

# Committee Daily Bulletin



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Second Regular Session

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COMMITTEE MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Appropriations	Substitute Bill to HBs 53, 253, 538, 581, 663, 1106, 1804, 1973, 2023, 2511, 2674, 3146, 3161, 3536, 3978, 4276 & 5145	Reps. Bag-ao, Roque (H.), Yap (V.), Deputy Speaker Cayetano, Reps. Baguilat, Eriguel, Suansing (E.), Marcos, Angara-Castillo, Tan (A.) Alejano, Tambunting, Deputy Speaker Garin, Reps. Villarín, Salo, and Mendoza	Strengthening the Philippine comprehensive policy on human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) prevention, treatment, care and support, and establishing the Philippine National HIV and AIDS Plan, repealing for the purpose RA 8504, otherwise known as the Philippine AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Karlo Alexei Nograles (1 <sup>st</sup> District, Davao City), approved the substitute bill with amendments.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 61, 256, 1645 & 3938	Reps. Nograles (K.A.) Roque (H.), Deputy Speaker Villarica, and Rep. Bag-ao	Providing a framework for the right to adequate food	The Committee approved the substitute bill with amendments.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 133 & 177	Reps. Batocabe and Ramirez-Sato	Ensuring the preservation and management of protected areas, amending for the purpose RA 9486, otherwise known as the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS) Act of 1992	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 133 and 177.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 321, 437, 2349, 3043 & 3943	Reps. Primicias-Agabas, Bravo (A.), Macapagal-Arroyo, Roque (H.), and Salon	Regulating the importation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of children's products containing hazardous chemicals, and providing penalties for violations thereof	The Committee approved the substitute bill.
	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, defining its mandates, powers and functions, providing funds therefor	The Committee approved the substitute bill with amendments.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 5134 & 6383	Reps. Tugna and Hofer	Establishing a retirement benefit system in the Office of the Ombudsman, augmenting its employee benefits, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 5134 and 6383 subject to style and amendment.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 5215, 167, 1513 & 2308	Reps. Velasco, Velasco-Catera, and Loyola	Creating the positions for judges-at-large, amending for the purpose BP 129, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the substitute bill.

Continuation... Appropriations	Substitute Bill to HBs 5366, 5586, 5600 & 6288	Reps. Tugna, Escudero, Hofer, and Villafuerte	Institutionalizing the Philippine qualifications framework (PQF) and establishing the PQF-National Coordinating Council	The Committee approved the substitute bill.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 6286, 898, 2166, 2951, 3472, 3586, 5990, 6213, 4025 & 6361	Reps. Hofer, Tan (A.), Santos-Recto, Herrera-Dy, Macapagal-Arroyo, Vargas, Nieto, Belaro, and Olivarez	Establishing a medical scholarship and return service program for qualified students and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the substitute bill with amendments.
	Substitute Bill to HB 2746	Rep. Alonte	Creating two additional branches of the Municipal Trial Court in Cities (MTCC) for Biñan City in the 4 <sup>th</sup> Judicial Region, and appropriating funds therefor, amending for the purpose Section 29 of Batas Pambansa (BP) Blg. 129, otherwise known as the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980, as amended	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HB 2746.
	Substitute Bill to HB 3608	Rep. Arcillas	Creating two additional branches of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) and one additional branch of the MTCC in the 4 <sup>th</sup> Judicial Region, to be stationed in the City of Sta. Rosa, Laguna, and appropriating funds therefor, amending for the purpose Section 14 (e) and Section 29 of BP 129, as amended	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HB 3608.
	Substitute Bill to HB 3464	Rep. Aragonos	Creating four additional branches of the RTC in the Fourth Judicial Region to be stationed in San Pablo City, Laguna, and appropriating funds therefor, amending for the purpose Section 14 (e) and Section 29 of BP 129, as amended	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HB 3464.
