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PRE-PLenary CONFERENCES ON THE FY 2018 BUDGET

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Pre-Plenary conferences on the proposed FY 2018 budget, and plans and programs of the following government agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1st District, Davao City), held pre-Plenary conferences with the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agencies and the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) to thresh out issues and concerns raised by House Members relative to their proposed FY 2018 budget prior to the budget deliberations in the plenary.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Celso Lobregat (1st District, Zamboanga City) presided over this pre-Plenary conference.</p> <p>At the outset, ERC Commissioner Gloria Victoria Yap-Taruc made a short presentation on ERC's current state of affairs and its desire to obtain fiscal autonomy. She requested the help of Congress in providing the ERC personnel with better compensation as well as funding for their continuing education to improve their competency and keep them abreast of the developments in the field of energy regulation.</p> <p>ERC OIC-Executive Director Floresinda Digal presented the Commission's proposed 2018 budget, accomplishments, plans and programs. Digal said that under the 2018 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the ERC gets P350.95 million, which is 14.78% lower than its current budget of P411.84 million.</p> <p>On the query of 1-CARE Party-List Rep. Carlos Roman Uybarreta on the general sentiment of stakeholders with regard to the proposed adjustment of the recoverable systems loss cap, Digal disclosed that the ERC is yet to finish its consultations with stakeholders. However, ERC's initial observation is that the stakeholders are generally supportive, although there were some resistance coming from private distribution utilities.</p> <p>Rep. Arnolfo "Arnie" Teves Jr. (3rd District, Negros Oriental) criticized the practice of making the consumers pay for systems loss considering the huge amount of profit being enjoyed by the players in the power industry.</p> <p>In the same vein, BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate underscored the need to review RA 9136 or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 which was designed to bring down electricity rates and improve the delivery of power supply to the end-users.</p> <p>Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija) asked how the suspension of ERC Chair Jose Vicente Salazar has affected the agency and the morale of its employees.</p> <p>ERC Commissioner Josefina Asirit said that despite the flak they</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) 	<p>received from the public, the ERC employees continue to perform the tasks and functions expected of them and their office.</p> <p>The ERC was requested to submit the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of its employees and their corresponding salaries; Matrix showing the salient features of the existing and proposed law on putting a cap on recoverable systems loss; Copy of the power supply agreements entered into by Manila Electric Company (MERALCO); and Progress report on the 2013 Malampaya shutdown. <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Oscar "Richard" Garin Jr. (1st District, Iloilo) presided over the pre-plenary conference on DSWD's proposed budget.</p> <p>Several House Members inquired about the status of implementation of the <i>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps)</i>, which is a human development measure of the national government that provides conditional cash grants to the poorest of the poor to improve the health, nutrition, and the education of children aged 0-18.</p> <p>DSWD Officer-in-Charge Emmanuel Leyco disclosed that the Program is beset by delays in the release of funds which he attributes to the tedious process of verifying on a monthly basis the beneficiaries' compliance with the terms and conditions of the program and the limited capability of the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) to accommodate a large number of 4Ps beneficiaries. LBP is the primary financial conduit of the Program.</p> <p>To address the problem, Leyco said that the DSWD has decided that the verification of the beneficiaries' compliance shall be done every semester instead of monthly. He added that the DSWD is looking for other financial institutions as alternate financial conduits aside from LBP, as it also aims to increase the use of cash cards by beneficiaries through which they can claim their cash grants from the current rate of only 40% to 80% next year.</p> <p>Considering their personal knowledge of the situation in their respective districts, several House Members suggested that they be involved in the process of determining or identifying the beneficiaries of DSWD projects.