

# Committee Daily Bulletin

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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2018 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commission on Audit (COA)</li> </ul>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), listened to the presentations on the proposed FY 2018 budget, plans and programs, and major accomplishments of the Commission on Audit (COA), Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), Office of the Vice President (OVP), and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Celso Lobregat (1st District, Zamboanga City) sat as the presiding officer during the COA's budget briefing.</p> <p>COA Chair Michael Aguinaldo said that under the FY 2018 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the COA is set to receive P12.11 billion, which is 10.56% higher than its current budget of P10.96 billion.</p> <p>By expense class, COA's 2018 proposed budget will be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P10.44 billion; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P480.88 million; capital outlay (CO), P271.54 million; and retirement and life insurance premiums (RLIP), P924.23 million.</p> <p>Aguinaldo also presented the major accomplishments of the COA in 2016 up to the first semester of 2017 based on the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government auditing and records custodial services – conducted several kinds of audit, including audit of barangays; and issued notices of disallowances, suspension and charges against erring government officials/employees and private parties involved;</li> <li>Government accountancy services – actively participated in the Public Financial Management (PFM) Reform Program by implementing accounting and auditing reforms; and</li> <li>Government accounting and auditing regulations and adjudicatory and other legal services – acted on several audit cases; implemented the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS) and the Strategic Performance Management System (SPMS), among others.</li> </ul> <p>For 2018 and onwards, COA will continue to pursue programs aimed at creating positive impact; empowering and enabling agencies; improving the conduct of high quality, fair, and timely audits; increasing stakeholder's ownership and understanding; strengthening its capacity and capability; and enhancing infrastructure support system.</p> <p>On the query of ACT TEACHERS Party-List Rep. France Castro, Aguinaldo reported that there are over 5,000 vacant plantilla positions in the Commission, resulting in one COA auditor handling five to six provinces. But, Aguinaldo added, COA is already addressing this concern by pursuing a systematic and extensive recruitment program.</p> <p>Aguinaldo was requested to submit to the Committee the list of vacant positions in the Commission and the corresponding qualification</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO) and its attached bureaus</li> </ul>	<p>standards.</p> <p>COA was also asked to submit an updated data/status of its audit reports on various anomalies and irregularities, as requested by some Members of the Committee.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Eric Olivarez (1<sup>st</sup> District, Parañaque City) sat as the presiding officer during the PCOO's budget briefing.</p> <p>PCOO Secretary Jose Ruperto Martin Andanar said that under the FY 2018 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the PCOO and its attached bureaus are set to receive P1.35 billion which is 1.63% lower compared to its 2017 budget of P 1.37 billion.</p> <p>The PCOO's proposed budget for 2018 is distributed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PCOO-Proper – P256.71 million;</li> <li>• Bureau of Broadcast Services – P 370.09 million;</li> <li>• Philippine Information Agency – P 335.37 million;</li> <li>• Presidential Broadcast Staff (RTVM) – P 210.88 million;</li> <li>• News and Information Bureau – P 129.12 million;</li> <li>• Bureau of Communications Services – P 37.85 million; and</li> <li>• National Printing Office – P 10.95 million.</li> </ul> <p>Andanar said that the PCOO will continue to strive for a timely and effective dissemination of information about the programs, plans and projects of the President, the Cabinet, and the Executive Branch.</p> <p>KABAYAN Party-List Rep. Harry Roque Jr. sought clarification on the legal opinion issued by Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo stating that APO Production Unit Inc. may be held criminally and administratively liable when it subcontracted the printing of e-passports to a privately-owned printing company, the United Graphic Expression Corporation (UGEC). Andanar said that at the time the opinion was issued, certain documents were not available to Panelo. Andanar added that the PCOO already provided Panelo with the pertinent documents and is just waiting for his response.</p> <p>APO Production Unit Inc. is a government-owned and controlled corporation under the PCOO that is authorized to handle the printing of accountable forms and sensitive high quality/volume printing jobs of government agencies.</p> <p>GABRIELA Party-List Rep. Arlene Brosas raised concern over the safety and security of President Rodrigo Duterte following the PCOO's issuance of Department Order 15, which grants accreditation to bloggers and social media practitioners to cover events attended by the President. She emphasized the adoption of international standards for media accreditation. Andanar clarified that the accreditation of bloggers and social media practitioners will only be on a per event basis.</p> <p>ACT TEACHERS Party-List Rep. France Castro, along with several Members of the Committee, asked the PCOO on what action it has taken to avoid a repeat of the recent blunders committed by people from the state-run Philippine News Agency (PNA) in connection with its media releases.</p> <p>Andanar informed the Committee that the PCOO has created an Editorial Board, headed by himself, which shall take a closer look at all the materials lined up for release by the PNA to avoid further blunders. He added that two of the erring PNA employees have already resigned, while the others who have remained in the service shall be subjected to retraining and shall be penalized based on existing Civil Service laws and regulations.</p>
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Continuation... Appropriations		<p>Cimatu said that the DENR is coordinating with the Office of the President (OP) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on the ratification of the Minamata Convention. He and his officials will attend the upcoming convention in Geneva, Switzerland, Cimatu added.</p> <p>The Minamata Convention on Mercury is an international treaty designed to protect human health and the environment from anthropogenic emissions and releases of mercury and mercury compounds.</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Human Rights	HB 1617	Rep. Zarate	Defining certain rights of human rights defenders and providing penalties for violations thereof in the implementation of the 1998 UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally-Recognized Human Rights or otherwise known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Cheryl Deloso-Montalla (2nd District, Zambales), will deliberate further on HB 1617 in its next meeting.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Deloso-Montalla recognized that violations to human rights are growing exponentially even when the defenders of human rights continue to struggle for freedom and dignity.</p> <p>She said the role of the State as duty bearer cannot be overemphasized, and in the implementation of such function the State must ensure accountability, transparency and adherence to the rule of law, and create and maintain an enabling environment for respect to the primacy of human rights.</p> <p>BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate, principal author of HB 1617, underscored the fact that human rights defenders in the country also face human rights violations themselves, which even extend to their immediate families. Thus, he called for the immediate passage of the proposed law which aims to protect human rights defenders and penalize any violations of their rights in the pursuit of their advocacy.</p> <p>Rep. Zarate said HB 1617 is a refiled version of Bayan Muna's Human Rights Defenders' Protection Bill first filed during the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress and again in the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress.</p> <p>Jose Luis Martin "Chito" Gascon, chairman of the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and Atty. Ephraim Cortez, secretary general of the National Union of People's Lawyers (NUPL), manifested their support for the bill.</p> <p>Police Superintendent Veronica Peñalosa, chief of the Policy and Capability Development Division (PCDD), Human Rights Affairs Office (HRAO) of the Philippine National Police (PNP), said that while his office supports the intention of the bill, it has some reservations on some provisions of the bill.</p> <p>The Committee resource persons and other</p>