	Substitute Bill to HB 4644	Rep. Malapitan	Creating four additional branches of the RTC in the National Capital Judicial Region to be stationed in the City of Caloocan, and appropriating funds therefor, amending for the purpose Section 14 (d) of BP 129, as amended	The Committee approved the Substitute Bill to HB 4644.
	Substitute Bill to HBs 918 & 3657	Reps. Roque (H.), and Tan (A.)	Institutionalizing health promotion in the Philippines by establishing a National Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Commission of the Philippines, providing for a health promotion fund and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee will deliberate further on the substitute bill in its next meeting.
Climate Change (Special Committee)	HB 527	Rep. Batocabe	Establishing the National Coastal Greenbelt Program (NCGP), providing funds therefor	<p>The Committee, chaired by AKO BICOL Party-List Rep. Christopher Co, agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on HB 527.</p> <p>The TWG will be chaired by Rep. Scott Davies Lanete M.D. (3rd District, Masbate).</p> <p>In his explanatory note to the bill, the three AKO BICOL Party-List Representatives led by Rep. Rodel Batocabe emphasized that the establishment of science-based coastal greenbelts will protect biodiversity, improve fisheries productivity, and enhance the tourism and livelihood potential of coastal areas.</p>

Continuation... Climate Change (Special Committee)				<p>The Members of the Committee present expressed support for the bill. However, Rep. Fernando Gonzalez (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Albay) suggested that a legal opinion with regard to the provision in the bill that mandates the establishment of a 100-meter protection zone for the rehabilitation and reforestation of coastal greenbelts where private properties are located.</p> <p>Also manifesting their support for the proposed law were representatives from the government side, namely, Biodiversity Management Bureau (BMB) and Ecosystems Research and Development Bureau (ERDB) of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Climate Change Commission (CCC), National Housing Authority (NHA), Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA), and League of Provinces; and from non-government organizations (NGOs), namely, Zoological Society of London-Philippines, NGOs for Fisheries Reform (NFR), and RARE Philippines. They were requested to submit to the Committee their position papers on the bill.</p> <p>However, Department of Budget and Management (DBM) BMB-E Acting Director Vilma Gorospe suggested that existing laws relative to climate change mitigation and adaptation be reviewed and strengthened instead of crafting a new law.</p>
Foreign Affairs	HR 646	Rep. Bertiz	Inquiry into the persistent delays in the issuance of passports to Filipino applicants and the utilization of the passport revolving fund	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ana Cristina Siquian Go (2nd District, Isabela), approved the Committee Report on HR 646.
	HR 45	Rep. Savellano	Allocating funds for the conduct of a mapping survey to identify the metes and bounds of the area, east of Luzon known as the "Benham Rise," which was approved by the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as part of the Philippine territory, including the marine exploration for mineral deposits which may be used as alternative source of energy and other resources that will be found therein	The Committee approved the Committee Report on HR 45.
	HB 1276	Rep. Biazon	Amending RA 7157, otherwise known as the Philippine Foreign Service Act of 1991	The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate HBs 1276 and 6064.