</p> <p>Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas (1st District, Ilocos Norte) underscored the oversight function of Congress in asking DSWD to inform the Representative of each legislative district of any program or project before it is implemented within his or her area of jurisdiction.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Zubiri (3rd District, Bukidnon) asked DSWD to expand and sustain the programs under the <i>Kapit-Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan - Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (Kalahi-CIDSS)</i> citing its benefits to the rural communities, and to likewise expand its coverage to include senior citizens.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Joel Mayo Almario (2nd District, Davao Oriental) advised DSWD to enter into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for the implementation of the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP). This will allow the DSWD to utilize its unobligated funds of almost P8.6 billion the validity of which is due to expire at the end of the year.</p> <p>ACT TEACHERS Party-List Rep. Antonio Tinio suggested increasing the budget of DSWD for capital outlay (CO) to fund the renovation of DSWD's buildings and facilities.</p>
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<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) 	<p>The DSWD was requested to submit reports and documents pertinent to the proposed 2018 budget as requested by the Members of the Committee before the plenary deliberation of its budget.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Mark Aeron Sambar (Party-List, PBA) presided over this pre-plenary conference.</p> <p>Presenting the TESDA's proposed budget, Executive Director for Planning Marissa Legaspi said that under the FY 2018 National Expenditure Program (NEP), TESDA is set to receive P6.93 billion, which is 1.83% higher than its current budget of P6.83 billion</p> <p>Legaspi also discussed the mandate, mission and vision, and major accomplishments of TESDA from 2015 to 2016. She also explained TESDA's two-pronged strategy in poverty reduction: technical-vocational education and training (TVET) for global competitiveness; and TVET for social equity.</p> <p>Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. (1st District, Surigao del Sur) said it would have been better if TESDA had presented data on the number of graduates who got a job out of the six million techvoc graduates from 2014 to 2016, which may serve as an indicator if the TVET program has contributed to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the country and if it served its purpose of reducing poverty.</p> <p>TESDA Director General Guling Mamondiong said that the agency has already instructed all TESDA training centers all over the country to monitor their graduates and submit data on the number of graduates employed both locally and abroad. Mamondiong said that they expect to complete the data gathering before the end of the first quarter of next year.</p> <p>ACT TEACHERS Party-List Rep. France Castro noted that out of the P24 billion original budget proposal of TESDA, only P6.95 billion or only about 29% was approved by the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). She inquired as to which of the TESDA programs were affected by this budget slash.</p> <p>Mamondiong said that the reduction in the original budget proposal of TESDA resulted in the corresponding decrease in the allocation for maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), specifically funds for the training of one million people for its Barangay Skills Mapping Program; and the decrease in capital outlay (CO), specifically funds for the construction of dormitories intended for students living in far-flung areas from where TESDA trainings are being conducted.</p> <p>Rep. Marlyn Primicias-Agabas (6th District, Pangasinan) supports TESDA's plan to construct dormitories wherein students living in far-flung areas may stay while attending training.</p> <p>Reps. Raul Daza (1st District, Northern Samar) and Cesar Sarmiento (Catanduanes) urged TESDA to expedite the procurement of training kits for TESDA enrollees so as not to hamper the training program. Mamondiong explained that the delay in the procurement of supplies is due to the delayed release of funds by the DBM. He added that the suggested decentralization of the procurement process is not doable for TESDA due to its limited budget.</p> <p>Majority of the Members of the Committee pushed for an increase in the budget of TESDA to effectively implement its programs and projects.</p> <p>TESDA was requested to submit reports and documents pertinent to</p>