<p>Continuation... Human Rights</p>	<p>HBs 1303, 1512, 2343, 3217 &amp; 4078</p>	<p>Reps. Relampagos, Alejano, Fortun, Escudero, and Tambunting</p>	<p>Strengthening the Commission on Human Rights (CHR)</p>	<p>stakeholders were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bill.</p> <p>The Committee referred the bills to the technical working group (TWG) for further deliberation.</p> <p>Rep. Glona Labadlabad (2nd District, Zamboanga del Norte) chairs the TWG.</p> <p>The authors present pushed for the strengthening of the CHR by granting it prosecutorial powers, full fiscal autonomy, and immunity from prosecution, among others.</p> <p>Gascon expressed his full support for the bills.</p> <p>The resource persons and other stakeholders were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bills for the consideration of the TWG.</p>
<p>Transportation</p>	<p>HBs 456 &amp; 1286</p>	<p>Reps. Manalo and Baguilat</p>	<p>Maritime Safety, Security and Prevention of Ship-Sourced Pollution Act</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento, agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to harmonize HBs 456 and 1286.</p> <p>The TWG will be chaired by ANGKLA Party-List Rep. Jesulito Manalo, author of HB 456.</p> <p>Rep. Sarmiento underscored the need to conform to international maritime conventions in order to remain competitive in the global arena. However, he pointed out that there is presently no law implementing these conventions and no government agency tasked to oversee their effective implementation.</p> <p>Rep. Manalo explained that the proposed law seeks to implement the five safety conventions signed by the Philippines relating to the following: safety of life at sea; prevention of pollution from ships; prevention of collisions at sea; limitation on ship loading based on load lines; and determination of tonnage of ships.</p> <p>Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) Administrator Marcial Amaro III and Department of Transportation (DOTr) Undersecretary Felipe Judan expressed their support for the passage of an enabling law that will set the direction towards the effective implementation of these conventions.</p> <p>Likewise, Gerardo Borromeo, vice chair of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and Atty. Jay Batongbacal of the University of the Philippines (UP) Institute for Maritime Affairs and Law of the Sea favor the proposed law, but recommended the inclusion of a provision in the bill that will provide MARINA with an oversight function to oversee the effective implementation of the proposed law.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their position papers on the two bills.</p>