	HB 6064	Rep. Belaro	Seeking to adjust, update and rationalize the allowance and benefits of the Philippine foreign service personnel	<p>The TWG will be chaired by Muntinlupa City Rep. Rozzano Rufino Biazon, author of HB 1276.</p> <p>Rep. Biazon manifested that the explanatory note to the bill be registered as his sponsorship speech. The bill seeks to amend Sections 17 and 21 of RA 7157 by requiring that two-thirds of diplomatic and permanent missions should be headed by career ambassadors, and that only a "natural-born citizen" shall be eligible for appointment to a</p>

Continuation... Foreign Affairs				<p>permanent position in the career foreign service.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Spokesperson Robespierre Bolivar expressed support for the bills, but proposed some minor amendments.</p> <p>Commenting on the proposed amendment to Section 21 of RA 7157, Baguio City Rep. Mark Go opined that the requirement that one must be a "natural-born citizen" to be eligible for a permanent position in the career foreign service may be too restrictive.</p>
	HB 5389	Rep. Alejano	Creating a Foreign Policy Advisory Board (FPAB)	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HB 5389 in its next meeting.</p> <p>MAGDALO Party-List Rep. Gary Alejano, author of HB 5389, manifested that the explanatory note to the bill be registered as his sponsorship speech.</p> <p>Bolivar said that the DFA already has an Internal Policy Board which meets every month to discuss issues regarding foreign policies and advises the President on the matter. Thus, he does not see the need for the creation of the FPAB.</p> <p>In response, Rep. Alejano said that the proposed FPAB, which will be under the Office of the President, will serve as an independent, senior-level advisory body on foreign policy and will be part of the system of check and balance on foreign policy formulation.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Reps. Go and Salvador Belaro (Party-List, ANG EDUKASYON) questioned the provision in Section 7 (Powers and Functions) of the bill granting power to the FPAB "to define the priorities and strategic frameworks for the Philippine foreign policy," saying that such power is vested in the President.</p>
	HRs 412 & 1142	Reps. Zarate and Evardone	Calling for the return by the United States government of the three bells of Balangiga and other artifacts taken from the Province of Samar as war booty during the Philippine-American War	<p>The Committee discussed the two resolutions, HR 412, authored by BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate, and HR 1142, filed by Eastern Samar Rep. Ben Evardone.</p> <p>The Committee Chair said that the Substitute Resolution to HR 1337, authored by Speaker Pantaleon "Bebot" Alvarez (1st District, Davao del Norte), with the same subject matter was already adopted by the plenary on second reading.</p>
Good Government and Public Accountability	HR 654	Rep. Gonzales (A.D.)	Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the sale of <i>Paskuhan</i> Village in Pampanga by the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) to SM Development Corporation (SMDC) reportedly under the former's Asset Privatization Program	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Johnny Ty Pimentel (2nd District, Surigao del Sur), deferred the approval of the draft Committee Report on HR 654 to give the Members the chance to review the opinion of the Department of Justice (DOJ) on the sale of <i>Paskuhan</i> Village, which was just recently submitted.

<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>	<p>HR 1188</p>	<p>Rep. Evardone</p>	<p>Inquiry into the alleged grossly disadvantageous lease contract entered into by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (PhilExport), and the Manila Exposition Complex, Inc. (MECI)</p>	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on the issues raised in HR 1188 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Pimentel explained that the purpose of this inquiry is to determine whether or not the contracts of lease and sublease entered into by the DTI (lessor), PhilExport (lessee), and MECI (sub-lessee) in January 1996 was grossly disadvantageous to the government. The lease contract covers the use of a parcel of land with an area of 50,642 square meters, situated on Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue corner Macapagal Boulevard and Roxas Boulevard, by PhilExport for a period of 50 years and renewable for another 25 years.</p> <p>Rep. Pimentel and the authors of HR 1188, Reps. Ben Evardone (Eastern Samar) and Salvador Belaro (Party-List, 1-ANG EDUKASYON), lamented that the rental fee of P1,000 per year set under Executive Order (EO) 289 is grossly disadvantageous to the government resulting to substantial revenue loss considering the prime location of the property.</p> <p>EO 289, series of 1995, fixed the lease rate for the said land at P1,000.00 per year to house the Philippine Trade Center (PTC) and other trade complexes, including the World Trade Center (WTC), which would serve primarily as venue for international exhibits. The EO was issued in accordance with RA 7844 or the Export Development Act of 1994 which mandates the government to assist the private sector in the establishment of the PTC, through a land grant or long-term lease to an accredited private organization, which in this case is the PhilExport.</p> <p>ABS Party-List Rep. Eugene Michael de Vera asked why PhilExport opted to lease the land instead of a land grant, which is also allowed by law. PhilExport President Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. explained that the lease option was arrived at to avoid the payment of taxes accompanying a land grant.</p> <p>Ortiz-Luis clarified that out of the five hectares leased land, only 3.5 hectares are being utilized by PhilExport because the PTC and the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM) are also located at the same property.</p> <p>Rep. Belaro questioned why DTI turned a “blind eye” on the prejudicial contract. DTI Undersecretary Rowel Barba said that his office already sought the opinion of the Office of the Executive Secretary with regard to the lease contract. He added that the DTI will further discuss the matter with CITEM, National Development Company, and Export Development Council (EDC).</p> <p>The DTI was requested to update the</p>