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COMMITTEE MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Economic Affairs	HR 898	Rep. Yap (A.)	Inquiry into the desired economic policy direction of the Philippines with regard to foreign participation in the ownership and operation of corporations and firms engaged in the business of construction of buildings and other infrastructure in the country	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Arthur Yap (3rd District, Bohol), will deliberate further on the issues raised in HR 898 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Yap said that the purpose of the inquiry is to ascertain whether there are provisions in the Constitution and existing laws that hinder the full participation of foreign construction companies in the infrastructure program of the present administration under its "Build, Build, Build" Program.</p> <p>Lai Parcon, chairperson of the Environment and Water Committee, European Union - Philippines Business Network (EPBN), said that based on the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of RA 4566 or the Contractor's License Law, the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) issues two types of licenses to contractor companies, the regular license and the special license.</p> <p>Parcon said that a regular license is issued to contractor companies with at least 60% Filipino equity participation (or a 40% maximum foreign equity), while a special license is issued to a joint venture or consortium between foreign and Filipino contractor companies for a specific project.</p> <p>Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) Senior Lawyer Maria Mercedes Torrijos said that government-imposed restrictions on foreign participation in construction activities is unhealthy for competition and creates an uneven playing field between local and foreign contractors.</p> <p>Likewise, European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP) Executive Director Froilan Gottein recommended that the restrictions on foreign contractor companies participating in vital government infrastructure projects be eased.</p> <p>Philippine Constructors Association, Inc. (PCA) Executive Director Ibarra Paulino admitted that local companies cannot undertake all the infrastructure projects of the government by themselves, and thus welcomes the participation and technical expertise of foreign companies.</p> <p>On the other hand, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Undersecretary Ruth Castelo explained that under the amended IRR of RA 4566 that was approved in 2015, contractor companies with 100% foreign equity can participate in infrastructure projects provided that they will bring in at least P1 billion worth of capital investment to the country.</p> <p>Canadian Chamber of Commerce of the</p>

Continuation... Economic Affairs				<p>Philippines President Julian Payne, however, commented that such a requirement is a disincentive to foreign companies wanting to do business in the country but which do not have that much amount and it would drive them to invest in other countries that impose lesser restrictions.</p> <p>The PCC was requested to submit to the Committee a study on the effect of the restrictions in the current IRR of RA 4566 to the country's business environment.</p>
Government Reorganization jt./w Housing and Urban Development	Substitute Bill to HBs 449, 1518, 1721, 3375, 3639 & 5114	Reps. Belmonte (J.C.), Macapagal- Arroyo, Biazon, Castelo, Romero, and Bagatsing	Creating the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD), defining its mandate, powers and functions, providing funds therefor	<p>The Joint Committee, co-presided by KABAYAN Party-List Rep. Ron Salo, for the Committee on Government Reorganization, and Rep. Alfredo "Albee" Benitez (3rd District, Negros Occidental), Chair of the Committee on Housing and Urban Development, approved the Substitute Bill to the six measures, subject to style and amendment, and the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>Rep. Salo presented the main features of the substitute bill drafted by the technical working group (TWG) which was created for the purpose and which he chaired.</p> <p>He said the TWG conducted six meetings and one expert meeting with technical personnel of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) and the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB) to discuss and refine the substitute bill.</p>
Suffrage and Electoral Reforms	HBs 4898 & 5922	Majority Leader Fariñas and Rep. Antonio	Amending RA 9006, otherwise known as the Fair Elections Act	<p>The Committee, chaired by CIBAC Party-List Rep. Sherwin Tugna, directed the Secretariat to draft a substitute bill to the two measures.</p> <p>Both bills seeks to amend Section 11 (Rates for Political Propaganda) of RA 9006 by regulating the rates of and increasing the discounts charged by media outlets to political parties and bona fide candidates for their political propaganda advertisements during election period.</p> <p>Under RA 9006, or the Fair Elections Act, media outlets are allowed to charge political propaganda advertisements at a discounted rate of 30% for televisions, 20% for radio, and 10% for print over the average rates charged during the first three quarters of the calendar year preceding the elections.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn Garcia (3rd District, Cebu), who sponsored HB 4898 in behalf of the author, Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas (1st District, Ilocos Norte), asked if the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) monitors the rates charged by the media entities against political candidates during the campaign/election period.</p> <p>COMELEC Commissioner Luie Tito Guia said that the Commission has no basis if the rates provided to them by the media outlets are discounted. He went on to say that while the COMELEC has an ad hoc campaign unit, there is</p>

Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms				<p>really no dedicated unit and personnel with a plantilla position that monitors campaign finances.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Garcia expressed dismay over the failure of COMELEC to implement Section 11 of RA 9006.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), Guia disclosed that the Commission has not documented any violation of Section 11 of RA 9006. He, however, promised that his office will check the data regarding the matter.</p> <p>Rep. Lagman also requested the COMELEC to submit its recommendation on whether there is a need to create a financial unit to monitor the charges being imposed on political propaganda and advertisements, and whether to repeal Section 7 (Affirmative Action by the COMELEC) of RA 9006.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to issue a subpoena to compel the attendance of the heads of all major TV networks, radio and print media in its next meeting.</p>
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Basic Education and Culture (Technical Working Group)	HB 1177	Deputy Speaker Cayetano	Amending certain provisions of RA 8492, otherwise known as the National Museum Act of 1998, by, among others, allowing it to retain its income to augment its budget for operational expenditures and capital outlay, making regular admission to any of its public facilities free of charge, and exempting the Museum's procurement of materials which will form part of its collections from the procurement laws	<p>The technical working group (TWG), presided by Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, terminated its deliberation on the seven bills. It agreed to draft a substitute bill using HB 3201, authored by Rep. Deogracias Victor "DV" Savellano (1st District, Ilocos Sur), as the reference bill and incorporate in it the pertinent recommendations of the resource persons.</p> <p>Thereafter, the substitute bill will be submitted to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office's (PCSO) Legal Services Department Manager Marisa Medrano appealed to the Committee to relieve the PCSO from the responsibility of contributing funds to the National Museum's Endowment Fund as contained in Section 21 of HB 3201 for various reasons, including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The PCSO revenues, based on its charter, are already pre-allocated to Prize Fund, Charity Fund and Operating Fund; • The PCSO is already mandated under numerous laws to provide funding to several programs of the government; • The PCSO's fund is already depleted due to these mandatory contributions. <p>National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) Technical Legal Consultant Jose Dalisay underscored the need to clarify the definition and</p>
	HBs 1502 & 1727	Reps. Alejano and Biazon	Providing for the retention and utilization of the income derived by the National Museum, amending for the purpose Section 26 of RA 8492	
	HBs 1813, 3333 & 3820	Reps. Vargas, Noel and Revilla	Granting public elementary school students free admission to all public museums and national historical shrines and landmarks	
	HB 3201	Rep. Savellano	Strengthening the National Museum of the Philippines, repealing for the purpose RA 8492, and appropriating funds therefor	

<p>Continuation... Basic Education and Culture (Technical Working Group)</p>				<p>scope of “historical artifacts” which the National Museum can document, acquire, preserve and exhibit as contained in Section 4 of HB 3201. This, Dalisay said, will avoid a possible problem of jurisdiction between the National Museum and the NHCP, considering that the latter is also empowered to acquire documents, collections, memorabilia and other objects of significant historical value.</p> <p>National Parks Development Committee's (NPDC) Cultural and Public Affairs Division Assistant Chief Shiela Rose Javier expressed her office's objection to Section 8 of HB 3201 which seeks to appropriate the eastern section of Rizal Park for the creation of a National Museum Complex.</p> <p>Javier informed the Committee of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) executed on May 12, 2014 which provides that the Rizal Park, National Museum, and Intramuros Convergence Project shall develop the Greater Intramuros District for tourism and preservation purposes.</p> <p>The TWG requested the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Department of Finance (DOF), Department of Education (DepEd), and the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to submit their respective position papers by next week for the TWG's consideration in the drafting of a substitute bill.</p>