Continuation... Transportation	HB 497	Rep. Nograles (K.A.)	Creating a Harbor Pilotage Commission, regulating harbor pilotage services and the conduct of harbor pilots in all ports in the Philippines	<p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to harmonize the two bills and come up with a substitute bill.</p> <p>The TWG will be chaired by Rep. Sarmiento.</p> <p>Rep. Sarmiento pointed out the need to liberalize pilotage services to allow the participation of more harbor pilots and improve the quality of service. He noted that there are only 111 harbor pilots in the country which constitutes a monopoly of the pilotage services.</p> <p>Rep. Manalo said that his bill provides an open pilotage system to address the current monopolistic set-up. He cited the key role played by harbor pilots in ensuring the efficient operation of ports and the smooth flow of maritime commerce and in minimizing, if not avoiding, maritime accidents.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their position papers on the two bills.</p>
	HB 1278	Rep. Manalo	Providing open pilotage services in the country, creating a pilotage board, enhancing the powers of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) and other port bodies in regulating pilotage services and the conduct of harbor pilots	

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Subcommittee on Telecommunications (Information and Communications Technology)	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 929, 2556, 2874, 2907, 3629 & 4241	Reps. Abaya, Castelo, Yap (V.), Sandoval, and Belaro	Providing for the establishment of the No Calls and No Text Registration System	<p>The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Francis Gerald Abaya (1st District, Cavite), approved the draft substitute bill, subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>The bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Abaya recalled the agreements reached during the last meeting of the Subcommittee's technical working group (TWG).</p> <p>With regard to the recommendation to penalize telecommunication companies (telcos) for giving "special access numbers" to advertising and marketing companies thereby allowing the latter to send promotional materials to subscribers, Atty. Maria Cecilia Soria of Better Broadband Alliance (BBA) manifested that there is no need for such provision because it is already covered under the Data Privacy Act (RA 10173).</p> <p>On the query of 1-PACMAN Party-List Rep. Enrico Pineda on how advertising and promotional companies gain access to the personal information of subscribers, Atty. Sherwin de Joya of Smart Communications stressed that Smart neither gives out nor sell its subscribers' mobile numbers. He surmised that advertising companies may have acquired these personal information from other sources.</p> <p>Marle Rabena, chief of the Service and</p>

