

What about smoke-free EO? Duterte asked

○ Sunday, January 15, 2017

ALMOST a week after President Rodrigo Duterte signed an executive order (EO) on family planning, anti-smoking advocates are asking the Chief Executive on when he will sign the EO that will prohibit smoking in all public places nationwide.

In a statement, the New Vois Association of the Philippines (NVAP) said they are hoping that signing the EO for a smoke-free Philippines will come sooner than later or else risk more Filipinos dying from tobacco-related illnesses.

"We are calling on President Duterte to finally make a stand for Filipinos against the perennial lies of the tobacco companies by signing the much-awaited EO for a smoke-free Philippines," Rojas said.

Last year, Duterte failed to sign the EO proposed by the Department of Health (DOH) supposedly after the draft copy got lost in Malacanang.

In a separate interview, Health Secretary Pauly Ubial said that the re-submitted copy of the draft EO is already with the Office of the President (OP).

"We followed it up in Malacanang and they said it is already with the Office of the President. Hopefully, it can already be signed within January," said Ubial.

Under the proposed EO, the government is expected to impose a ban on smoking in all public spaces, including parks, bus stations, inside vehicles, and even in designated indoor smoking areas such as in airport lounges and restaurants. Smokers are only allowed to puff outside of buildings in public places away from people.

Last week, Duterte signed EO 12, which aims to intensify and accelerate the implementation of the reproductive health (RH) law in the country.

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implementation of the reproductive health (RH) law in the country.

According to Rojas, Duterte should also take action to prevent more and more Filipinos from getting addicted to smoking cigarettes.

"First-time smokers turn into chain smokers because tobacco is addictive. Nearly 17.3 million Filipinos are currently addicted to smoking already," said Rojas.

"This simply means that such addiction must also be curbed by the government in a

similar way that it endeavors to stop the drug menace," he added.

Rojas also noted that while illegal drugs are known to cause heart disease, respiratory issues, and liver disease among others, similarly avoidable illnesses can also be caused by cigarette smoking.

Smoking-related diseases, he related, are lung cancer, heart ailments, diabetes, erectile dysfunction, tuberculosis, and stroke.

"We really need to stop the premature death of Filipinos due to tobacco addiction. Like any other addiction, this must be reduced or totally prevented," said Rojas.

Data shows that almost 10 Filipinos die every hour due to smoking-related diseases.
(HDT/SunStar Philippines)

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