<p>Natural Resources (Technical Working Group)</p>	<p>HB 4116</p>	<p>Rep. Rocamora</p>	<p>Providing for the creation of the Philippine extractive industries transparency initiative (EITI)</p>	<p>The technical working group (TWG), presided by the Committee Chair himself, LPGMA Party-List Rep. Arnel Ty, will deliberate further on HB 4116 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Ty underscored the commitment of the present administration to ensure transparency and accountability in developing the country's extractive industries, such as mining, to optimize the gains from the utilization of the country's natural resources for the benefit of the Filipino people.</p> <p>Atty. Maria Karla Espinosa, national coordinator of the Philippine- extractive industries transparency initiative (PH-EITI) Secretariat, briefed the Committee on the salient features of the EITI in the Philippines.</p> <p>Espinosa said that the EITI is an international initiative that promotes a global standard of transparency by requiring extractive industries to publish what they pay to the government and the government to publish what they collect from these industries, towards an open and accountable management and governance of natural resources.</p> <p>In the Philippines, the EITI was instituted by virtue of Executive Order 147, series of 2013. The PH-EITI is composed of a multi-stakeholder group (MSG) chaired by the Secretary of the</p>

Continuation... Natural Resources (Technical Working Group)				<p>Department of Finance (DOF), with members coming from the government, business group, and civil society organizations.</p> <p>Espinosa emphasized that the EITI is part of the legislative agenda pursuant to the country's "AmBisyon Natin 2040" vision. <i>AmBisyon Natin 2040</i> represents the collective long-term vision and aspirations of the Filipino people for themselves and for the country in the next 25 years. It describes the kind of life that people want to live, and how the country will be by 2040. As such, it is an anchor for development planning across at least four administrations. (Source: NEDA website)</p> <p>Espinosa presented the amendments to the bill as proposed by the PH-EITI multi-stakeholder group, which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the definition of the term "service contract" (Section 3); • Expand Section 6 (f) by stating that the information required by EITI be made available and accessible through government reporting systems and structures; and • Rephrase Section 11 to read as: "Disclosure and Reconciliation of Payments. All fiscal payments and mandatory expenditures by contractors shall be disclosed to the PH-EITI multi-stakeholder group for reconciliation for the production of the annual EITI report. Utilization of shares in national wealth which are subject of special accounts shall be reported to PH-EITI." <p>Siquijor Rep. Ramon V.A. "Rav" Rocamora, author of HB 4116, asked the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) its reason for objecting to the bill. DBM Fiscal Planning and Reform Bureau Director Rolando Toledo said that the DBM expressed its reservation on the creation of plantilla positions for the PH-EITI Secretariat (Section 14 of the bill).</p>
Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development (Technical Working Group)	HB 4498	Rep. Rodriguez (M.)	Further promoting entrepreneurship by strengthening, empowering, and enhancing the financing programs for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), amending for the purpose RA 6977, as amended, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Small Enterprises	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Jose Enrique "Joet" Garcia III (2nd District, Bataan), concluded its deliberations on the two bills and agreed to draft a Substitute Bill to HBs 4498 and 5540, incorporating therein the comments and suggestions of the resource persons. Afterwhich, the final draft of the substitute bill will be reported out to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>One of the issues discussed in this meeting was where to get funding for the livelihood component of the proposed Venture Capital and Micro Finance Trust Fund benefitting MSMEs.</p> <p>The proposal to channel to MSMEs at least 20% of the budget for the conditional cash transfer (CCT) program of the government may not be feasible since, according to Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Bureau B</p>
	HB 5540	Rep. Romero	Providing additional capitalization and funding to the Small Business Corporation (SB Corp.) to effectively spur its growth and development throughout the country and to rationalize its guidelines	