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<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>Committee on the response of the Office of the Executive Secretary with regard to the contract of lease.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn Garcia (3rd District, Cebu) opined that unless EO 289 is revoked, the existing lease contract is deemed legal and will prevail.</p> <p>The Committee requested for the submission of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy of the questioned contract of lease and sublease;</li> <li>• Names of the corporations and entities that comprise the consortium investors in the WTC;</li> <li>• Financial report on the operation of the WTC;</li> <li>• Financial report of the PhilExport submitted to EDC from 1996 to 2016;</li> <li>• List of representatives from the government and private sector that comprise the EDC; and</li> <li>• Report on how much PhilExport has spent for the development of the export industry.</li> </ul> <p>Representatives from the Commission on Audit (COA), Office of the Executive Secretary (OES), and Office of the Government Corporate Counsel (OGCC) will be invited to attend the Committee's next meeting regarding the issue.</p>
<p>Government Reorganization jt. w/ Public Works and Highways</p>	<p>HBs 3278, 3855, 4466, 5683 &amp; 6236</p>	<p>Reps. Ocampo, Bravo (A.), Go (A.C.), Tan (A.), and Majority Leader Fariñas</p>	<p>Abolishing the Road Board and transferring its powers and functions to the Departments of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and Transportation (DOTr), amending for the purpose RA 8794 or the Motor Vehicle User's Charge (MVUC) Law</p>	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Virgilio Lacson (Party-List, MANILA TEACHERS), Vice Chair of the Committee on Government Reorganization, and Rep. Deogracias Ramos Jr. (2nd District, Sorsogon), Vice Chair of the Committee on Public Works and Highways, agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the bills.</p> <p>The TWG will be chaired by KABAYAN Party-List Rep. Ron Salo.</p> <p>Rep. Wilter "Sharky" Wee Palma II (1st District, Zamboanga Sibugay) clarified that though the bills seek to abolish the Road Board, the Joint Committee agrees to retain the MVUC Fund and transfer it to an appropriate government agency to continue the implementation of road safety measures in the country.</p> <p>The MVUC Fund is a special fund collected from and paid by vehicle owners as road user's tax which is earmarked solely and used exclusively to fund road maintenance and improvement of road drainage; installation of adequate and efficient traffic lights and road safety devices; and air pollution control.</p> <p>Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija), co-author of HB 5683, calls for the</p>

<p>Continuation... Government Reorganization jt. w/ Public Works and Highways</p>				<p>abolition of the Road Board which she claims has been assuming the functions of the DPWH and DOTr. She also disclosed that based on a Commission on Audit (COA) report, irregularities in the use of the MVUC Fund have been noted which included, among others, fund transfers made but have remained unliquidated to date.</p> <p>Road Board Project Manager Ruby Romero denied the agency's involvement in any irregularity or corrupt practice, explaining that the Road Board does not have a hand in the implementation of MVUC-funded road projects as it merely facilitates proposals for funding submitted by requesting agencies.</p> <p>DPWH Undersecretary Raul Asis, however, countered that while the Road Board only facilitates and allocates funds for road projects, it went beyond its powers and functions when it started to arrogate upon itself the task of identifying projects.</p> <p>The Road Board was requested to submit its accomplishment reports from 2002 to present; list of projects covered by the MVUC Fund; and the status of its projects.</p>
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CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Congressional Oversight Committee on Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (COCCAAP) – House Panel</p>	<p>Discussion with the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) on the following issues and concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disallowed employee benefits</li> </ul>	<p>The House panel of the Congressional Oversight Committee on the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (COCCAAP), presided by the Chair of the House Committee on Transportation, Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento, discussed with CAAP several issues and concerns concerning its operations, employee benefits, financial position, and unpaid navigational charges.</p> <p>CAAP lawyer Joseph Gumabon gave a brief background on the notice of disallowance issued by the Commission on Audit (COA) relative to the performance enhancement allowance (PEA) granted by CAAP to its personnel in 2012 totaling P128.37 million or approximately two-month salary for each of its personnel. The PEA was disallowed by COA based on the fact that it was given out without the approval of the President.