Continuation... Subcommittee on Telecommunications (Information and Communications Technology)				Interconnection Division of the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC), said that the Commission is not capable of establishing a No Calls and No Text Registry, as required under the proposed law.
	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 590, 931, 1193, 1258, 2328, 2648, 2809, 3649, 3661, 4014, 4404, 4646, 5382 & 5591	Reps. Velarde, Abaya, Loyola, Biazon, Antonino, Gatchalian, Castelo, Rodriguez (M.) Sandoval, Lazatin, Almario, Lopez (M.L.), and Tambunting	Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) Card Registration Act	<p>The Subcommittee, approved the draft Substitute Bill to the 14 measures, subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>The bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Rep. Abaya said that a bill of the same nature was approved on Third Reading by the House of Representatives during the 16<sup>th</sup> Congress, but was stalled at the Senate.</p> <p>Atty. Ariel Tubayan, director for policy division of Globe Telecom, suggested that more stringent security measures should be implemented in collecting the data of subscribers, such as the use of biometrics.</p> <p>The Subcommittee requested the resource persons to submit their official position papers on the bill within one week.</p>

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Government Reorganization jt. w/ Special Committee on Food Security (Technical Working Group)	HBs 1102, 1547 & 2908	Rep. Castelo	Creating the Office of National Food Security and appropriating P20 billion therefor from the funds of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) and the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO)	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Jose "Ping-ping" Tejada (3rd District, North Cotabato), will deliberate further on the five measures in its next meeting.</p> <p>Reps. Tejada and Winston "Winnie" Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), author of HBs 1102, 1547 and 2908, underscored the importance of creating an office that would ensure the accessibility and availability of food to all and will address the growing problem of hunger and malnutrition in the country.</p> <p>Rep. Tejada went on to say that the TWG meetings intend to clarify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organizational structure to be created (whether a council, an office or authority);</li> <li>• The implications of the proposed law to existing government offices in terms of functions and mandates; and</li> <li>• The budgetary impact of creating a new government office.</li> </ul> <p>Representatives from the Departments of Trade and Industry (DTI), Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Foreign Affairs (DFA) and Agrarian Reform (DAR), Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), Population Commission (POPCOM), Commission on Higher</p>
	HB 4223	Rep. Romero	Strengthening food security, establishing the Food Security Council	
	HB 4361	Rep. Espino	Providing for a framework for food security, establishing a Food Security Authority and appropriating funds therefor	

Continuation... Government Reorganization jt. w/ Special Committee on Food Security (Technical Working Group)				<p>Education (CHED), Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) expressed their support for the bills.</p> <p>On the other hand, the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Budget and Management (DBM), Science and Technology-Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and the National Nutrition Council (NNC) find it not necessary to create a separate government office to address food security in the country citing the costs involved.</p> <p>They explained that the functions of the proposed council are already being undertaken by existing government agencies. Instead of creating a new office, they suggested that these agencies be strengthened and their functions streamlined.</p> <p>Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) Human Resource Department Manager Marissa Medrano said that PCSO may not be able to provide funds for the implementation of the proposed law as it already supports various health programs of the government and assists in the upgrading of the government's healthcare facilities. Medrano further said that the President's approval is necessary in tapping the PCSO's Charity Fund.</p> <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bills.</p>
Metro Manila Development (Technical Working Group)	HB 4642	Rep. Castelo	Granting the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) additional powers and functions, amending for the purpose RA 7924	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Malabon City Rep. Federico "Ricky" Sandoval II, will deliberate further on the bills in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Bayani Fernando (1st District, Marikina City), main author of HB 5057, was asked to submit a revised version of his bill incorporating his proposed amendments, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Metro Manila Council (MMC) will propose ordinances to be adopted or approved by the city/municipal council of each of the 19 local government units (LGU) comprising Metro Manila within 30 days; and</li> <li>• The scope of services of MMDA shall be subject to the limitation as provided for under RA 7924 or the law creating the MMDA.</li> </ul> <p>Representatives from various LGUs in Metro Manila conveyed that they will discuss again with their respective councils the proposed amendments and will submit their position papers after receipt and review of the amended version of the bill.</p>
Public Order and Safety (Technical Working Group)	Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 1059, 1115,	Reps. Antonino, Alejano, Bataoil,	Providing for the reorganization and modernization of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and appropriating funds therefor	The technical working group (TWG), presided by Abra Rep. Joseph Sto. Niño Bernos, approved the draft substitute bill with amendments.

