

Committee Daily Bulletin



17th Congress
Third Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. III No. 94
April 8, 2019

| COMMITTEE MEETING | | | | |
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| COMMITTEE | MEASURES | | SUBJECT MATTER | ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION |
| | NO. | PRINCIPAL AUTHOR | | |
| Information and Communications Technology | HR 938 | Rep. Pineda | Inquiry into the submitted roll out plans of the telecommunication companies (telcos) relative to addressing the backlog of cell sites with the end in view of enacting regulations to support efforts that would ensure the improvement of the state of Philippine telecommunications | <p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Victor Yap (2nd District, Tarlac), discussed with concerned government agencies and telecommunications companies (telcos) the latter's roll out plans for the construction of additional cell sites in the country and the government's "common tower" policy.</p> <p>Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Acting Secretary Eliseo Rio Jr. reported that the Philippines barely meets the ideal ratio of one tower for every 1,000 subscribers and needs 50,000 more towers or cell sites just to catch up with present day requirements. At present, there are only 18,000 cell sites nationwide, according to Rio.</p> <p>When asked by the Committee Members to explain the reason behind the backlog, Globe Telecom Senior Vice President for Corporate and Legal Affairs Froilan Castelo stated that the problem lies in the difficulty of securing permits, numbering over 25, from government regulators and local governments, aside from the local residents' resistance to the installation of telecommunication towers in their area.</p> <p>To help address the current backlog in cell sites, Rio said the DICT intends to set up a one-stop shop for the filing and processing of permits needed for the construction of cell sites.</p> <p>Rio also mentioned that the government will implement a common tower policy wherein qualified companies will build towers which will be leased to telcos for their common use. The DICT targets the construction of the ideal number of telecom towers or cell sites in a span of seven to 10 years. Rio added that so far, 19 common tower providers have signified their interest to participate in the project.</p> <p>Rep. Enrico Pineda (Party-List, 1-PACMAN), principal author of HR 938, opined that the construction and ownership of common telecommunications towers should be covered by a congressional franchise.</p> <p>Rep. Yap suggested that the two major telecommunications companies Globe and Smart should allow a shared use of their towers to lower capital expenditures and consequently reduce the cost of their services.</p> <p>Globe Telecom is amenable to the suggestion, adding that the company is already holding talks with Mindanao Islamic Telephone Company (Mislattel) for this purpose.</p> |

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| Continuation... Information and Communications Technology | | | | <p>(Mislattel is a consortium by Udenna and China Telecom which became the third major telco in the country in November 2018.)</p> <p>Mislattel spokesperson Adel Tamano also expressed his company's support for the common tower policy of the government.</p> <p>On the other hand, Smart Communications, Inc. Vice President for Regulatory Affairs Roy Ibay explained that the towers being used by Smart are only being leased from other private entities and sharing their use with other telcos will require the approval of the lessors.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Democracy.Net.Ph co-founder Pierre Tito Gallo requested Congress to pass a law on spectrum management in order to ensure the efficient use of radio frequencies by the telcos.</p> <p>The Committee asked the DICT and the Philippine Competition Policy (PCC) to work together to ensure an improvement in the quality and coverage of internet service especially in the rural areas without resulting to an unjust increase in internet service rates. The DICT was also asked to explore if it is feasible for the telcos to use the infrastructure of various electric cooperatives around the country under a lease agreement.</p> |
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| JOINT CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING | | | | |
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| Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on the Automated Election System (Technical Working Group) | Privilege Speech | Senate President Sotto | On the alleged anomalies in the conduct of the 2016 national and local elections | <p>The technical working group (TWG), co-chaired by Rep. Sherwin Tugna (Party-List, CIBAC), Chair of the House Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms, and Senator Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel III, Chair of the Senate Committee on Electoral Reforms and People's Participation, discussed with concerned government agencies and private entities the issues regarding the conduct of the 2016 national and local polls.</p> <p>In his privilege speech last year, Senate President Vicente Sotto III alleged that irregularities transpired during and after the 2016 elections. These include the early transmission of votes and the existence of "queuing servers," where election results were supposedly stored before transmission to the Consolidating Canvassing System, which created fear that results might have been tampered with.</p> <p>The members of the TWG agreed that the questionable entries on the audit logs alone are not enough to conclude that electoral fraud happened during the 2016 national and local polls. Nevertheless, they recognized that these questionable logs are "vulnerabilities" in the automated election system that concerned government agencies and the Joint Congressional Oversight Committee should address.</p> |