft chapter, two overarching activities will be implemented, specifically the criminal justice information exchange (CJiX) and a communication plan.

The CJiX will give all justice sector agencies the flexibility to develop their own information and communication technology (ICT) systems according to their needs and provide the framework that will generate the commonalities for easy interchange of crime-related data.

"The CJiX will not impose a specific development platform for ICT systems within the justice sector agencies, but will provide for the necessary interconnectivity or interoperability that will enable the free flow of crime-related data within and from without the justice sector agencies," the draft said.

"The CJiX shall have the flexibility to allow for the interchange of other crime-relevant data that relate to civil actions and special proceedings, such as frauds in commercial transactions, unfair competition, infringements of intellectual property rights, infrastructure and land disputes," it added.

Meanwhile, the paper said crucial to implementing strategies and achieving targets is an effective communication plan.

"This plan will ensure that the activities and initiatives are communicated to all stakeholders in a manner that is understandable to all, and direct feedback is obtained from them. Utilizing appropriate mass media tools will be part of the plan," the report said.

The government wants access to civil, criminal, commercial and administrative justice systems enhanced, and to improve sector efficiency and accountability.

However, despite the government's plan to have a swift and fair administration of justice, the Human Rights Watch, an independent international organization, released its latest World Report last Friday,

pointing out that President Duterte and senior government officials have “praised the killing spree of suspected drug dealers and drug users and resisted holding those responsible to account.”

“In the name of wiping out ‘drug crime,’ President Duterte has steamrolled human rights protections and elevated unlawful killings of criminal suspects to a cornerstone of government policy,” said Phelim Kine, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

“Friends of the Philippines need to make clear that it can’t be business as usual until the killings stop and there are meaningful moves toward accountability,” Kine added.

Akshaya Kumar, deputy United Nations director, said in the report that Duterte’s anti-drug campaign has resulted in “police and unidentified gunmen killing thousands of Filipinos, without any semblance of due process.”

“Promising medals to those who join his effort, Duterte has compared himself to Hitler and declared that he would be ‘happy to slaughter’ the more than three million Filipinos he describes as ‘drug addicts,’” Kumar said.

“This kind of braggadocio makes it difficult to try to change Duterte’s actions by simply showing how his tactics violate basic human rights,” he added.

The draft PDP, however, said the government will continue to implement policies and mechanisms that will protect and uphold human rights.

“This will include coordinated investigation, case build up and prosecution especially in relation to grave human rights particularly extralegal/political/media killings, torture and enforced disappearances,” the draft paper said.

The PDP also said with the war on drugs and intensified campaign against criminality, reforming the corrections system in its entirety is now of “greater urgency.”

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