<p>Continuation... Public Order and Safety (Technical Working Group)</p>	<p>1306, 1506, 1508, 1778, 2155, 2426, 2952 &amp; 2993</p>	<p>Catamco, Pineda, Deputy Speaker Abu, Reps. Santos- Recto, and Matugas</p>		<p>The substitute bill will be submitted to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Among the amendments agreed upon by the TWG in today's meeting are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the functions of the Area Police Offices (APOs) to include the conduct of inter-regional operations against criminality, insurgency, terrorism, and transnational crimes (Section 10);</li> <li>• Allow the PNP to resort to direct contracting or any alternative mode of procurement notwithstanding the provisions of RA 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act (Section 25);</li> <li>• Amend the title of Section 27 to read as "Use of Unexpended Balances of Appropriations and Savings," and allow the use of savings to cover actual deficiencies incurred in the implementation of the PNP Modernization Program, as may be authorized by the President; and</li> <li>• Adopt a separate police justice system, to be promulgated by the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM) upon the recommendation of the PNP Chief, which shall apply to cases of breach of internal discipline in the PNP (Section 40).</li> </ul> <p>NAPOLCOM Legal Affairs Chief Chito Noel Bustonera and PNP Internal Affairs Service Deputy Inspector General Leo Angelo Leuterio conveyed their support for the bill.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Climate Change (Special Committee)</p>	<p>Briefing by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC) on the status of the People's Survival Fund (PSF) Law or RA 10174</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by AKO BICOL Party-List Rep. Christopher Co, listened to the briefing conducted by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities (ICSC) on the nature, processes as well as status of the People's Survival Fund (PSF) Law or RA 10174.</p> <p>Angelo Kairos dela Cruz, associate for climate policy at ICSC, said that the PSF was established as a special fund in the National Treasury for the financing of adaptation programs and projects of local governments and communities based on the National Strategic Framework. Under RA 10174, the national government shall allocate at least P1 billion per year to the PSF under the General Appropriations Act (GAA).</p> <p>ICSC, a member of the PSF Board, assists local governments and communities in developing their local resilience strategies. It was also involved in the crafting of RA 10174.</p> <p>Dela Cruz also discussed the process of approval of proposals requesting funding under the PSF, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance - submission of the required documents in accordance with the ICSC templates;</li> </ul>