</p> <p>Gumabon said that CAAP's latest action to solve the problem was the filing of a motion for reconsideration with the COA en banc on August 4, 2017 based on the following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The memorandum of the Executive Secretary issued on April 29, 2016 granting "post-facto" approval (or with retroactive effect) ratified and cured the deficiency of the PEA.</li> <li>• A ruling on the technical procedural compliance would defeat the administration of substantive justice.</li> <li>• The enforcement of the decision would demoralize CAAP's employees and increase the likelihood of resignations and human resource issues.</li> </ul> <p>Reacting to Rep. Sarmiento's comment that he expects the Department of Transportation (DOTr) to defend the position of CAAP, DOTr Undersecretary Reinier Yebra said a meeting with COA Chair Michael Aguinaldo will be set to resolve the issue on the disallowed PEA.</p>



SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Subcommittee II (Constitutional Amendments)	Review of certain provisions of the 1987 Philippine Constitution in connection with the proposed shift to a federal form of government	<p>The Subcommittee II, chaired by Deputy Speaker Fredenil "Fred" Castro (2nd District, Capiz), listened to the views of the resource persons on the proposed amendments to the Bill of Rights (Article III); Citizenship (Article IV); Suffrage (Article V); Judicial Department (Article VIII); Constitutional Commissions (Article IX); and Amendments or Revisions (Article XVII) of the 1987 Constitution.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Castro reiterated that the Subcommittee does not want to limit the discussion to opinions and sentiments that are in support of the shift to a federal type of government. According to him, as long as the issues raised are within the topics assigned to the Subcommittee and are aimed at improving the Constitution to better serve the people, the resource persons are welcome to share their views and opinions.</p> <p>Former Supreme Court Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza raised the following suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renaming of Article IX (Constitutional Commissions) into "Independent Agencies of the Government" and including the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Office of the Ombudsman in the commissions enumerated in the said article;</li> <li>• Removing the Secretary of the Department of Justice (DOJ) as ex-officio member of the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) and replacing him/her with a member of the House of Representatives and a member of the Senate; and</li> <li>• Mandating both chambers of Congress to vote separately once a Constitutional Convention is convened.</li> </ul> <p>Mendoza also took note of PDP-Laban Federalism Institute's proposal which according to him is still a unitary form of government that is highly decentralized rather than a federal one. He stressed that local government units (LGUs) are mostly unprepared for a federal government especially in terms of engaging in legislative work.</p> <p>Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) Presidential Assistant on Legislative Affairs Emmanuel Buenaventura said that the IBP is still in the process of reviewing the proposed amendments to the Constitution introduced by the Institute and the one attached to Resolution of Both Houses (RBH) No. 8, authored by Rep. Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales Jr. (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Pampanga). Nevertheless, IBP, at this point in time, favors the full decentralization of powers to local governments. Buenaventura suggested that the proposed Constitution of the federal government will include provisions disallowing secession from the national government.</p> <p>Former Supreme Court Justice Adolfo Azcuna, a member of the Constitutional Commission that drafted the 1987 Philippine Constitution, supported Mendoza's claim that the intention of Article XVII was to have Members of Congress vote as separate Houses, explaining that it was crafted with a unicameral system in mind. Azcuna came into the meeting in his personal capacity and did not represent any agency or organization.</p> <p>Several Members expressed their agreement to Mendoza's suggestion to elevate the status of the CHR to a Constitutional Commission. Azcuna, however, opined that there is no need for them to do so since competent and independent courts are the real guardians of human rights and not just the CHR.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso (3rd District, Leyte) inquired on the possibility of abolishing the Sandiganbayan and to just transfer its function to the Court of Appeals (CA). Azcuna said that the matter was initially considered by the Supreme Court (SC). However, the SC was convinced by the employees and officials of Sandiganbayan of the latter's important role in the country's fight against graft and corruption.</p>

Continuation... Subcommittee (Constitutional Amendments)	II	Mendoza requested the lawmakers to seriously ponder on the proposed shift to a federal form of government as it entails the redistribution of sovereignty and exposes the country to the dangers of secession. He cited Catalonia Region in Spain which aspires to have an independent state and break away from Spain. Mendoza reminded the Committee of the hardships that the country went through to achieve a unified independent state, which he hopes will not go for naught.