<p>Continuation... Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development (Technical Working Group)</p>				<p>Assistant Director Jane Abella, the CCT program or the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) is not intended for livelihood but for cash grants to poor households to improve their health, nutrition, and education particularly of children aged 0-14.</p> <p>Another option, Rep. Jocelyn Limkaichong (1st District, Negros Oriental) said, is that the funding requirement for the livelihood program for MSMEs may be tied up with the financing program for MSMEs called <i>Pondo sa Pagbabago at Pag-Asenso</i> (P3) program, which is proposed to be institutionalized under HB 5158, authored by Rep. Peter "Sr. Pedro" Unabia (1st District, Misamis Oriental).</p> <p>For its part, the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) expressed regret that it could no longer provide additional capitalization to SB Corp. as doing so may adversely affect its capital ratio. He explained that the LBP also has to build its own capital in order to comply with <i>Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas'</i> (BSP) regulations and to support the government's major initiatives.</p> <p>The TWG requested all the resource persons present to submit their position papers on or before September 6.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Mindanao Affairs	Briefing by the Department of Education (DepEd) on its plans and programs and proposed FY 2018 budget	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Maximo Rodriguez Jr. (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), listened to the briefing of the Department of Education (DepEd) on its plans and programs and proposed FY 2018 budget.</p> <p>Education Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla presented the DepEd's FY 2018 proposed budget amounting to P612.12 billion, which is a mere 7.9 % increase, she said, from this year's budget of P568.44 billion. Sevilla added that for 2018, the DepEd will continue to provide basic education resources to support the K to 12 Program.</p> <p>To address DepEd's low budget utilization and delay in fund releases, Sevilla said the Department has undertaken the following interventions: tasked the Education Programs Delivery Unit (EPDU) to monitor the implementation of all of the DepEd's programs and the utilization of the budget; downloaded funds to regional school divisions before the opening of the school year; established a more efficient feedback mechanism; and executed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) establishing a report sharing system.</p> <p>Meanwhile, DepEd Undersecretary Alain Pascua gave an update on the Department's 2017 school building program which has a total budget of P119 billion and is being implemented by the DepEd and the DPWH. With a P10.2 billion budget, the DepEd is in-charge of projects involving school building repairs, restoration of "Gabaldon" school buildings, school improvement, electrification of on-grid schools, and purchase of school furniture. On the other hand, the DPWH, with a budget of P109.3 billion, takes charge of the construction of new school buildings and replacement of old ones.</p>

Continuation... Mindanao Affairs		<p>Several House Members inquired on the causes of delays in the construction of school buildings. Pascua explained that the delays are primarily due to the delay in the completion of the process of validating the design of school buildings, which are undertaken jointly by DepEd and DPWH. Another reason, Pascua said, is the absence of funding for soil testing necessary to determine the suitability of the site for constructing school buildings with two or more floors. He added that it was only in August of this year that the DBM allocated P1.6 billion for soil testing.</p> <p>Reps. Wilter "Sharky" Wee Palma II (1st District, Zamboanga Sibugay), Manuel Zubiri (3rd District, Bukidnon), and Abdullah Dimaporo (2nd District, Lanao del Norte) requested the DepEd to provide Mindanao with adequate budget, proportionate to those allocated to other regions, in order to increase the literacy rate in Mindanao.</p> <p>The DepEd was requested to submit a list of programs and projects in Mindanao and the corresponding budget allocation for 2018, and the status of school building projects in Mindanao.</p>
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OTHER MATTERS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
East ASEAN Growth Area (Special Committee)	Report on the two technical working visits in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam and in the cities of Davao and General Santos	<p>The Committee, chaired by Davao del Sur Rep. Mercedes "Didi" Cagas, reported on the results of the two technical working visits of the Committee Members and some officials of the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam and in the cities of Davao and General Santos.