

DENR bats for 'meager' 2024 budget hike

By Red Mendoza, The Manila Times

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources appealed for a slight increase in its 2024 budget to P24.572 billion, which, according to its head, is less than 1 percent of the proposed P5.768 trillion national expenditure program.

"We are 0.44 percent of the total national budget, and yet, we are tasked with an enormous and complex mandate," Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga told the House Committee on Appropriations on Wednesday.

However, the agency's proposed budget for 2024 is already 5.49 percent higher than its 2023 allocation of P23.29 billion.

In its presentation to the House panel, the DENR said the budget would adopt a climate-risk lens in national planning and policies.

The proposed allocation is broken down into: P18.62 billion for the DENR's offices across the country, P2.57 billion for the Environmental Management Bureau, P1.47 billion for the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, P1.6 billion for the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority, P210.92 million for the National Water Resources Board, and P94.6 million for the Palawan Council for Sustainable Development.

Loyzaga said the budget was expected to address the complex environmental policy areas, including forests, biodiversity, coastal and marine resources, minerals, lands, air and water.

"The proposed budget incorporates a geospatial approach to identifying, accounting and valuing our natural resources, and integrated and strategic planning required to de-risk development positions," she pointed out.

She said that securing adequate financing for the science, technology, engineering, innovations and human resources for sustainable development has been "challenging" — not only for the DENR but also for all developing countries.

"The impacts of the resources the DENR is given will be multiplied by adopting a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. We aim to use these resources to build the trust of our communities, the private sector, academe, and development partners to further our goals," Yulo-Loyzaga said.