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SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Subcommittee on Judicial Reforms (Justice)	Substitute Bill to HBs 350, 547, 3275, 4748, 5216 & 5233	Deputy Speaker Quimbo, Reps. Escudero, Roque (H.), Alejano, Chipeco, and Speaker Alvarez	Further strengthening the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) by increasing its powers and functions, and redefining, expanding, and rationalizing its organization, repealing for the purpose Republic Act Nos. 9417 and 2327, and Executive Order Nos. 1 and 2, series of 1986 and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Subcommittee, chaired by Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso (3<sup>rd</sup> District, Leyte), approved the substitute bill subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate expressed concern that the specific task of the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) to recover the ill-gotten wealth of former President Ferdinand Marcos will be neglected once the PCGG is abolished and its powers and functions transferred to the OSG.</p> <p>Solicitor General Jose Calida said that under Section 4 (Organizational Structure) of the bill, a special task force within the OSG is proposed to be created to perform the powers and functions of the PCGG.</p> <p>With regard to concerns about the security of tenure of the PCGG personnel, Calida said that they will be absorbed by the OSG pursuant to Section 22 (Absorption of Personnel) of the bill.</p>
	HBs 5718, 5985, 6085 & 6086	Reps. Almario, Rocamora, and Mangudadatu (S.)	Creating additional branches of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) and Municipal Trial Court (MTC) in the Provinces of Davao Oriental, Siquijor, and Sultan Kudarat	The Subcommittee approved the four bills.
	HB 3113	Rep. Bolilia	Creating two additional branches of the RTC in the Fourth Judicial Region to be stationed at the Province of Batangas with seats at Rosario and San Juan, further amending for the purpose Batas Pambansa Blg. 129, as amended, otherwise known as the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Subcommittee approved HB 3113 with amendment.</p> <p>The author, Rep. Lianda Bolilia (4<sup>th</sup> District, Batangas), agreed to amend her bill by creating only one new court sala in the Municipality of San Juan, Batangas.</p> <p>This, after Rep. Veloso said that Deputy Speaker Ranejo Abu (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Batangas) already filed HB 2830 which seeks to create 16 additional branches of the RTC in the whole Province of Batangas, including the Municipality of Rosario, that was already approved by the Committees on Justice and Appropriations.</p>

AGENCY BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
East ASEAN Growth Area (Special Committee)	<p>Update on transport initiatives of the Brunei Darussalam-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines (BIMG)-East ASEAN Growth Area (EAGA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zamboanga-Sandakan air connectivity</li> <li>Davao/General Santos-Bitung shipping project</li> </ul>	<p>The Committee, presided by Iligan City Rep. Frederick Siao, listened to the briefing on the status of two BIMP-EAGA transport initiatives: the Zamboanga-Sandakan air connectivity and the Davao/General Santos-Bitung shipping project.</p> <p>On the Zamboanga-Sandakan air connectivity, according to Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA) Deputy Executive Director Romeo Montenegro, Cebu Pacific will launch its first international route out of Zamboanga City using a 72-seater ATR aircraft with four times weekly flights to Sandakan, Sabah starting October 29. He emphasized that the route, if made regular and sustainable, will lay the foundation for sub-regional connectivity that will benefit the people, especially on the larger context of the ASEAN integration.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Orestes Salon (Party-List, AGRI) if the proposed route is included in the budget of the DOTr this year, Montenegro replied in the negative, saying that the proposal was introduced late this year.</p> <p>Cebu Pacific Vice President for Corporate Affairs Paterno Mantaring Jr. manifested that the support of the government agencies for this project is important.</p> <p>Bureau of Immigration's (BI) Immigration Regulation Division Chief Rogelio Gevero Jr. manifested the agency's support for the project, saying that it has already assigned immigration officers to handle the flights in the Zamboanga-Sandakan route. However, Gevero said that the necessary support equipment may not be readily available since they were not included in this year's budget.