</p> <p>During the technical working visit in Indonesia and Brunei Darussalam held on January 31 to February 5, the Committee Members met with officials of both countries and discussed the status of the following projects:"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority infrastructure projects amounting to US\$ 23 billion; • Upgrading of seaports and airports in the Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA); and • Construction of roads and bridges and other infrastructure projects that support the development of sea and air routes within the BIMP-EAGA. <p>The Philippine delegation also visited the port in Bitung, Indonesia which is part of the Davao-General Santos-Bitung ship route launched earlier this year.</p> <p>On the other hand, the technical working visit in Kudat and Sasa Ports in Davao City on February 23 and in Makar Port in General Santos City on February 25 allowed the Committee Members to have first-hand information about the features and operations of these port facilities, which are being prepared to fully serve this route.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) composed of stakeholders to discuss the action points of the BIMP-EAGA, which are geared towards enhancing the sub-regional economic cooperation. It also agreed to convene a stakeholders consultative meeting with all agencies engaged in the BIMP-EAGA projects on September 28.</p>
	Update on the Davao-General Santos-Bitung ports	<p>The Committee listened to the report of MinDA on the status of the Davao-General Santos-Bitung ports.</p> <p>Jonathan Miral, chief of MinDA's International Relations Division, said that after the launch of the Davao-General Santos-Bitung, Indonesia ship route, there had been no subsequent trips using this route due to some issues on the type of vessel that will be allowed to transport cargoes. He said that there is a demand for cargo shipping through this route since many</p>

<p>Continuation... East ASEAN Growth Area (Special Committee)</p>		<p>companies are engaged in the trade of products between the countries in the BIMP-EAGA.</p> <p>Luz Patricia Tanco, chief corporate attorney at the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) Region XII, disclosed that Filipino traders are restricted from bringing certain goods to Indonesia, even with the launching of the ship route, such as electronic products, garments, toys, footwear, food and beverage, cosmetic, household/health products, and traditional medicines.</p>
	<p>Discussion on the plight of employees in the three Filipino-owned tuna canneries in Manado City, Indonesia</p>	<p>The Committee discussed with concerned government agencies the plight of employees in the three Filipino-owned tuna canneries in Manado City, Indonesia.</p> <p>During their technical working visit in Indonesia, the Committee Members were informed that the employees of the Filipino-owned canneries there were affected by the ordinance of Manado City that limits fishing activity to Indonesian nationals only. This ordinance was issued after the canneries have already recruited Filipino workers to Indonesia.</p> <p>Representatives from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) said that the status of Filipino workers (land-based and sea-based) working for the three tuna canneries must be verified so that they can be assisted and protected. DOLE and POEA both admitted that they lack information regarding the number and status of workers in the canneries.</p> <p>Administrator Hans Leo Cacdac of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) expressed the agency's willingness to assist the families of the Filipinos working for the canneries by extending them livelihood and scholarship assistance.</p> <p>DOLE, POEA, and the OWWA promised to conduct their own investigation on the matter and submit an official report to the Committee.</p>
	<p>Update on the infrastructure projects connecting Palawan to BIMP-EAGA</p>	<p>The Committee listened to the update of PPA and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on the infrastructure projects connecting Palawan to BIMP-EAGA.</p> <p>Engr. Nelson Caabay Jr. of PPA's Project Management Office (PPA-PMO), Puerto Princesa said that the infrastructure projects aim to assist BIMP-EAGA destinations by providing infrastructure services to increase trade and tourism inside and outside the sub-regions.</p> <p>He said that in Palawan, the ports in Brooke's Point and Bataraza are currently being improved to serve as transit points to facilitate the movement of people and goods to and from BIMP-EAGA destinations.</p> <p>DPWH Region IV-B Assistant Regional Director Wilfredo Mallari informed the Committee that the widening of Puerto Princesa South Road from two to six lanes will start in the Municipality of Narra and will stretch all the way to the Municipality of Bataraza, covering a total road length of 62.15 kilometers. The road widening, which has an allocation of P3 billion, is expected to be completed in 2022.</p> <p>Rep. Gil "Kabarangay" Acosta (3rd District, Palawan) requested that the budget intended for the development of the BIMP-EAGA be obligated immediately to fast-track the projects and maximize the potential of the region. Mallari assured the Committee that P500 million worth of infrastructure projects will be obligated before the year ends.</p>