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MANILA -- The chairman of the House Appropriations Committee on Friday said the version of the PHP4.1-trillion 2020 budget approved by the bicameral conference committee and ratified by both Houses of Congress contains no pork and no parked funds.

Committee chairman Isidro Ungab said the 2020 General Appropriations Bill (GAB) is in compliance with the “express instructions” of President Rodrigo Duterte as it would be a powerful tool to help deliver his goal of a “safe and comfortable life for all.”

Ungab said the budget process was undertaken with “utmost transparency.”

“It represents the clear 2020 vision of the President and his economic strategy anchored on increased spending in infrastructure and human capital development. The projects outlined under the 2020 budget will help sustain our status as one of Asia’s best-performing economies,” he said.

“Attempts to label the

2020 budget pork-ridden by constantly redefining ‘pork’ is unfair and misleading. The Supreme Court has already declared pork barrel funds as unconstitutional and clearly defined what constitutes pork. The 2020 budget is pork-free,” he added.

The lawmaker noted that all changes made in the GAB were aligned with the President’s priorities and were based on the recommendations of the Cabinet Departments and other government agencies.

“Both houses ratified the budget bill. The representatives of both the Senate and House agreed on the amendments to, and final version of, the 2020 GAB at the bicameral conference committee,” he said.

On Thursday, Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said there is no room for unconstitutional provisions in the proposed 2020 national budget.

Panelo made this assurance following concerns raised by Senator Panfilo

Lacson that members of the House of Representatives allegedly made last-minute insertions prior to the signing of the budget by the bicameral conference committee.

“Provisions in the budget that run counter to the Constitution will be vetoed by the President, there is no change in that policy,” Panelo said in a statement.

Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles, like Panelo, earlier said the President will not hesitate to use his veto powers as he did when he vetoed the 2019 national budget.

The House approved House Bill No. 4228, or the General Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2020, on Sept. 20 while the Senate passed its version on Nov. 27.

Duterte earlier said he wanted to avoid a repeat of the nearly four-month delay in 2019 budget enactment due to an impasse between the House and Senate on realignments made by some House members.

In his veto message on the 2019 budget, Duterte said he would “not tolerate any attempts to circumvent the Constitution”, and vetoed PHP95.3 billion items of appropriations under the budget because they were “not within programmed priorities”. (PNA)

BAGUIO CITY-- League of Association of La Trinidad Vegetable Trading Area at the trading post in Benguet capital town has renewed its plea to the city government of Baguio to suspend the truck ban for trucks carrying vegetables.

“May we request you honor to lift the truck ban among the vegetable trucks from Dec. 20 to 31 this year,” said the group’s letter dated December 6 and received by the Office of the City Mayor on Dec. 12.

The office of Councilor Benny Bomogao, the chairman of the committee on transportation, was also furnished with the letter.

In its letter, the group said, if lifting the truck ban is not pos-

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Army provides medical services, advice vs. Yuletide diseases

MANILA -- With the Christmas season fast approaching, the Philippine Army (PA), through the Office of the Army Chief Surgeon (OACS), on Thursday provided free medical services to Army personnel and their dependents aside from increasing their awareness on lifestyle diseases associated with the holidays.

These activities were conducted at the PA headquarters in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Army spokesperson Lt. Col. Ramon Zagala said.

The OACS-sponsored event has the theme “Have Yourself a Merry Healthy Christmas”, he added.

The OACS offered free medical services on hypertension screening, diabetes screening, vaccination, pharmacy counseling, nutrition counseling, vision screening with eyeglass fitting, physical therapy, thyroid ultrasound, wart removal, consultation and anti-ra-

bies vaccines for canine and felines, OB-Gyn consultation, pediatric consultations, mental illness, and burnout screening.

During the activity, PA chief-of-staff Maj. Gen. Jesus Sarsagat highlighted the importance of prioritizing one’s health as it plays an integral part in enabling Army personnel to effectively perform their duties while taking care of their families.

Last July, the OACS also hosted the first Army Medical Service Day 2019 where it provided free health services in partnership with the Department of Health, the City Government of Taguig, and different pharmaceutical companies.

“With this kind of activity, we aim to support the health of every Filipino soldier and their dependents, as well as to advance our troops’ overall well-being, so they could better perform their duties and responsibilities,” Zagala added. (PNA)

Veggie traders appeal for Baguio to lift truck ban

sible, the city could issue 30 more truck ban passes to cater to the increase in demand of produce during the holiday season.

In a text message, Agot Balanoy, the group’s public relations office, said they hope a respond from the city government any time soon as they expect demand to rise before Christmas and New Year’s Day.

Balanoy said December is the peak season of the vegetable industry.

“It is during this time that farmers hope to sell most of their produce since the demand doubles or triples. These vegetables from Benguet and nearby vegetable producing provinces supply key markets as far as Batanes in the north and Palawan and General Santos City in the South,” she said.

Balanoy said the request is to allow a swift delivery of highly perishable vegetables to the consumers.

The Baguio City truck ban ordinance prohibits trucks from using the roads at the central business district (CBD) during rush hours from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The La Trinidad trading post where the vegetables are brought by farmers have to pass several roads at the CBD to reach Marcos Highway, the primary road leading out of the region to its destinations.

While there are roads like at the diversion roads in Suelo Village and at the Balakbak Barangay, trucks carrying tons of vegetables are unable to maneuver due to the steepness of the road, posing risks not only to the truckers but to the residents in the area.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and He will flee from you.” – James 4:7