

DEPDev pushing for amendments to feeding program, coco levy laws

THE Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) asked legislators to amend legislation governing the national feeding program and the coconut levy fund, citing implementation constraints that hinder service delivery and farmer access.

Speaking at a House Economic Affairs Committee briefing on Wednesday, Economy Undersecretary Rosemarie G. Edillon said DEPDev priorities include changes to Republic Act No. 11037, or the Masustansiyang Pagkain para sa Batang Pilipino Act, to relax the rules on milk sourcing.

“We actually want to relax the provision related to milk, because the options available to our supplementary feeding centers are extremely limited,” she said.

The law established a national feeding program to address hunger and undernutrition.

Under the law, National Government agencies and local

dairies are tasked with incorporating fresh milk and milk-based products into fortified meals. It aligns with the Philippine Food Fortification Act of 2000, which promotes the use of locally produced milk to improve nutrition and support the dairy industry.

Proposed amendments to the Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act will seek to overhaul provisions hindering farmers from accessing the trust fund.

The Coconut Farmers and Industry Trust Fund Act or Republic Act No. 11521 was signed into law by President Rodrigo R. Duterte in 2021. It placed coconut levy assets into a trust fund intended to support the rehabilitation and modernization of the coconut industry.

The Department of Finance has said that the proposed amendments aim to establish “practical rules” aligned with the fund’s objectives. She gave no further details. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

DoF seeking P38-B budget for 2026

THE Department of Finance (DoF) is proposing a 2026 budget of P37.78 billion as it works to digitalize its operations.

The funding proposal, if granted, would represent a 1.09% increase from its allocation in the 2025 General Appropriations Act and account for 0.56% of the P6.793-trillion national budget for 2026, the DoF said.

In a briefing, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said the proposed budget is equivalent to three days’ worth of its collections. It is tasked with collecting

about P13.65 billion per day for the government.

“Digitalization and modernization initiatives remain a high priority across all agencies under the DoF to transform processes, integrate systems, and deliver faster, more efficient services,” he said.

The DoF said House Committee on Appropriations Vice Chair Bella Vanessa B. Suansing expressed support for the DoF budget, committing to “faithfully sponsor” the proposal before the Congress. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Lease, e-governance laws deemed investor-friendly — foreign chambers

AMENDMENTS to the Investor’s Lease Act have enhanced the investment climate, the Joint Foreign Chambers (JFC) said.

The JFC added that other recent reforms like the E-Governance Act and the Enhanced Fiscal Regime for Large-Scale Metallic Mining Act “will foster a more stable, predictable, and competitive business environment.”

“These reforms signal the government’s strong commitment to unlocking the coun-

try’s economic potential, and the JFC commends President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. and the Philippine Congress for their leadership in advancing them,” the JFC said in a statement on Wednesday.

It said the E-Governance Act will help reduce red tape, increase efficiency, and improve transparency.

Meanwhile, the extended lease period allowed by the amended Investor Lease Act provides foreign investors with long-term

certainty, encouraging major investments.

The new mining fiscal regime simplifies tax policies for the industry and establishes a fair and transparent fiscal framework designed to attract responsible mining investment.

“The JFC applauds these transformative reforms, which together represent major steps toward building a more competitive, inclusive, and prosperous future for the Philippines,” it added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

DoH invites private sector to manage government hospitals

By Justine Irish D. Tabile
Reporter

THE Department of Health (DoH) said it plans to bring in private partners to take on the operations and maintenance (O&M) of government hospitals.

“I am running the biggest conglomerate of hospitals, and I need the help of the private sector,” Health Secretary Teodoro J. Herbosa told the Health Leadership Summit 2025 on Wednesday.

“I am willing to share some of the hospitals and outsource the O&M contracts to make sure that the hospitals are functional.”

He said the DoH currently operates 83 hospitals of 500 to 1,500 beds.

“We are ready for public-private partnerships (PPPs). We are actually ready for them to be managed by (the private sector),” he said.

He said funding delays have become an issue for equipment maintenance, and noted that the government has changed strategy for healthcare facilities, preferring to add more Bagong Urgent Care and Ambulatory Services (BUCAS) Centers to opening new hospitals.

“Because of the Universal Health Care Law, I’m asking the private sector to partner in primary healthcare, in longevity medicine, in diagnostic outpatient testing, and in ambulatory care,” he said.

“I need more BUCAS Centers; I do not need more hospitals. Hospitals are difficult and expensive to manage,” he added.

Rafael Jaime V. Recio, chief strategy and investment officer at AC Health (Ayala Healthcare Holdings, Inc.), said that the private sector in other countries is already taking part in the O&M of government-owned hospitals.

“It is a model that works in other countries,” he told re-

porters on the sidelines of the summit.

However, he said that to make it a viable option for private companies, the agreements need to “make sense from a commercial standpoint.”

“There’s a balance that has to be struck between what the government needs, what we can deliver, and how incentives are aligned between the two sides,” he said.

He said incentives have to be tailored to each project.

AC Health is currently participating in various PPPs with local government units.

Meanwhile, he said that AC Health is planning to use the funding from investment firm ABC Impact’s acquisition of a 16% stake in the company to expand its network.

“The idea is that we want to focus on key geographies beyond Metro Manila,” he said.

“Obviously, Metro Manila is a priority for us. But then beyond

Metro Manila, we’re looking at key cities outside that we’d want to double down on and create a tighter network,” he added.

He said AC Health sees acquisition opportunities but noted that the industry has become more competitive.

AC Health is hoping to expand its network to 10 hospitals, 300 clinics, and 1,150 pharmacies by 2027.

Asked if there are more plans to raise funding, he said, “I think our focus over the next maybe three to five years is really making sure that we’re able to effectively deploy the capital, work with our partners, and grow the portfolio, and then maybe at some point, if the need dictates, then we might look at it again.”

“We’re always evaluating funding options as and when needed. But for now, I think the focus is really execution, rolling out, and making sure that we’re able to deploy the capital effectively and grow the portfolio,” he added.

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