</p> <p>Rep. Salon requested the BI to submit a timeline for the purchase of the needed equipment.</p> <p>Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Foreign Trade Officer Jose Ma. Dintay also conveyed DTI's support for the project and expressed its willingness to discuss with Cebu Pacific opportunities for trade.</p> <p>Representatives from the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Bureau of Customs (BOC), and Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ) of the Department of Health (DOH) will be invited in the next meeting to respond to the concerns raised by the Members of the Committee.</p> <p>Likewise, the Committee agreed to send formal communication to concerned government agencies to seek their support for the project.</p> <p>DOTr Maritime Division Assistant Secretary Fernando Juan Perez apprised the Committee of the Davao/General Santos-Bitung shipping project.</p> <p>According to Perez, after the launching of the Davao-Gensan-Bitung (DGB) route, various meetings and consultations were already conducted by the Philippines-Indonesia Task Force to ensure the sustainability of the shipping network. During the Task Force's meeting on June 7, 2017, the following were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Highlights of the launching of the ASEAN roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) sea route;</li> <li>Report on the current operations of the Asian Marine Transport Corp. which owns the first vessel that used the route;</li> <li>Ways to ensure the sustainability of the route; and</li> <li>Other efforts undertaken by the Task Force to sustain economic activity along the route.</li> </ul>

<p>Continuation... East ASEAN Growth Area (Special Committee)</p>		<p>Perez said that one major factor that affects the sustainability of the DGB route is the trade restrictions imposed by the Indonesian government.</p> <p>Jose Ma. Dinsay, foreign trade officer of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), said that the Philippines should continue to look for ways to strengthen trade relations with Indonesia and to encourage it to actively participate in the project.</p> <p>Montenegro commented that it may take time to convince the Indonesian government to open up its trade, saying that the country is highly centralized, in that all decisions, including matters on trade, emanate from Jakarta.</p> <p>Asked about what the Committee can do to assist, Perez suggested that high-level talks between the Philippine and Indonesian governments may be arranged.</p> <p>The DOTr was requested to furnish the Committee with a copy of the progress report on the project, including the participation of the private sector in the trade route.</p>
<p>Economic Affairs</p>	<p>Briefing on the state of microfinance and microinsurance in the country</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Arthur Yap (3rd District, Bohol), listened to the briefing conducted by the Department of Finance (DOF) on the state of microfinance and microinsurance in the country and later discussed the comments and recommendations of other government agencies and the private sector involved in this business.</p> <p>Rep. Yap said that the inputs from the resource persons will serve as reference in determining the appropriate legislation that will improve financial services and provide insurance coverage for the low-income group, including workers in the agriculture sector who comprise 25% of the country's labor force or approximately 42 million workers.</p> <p>DOF-National Credit Council's (NCC) Development Management Officer Aurora Villaviray presented the national strategy for microfinance which focuses on creating an enabling policy environment that will facilitate the increased participation of the private sector in the delivery of microfinancial services to the poor. She mentioned the importance of building the capacities of microfinance institutions instead of government subsidizing credit or directly extending credit to the poor.</p> <p>Among the challenges in microfinance, as discussed by Villaviray, are the need for more effective regulations and laws; peace and order problems in some areas such as in Mindanao; and high cost involved and difficulty in reaching the remotest areas and communities.