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Headline: Proposed 2024 climate change budget slashed

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A view of Baguio City, considered the most vulnerable to climate change among four cities outside the National Capital Region due to its vulnerability to extreme weather events, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature-Philippines, which did a study years ago. (INQUIRER FILES)

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MANILA, Philippines — A total of P86 billion was trimmed from the proposed 2024 budget for climate change, with a portion reallocated to unprogrammed funds, the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said on Wednesday.

President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Tuesday declared that the government has allotted P457.41 billion pesos for climate change in the 2024 General Appropriations Act (GAA), which is the final budget that Congress deliberated and passed.

The DBM, however, proposed around P543 billion for climate change in the National Expenditure Program (NEP) 2024. This is a P86 billion slash during Congressional hearings.

INQUIRER.net learned that a portion of the P86 billion became unprogrammed funds.

“This is to confirm that the amount of P543.4 billion was allocated for climate change projects, programs and activities under the NEP, while P457.41 billion was allocated for the same under the [Fiscal Year] 2024 GAA,” the DBM told INQUIRER.net in a message.

“Our concerned budget bureau explained that a portion of the P543.4 billion were reclassified to unprogrammed appropriation under the FY 2024 GAA,” the DBM added.

This is a mere P4 billion increase from the 2023 climate change budget, which was P453.11 billion.

INQUIRER.net has reached out to both chambers of Congress for a comment.

The 2024 GAA has a sizable P449.5-billion unprogrammed funds, which raised concerns from a number of lawmakers.

In January, Albay First District Representative Edcel Lagman questioned the legality of the unprogrammed funds, as they were inserted by Congress and exceeded the budget that the Executive asked for.

“This year’s GAA, which took effect on [Jan. 1, 2024], suffers a constitutional infirmity insofar as the bicameral conference committee inserted P449.5 billion in excess of the unprogrammed appropriations of P281.9 billion recommended by the President in the national budget or the NEP (national expenditure program),” Lagman said in a prior statement.

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However, the DBM previously explained that the unprogrammed appropriations are merely standby funds.