<p>Continuation... Climate Change (Special Committee)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical evaluation - to be conducted by the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) and the National Panel of Technical Experts (NPTE);</li> <li>• Commissioner's endorsement – the proposal should be endorsed by at least two of the three commissioners of the Climate Change Commission (CCC); and</li> <li>• PSF Board approval.</li> </ul> <p>Dela Cruz mentioned that the Department of Finance (DOF) serves as chair of the PSF Board. Likewise, the DOF serves as the secretariat of the Board, replacing the Climate Change Office, but some of the secretariat functions were “outsourced” to the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP). The DBP is not a member of the PSF Board.</p> <p>Rep. Fernando Gonzalez (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Albay) asked whether legislators can access the PSF to fund projects in their congressional districts. Dela Cruz answered that although RA 10174 provides that only LGUs and communities can propose projects to be funded under the PSF, the House Members can lead or host discussions in their respective districts about the PSF so that LGU officials will be apprised of the availability of such fund and thereby initiate requests for funding.</p> <p>When asked by Rep. Yedda Marie Romualdez (1<sup>st</sup> District, Leyte) if Leyte will be given priority in the availment of PSF, Dela Cruz replied that areas around the Eastern seaboard will be given priority due to the devastation they suffered during the onslaught of Typhoon Yolanda.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon), Dela Cruz replied that the ICSC is willing to provide technical assistance to project proponents for greater chances of Board approval as long as climate change vulnerability is well-established and appropriate adaptation measure is proposed.</p> <p>AKO BICOL Party-List Rep. Rodel Batocabe inquired on the timeline of the process of approval for proposed projects. Dela Cruz said that the whole process may take about three months. He added that this year's funding allotment has already been earmarked, as early as June, to four PSF-approved projects in Lanuza, Surigao del Sur; Siargao Islands, Surigao del Norte; San Francisco, Camotes Island; and Gerona, Tarlac.</p> <p>Dela Cruz informed the Committee that interested local governments and communities may already submit their proposal to the ICSC starting October until December 2017 so that they will be evaluated and set for approval before the PSF Board convenes in March 2018.</p>
<p>Economic Affairs</p>	<p>Update on the status of implementation of RA 9856 or the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) Act of 2009</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Arthur Yap (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Bohol), continued its discussion on the status of implementation of RA 9856 or the REIT Law.</p> <p>Rep. Yap said that it is important to know the underlying reasons why the REIT Law has not been implemented despite its enactment in 2009. The law aims to promote the development of the capital market, democratize wealth by broadening the participation of Filipinos in the ownership of real estate, and protect the investing public by providing an enabling regulatory framework.</p> <p>Department of Finance (DOF) Undersecretary Antonette Tionko and Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) Assistant Commissioner Marissa Cabrerros explained that the delay in the implementation of RA 9856 could be attributed to the conflicting interpretations of the law specifically with regard to the application of value-added tax (VAT) to the transfer of property under the REIT.</p>

<p>Continuation... Economic Affairs</p>		<p>Reps. Manuel Zubiri (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Bukidnon) and Randolph Ting (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Cagayan) requested the DOF to formulate the appropriate provision amending the REIT Law.</p> <p>On the other hand, Francisco Lim, president of the Shareholders Association of the Philippines and who was involved in the crafting of the REIT Law, stressed that there is no need to amend RA 9856 since there is a BIR regulation that can address the tax issues.</p> <p>Atty. Ma. Gracia Casals-Diaz, executive director of the Capital Market Development Council (CMDC), suggested that it should be the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 9856 that should be amended instead of the law itself.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to draft the proposed amendment to the law which will be transmitted to the DOF and the BIR for further study.</p>
<p>Foreign Affairs</p>	<p>Briefing by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on the government's foreign policy direction under President Rodrigo Duterte's administration</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ana Cristina Siquian Go (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Isabela), listened to the presentation of Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano on the government's foreign policy direction under President Rodrigo Duterte's administration.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Go made it clear that the legislative priorities of the Committee will be parallel to the legislative priorities of the Duterte Administration. It is Rep. Go's first time to preside over the meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs as its new Chairperson. The former Committee Chair, Rep. Linabelle Ruth Villarica (4<sup>th</sup> District, Bulacan), was recently elected as Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.</p> <p>Consistent with President Duterte's pronouncement, the Foreign Affairs Secretary said the Philippine government will pursue an independent foreign policy in order to truly protect and promote the country's interests and the Filipino people's values. This policy is enshrined in the Constitution, which provides that "The State shall pursue an independent foreign policy. In its relations with other states, the paramount consideration shall be national sovereignty, territorial integrity, national interest, and the right to self-determination." (Section 7, Article II)</p> <p>Cayetano said the Philippines cannot go into a head-on confrontation with other countries just for the sake of territorial integrity without thinking of the national interest. He explained that if the Philippines aggressively pursues its territorial rights over the disputed areas, the country may lose out on trade, foreign investments or tourism. He added that the country's foreign policy is geared towards pursuing peace and stability in the region as this will result in economic benefits for the country. However, he stressed, it is not to say that the country is trading or compromising any of its territories in exchange for economic benefits.</p> <p>Upon the request of Cayetano, the Committee conducted an executive session to discuss the last part of his presentation which involves confidential information concerning national security matters.</p>