</p> <p>Villaviray also discussed the importance of microinsurance, which is a form of social insurance for the poor and low-income sector. It provides specific insurance products that meet the needs of the disadvantaged for risk protection and relief in times of distress or misfortune. Villaviray said that micro life insurance products include term insurance, credit life insurance, and personal accident insurance; while micro non-life insurance products include casualty and liability insurance and property insurance.</p> <p>Atty. Dennis Cabucos of the Insurance Commission (IC) said that, in promoting microinsurance, the IC recommends the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grant incentives to the microinsurance providers;</li> <li>• Codify pertinent regulations;</li> <li>• Allow direct selling by microinsurance providers; and</li> <li>• Simplify licensing requirements.</li> </ul> <p>Rep. Mohamad Khalid Dimaporo (1st District, Lanao del Norte) suggested that the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) should allow local government units (LGUs) to tap 5% of their calamity fund for insurance purposes.</p>

<p>Continuation... Economic Affairs</p>		<p>Representatives from both the government and the private sector who presented their views and recommendations relative to microfinance and microinsurance are the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undersecretary Roseller Barinaga of the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC);</li> <li>• Lemuel Untalan, senior manager, Corporate Planning Department, Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth);</li> <li>• Rodelia Pagaddu, department manager of the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation (PCIC);</li> <li>• Jimmy Loro, senior adviser, GIZ Regulatory Framework Promotion of Pro-Poor Insurance Markets in Asia; and</li> <li>• Gregorio Barrios, microinsurance specialist, Philippine Insurers and Reinsurers Association (PIRA).</li> </ul>
<p>Information and Communications Technology</p>	<p>Briefing on the National Broadband Plan (NBP)</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Victor Yap (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Tarlac), listened to the presentation of the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) on the National Broadband Plan (NBP).</p> <p>DICT Undersecretary Denis Villorente said that the NBP, which was developed through the directive of President Rodrigo Duterte during his 2016 State of the Nation Address (SONA), serves as a blueprint for the acceleration of the deployment of fiber optic cables and wireless technologies to improve internet speed in the country. It is expected that within the term of the President, 100% of the local government units (LGUs) will be connected to high speed government broadband backbone with households enjoying a 10 Mbps connection at a broadband price of less than 5% of average monthly household income.</p> <p>Villorente also discussed the rationale for establishing the NBP; the major strategies in the implementation of the NBP; the policy and regulatory reforms that the government will undertake to pursue the project; and the components of the NBP (e.g. national fiber backbone, international cable landing stations, accelerated tower build, accelerated fiber build, and satellite overlay).</p> <p>Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) Executive Vice President Aileen Anunciacion Zosa said that to drastically improve the Philippines' internet service, the government should pursue the Luzon Bypass Infrastructure project which will provide international submarine cables a safe and alternative path across the Luzon Strait, an earthquake prone area. In exchange, international submarine cable owners will allow the Philippine government the use of their cable with an initial capacity of 2 million Mbps which is 50 times higher than the government's current capacity.</p> <p>Zosa said the Landing Party Agreement among the DICT, BCDA and cable owners will be signed in the third quarter of 2017.</p> <p>Rep. Micaela Violago (2<sup>nd</sup> District, Nueva Ecija) asked if in the implementation of the NBP, the government would employ the services of Globe Telecom Inc. and Smart Communications, the two giant telecommunications companies (telcos) in the country.</p> <p>Villorente said that the procurement of the requirements of the NBP including getting the services of telcos will go through the government procurement process under the Procurement Law and will be open to all service providers.</p>

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