

DTI P14-B budget pitch cites need to expand investment promotion

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it hopes to obtain an additional P2 billion for its 2026 budget, citing the need for more investment promotion and industry support.

"We are still hoping that the P12 billion can still go up by another P2 billion," Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque told reporters on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the COCONUT Philippines Trade Fair on Friday.

"Based on the budget hearing, everybody wants to support the small and medium enterprises and, of course, foreign trade because they can see the results," she added.

Under the National Expenditure Program (NEP) 2026, the DTI and agencies under its umbrella were allocated P12,426 billion.

She said that a portion of the budget will be used to promote international trade and foreign investment.

"How can we get foreign investors to come in if they don't know what the programs that we have are or what we can offer to these foreign investors?" she said.

"We need to really do marketing because there are other Southeast Asian people really marketing their countries, and the numbers show that we are growing in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI) and exports," she added.

Under the NEP, foreign trade and investment marketing were allotted P1 billion, which will

be used to fund roadshows and other such activities.

She said the DTI is seeking support from Congress for fair trade and consumer protection programs, as well as digitalization and increased staff.

"There are too many products being sold via e-commerce. We need more people and technology to make sure that the products are safe," she added.

Ms. Roque said additional funding is needed for micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) development.

"That's really a big sector. We also need funds for that, especially for the trade shows," she said, noting that such events generate more sales for MSMEs.

"We need to promote and find avenues for them to sell their products," she added.

She is also seeking additional funding for halal certification.

"We have so many products, but they're not halal certified. Why? Because certification is expensive," she said.

"We have 3,000 MSME products out there that are halal. We are hoping to grow that," she added.

Another initiative being pushed by the DTI is the creative industry, which received P50 million of funding under NEP.

"We were asking for P450 million for the creative industry. That's also where our edge is," she said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

PCA expects Europe, UAE to absorb more coconut exports

THE Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) is banking on other markets to absorb coconut exports, with shipments to the US expected to slacken in response to the 19% tariff imposed on Philippine goods.

"There are bigger markets than the US," PCA Administrator Dexter R. Buted said, citing Europe and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the COCONUT Philippines Trade Fair, Mr. Buted also noted the potential of Japan and China to absorb some Philippine shipments.

Demand in China and Japan, he said, centers on young coconut and coconut water.

In Europe, "there is demand for virgin coconut oil and desiccated coconut, which they use for pastries, bread, and chocolates," he added.

He added that the demand for coconut water has surged 1,000%, noting that a Philippine company has secured a P15-billion contract to supply coconut water to a global brand for five more years.

He said that while the US market cannot be completely ruled out, diversification will help maintain the country's position as a top global exporter of coconut.

Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque said negotiations with the US concerning reciprocal tariffs are still ongoing.

"For coconut, we're still negotiating with the US, so nothing is final yet. The coconut industry is very important for us, and definitely we need to really find or strengthen the market for this," she said.

To help mitigate the impact of the 19% tariff, she said the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has reached out to manufacturers.

"We've already reached out to the various manufacturers and industries, she said, noting that talks have taken place without providing details.

"We have 29 DTI offices all over the world and 21 trade offices. Let's take advantage of this.

To the businessmen out there who are affected, the DTI is here for you to help you and to assist you," she added.

She said support will take the form of finding more markets and buyers for Philippine exports.

"We are encouraging more people to really get into the coconut business because it is a star product. Globally, there is a huge market, and locally, there is also a big demand," she said.

"We really hope that we can grow this market, because wherever I go, they really want coconut, especially from the Philippines," she added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

PHL needs broader investor base to mitigate volatile flows — BPI

STRENGTHENING the Philippine investor base could help mitigate any potential volatility when investment flows dry up, Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) Wealth Chief Investment Officer Luis Antonio Zialcita said.

"I guess one of the key things that we have to achieve... is a stronger local investor base. At this point in time, markets are very dependent on flows," Mr. Zialcita said at a panel discussion at the Philippine Investment Conference 2025.

Other parts of the world economy, including those in Southeast Asia, have become more important as the US tariffs weigh on its economy's trade with other countries, PwC China Economist Dr. Jackie Yan said in the same panel.

"In my view, I don't see it as decoupling. I just see it as both decoupling and recoupling. It's just a transformation of the global supply chain," he said.

"This is where increasingly the other parts of the world economy, like the ASEAN economy, are becoming significantly more

important because it's integrated into this global supply chain transformation."

Particularly in the case of China, investments and exports are flowing more into countries in ASEAN, while exports from the region are increasing into the US, he said.

"We're seeing the restructuring of the supply chain and investment flows because I think one thing people didn't really appreciate enough is that investment and trade are always linked with each other. You have cross-border investment and then you create new trade linkages," he said.

"We have looked like there's a decoupling maybe between the US and China, but I think behind the scenes you are seeing ASEAN becoming an integrated part of this and it's just creating new trade and investment linked to this along the way."

While the Philippines is unlikely to decouple from the US in the short term, a deepening of financial markets could help open up the country to more foreign investors, Mr. Zialcita said.

"The regulatory changes that the SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) Chair has mentioned, the deepening of our markets, is one of those key things that will allow us to finally be global," he said, noting that market pricing in the Philippines remains low compared to other regions.

"For the meantime, at least the valuations are very attractive... that is something that investors should consider," he said.

In a speech at the same conference, SEC Chairman Francisco E. Lim said the commission is working to broaden participation and modernize infrastructure to deepen the capital markets.

These efforts include a shelf registration framework for issuers, aimed at providing flexibility and speed; efforts to improve liquidity and price discovery, as well as expanding the repo market to include trust entities, mutual funds, and insurers. — **Aaron Michael C. Sy**



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