



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 17th CONGRESS, FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House of Representatives

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No. 27

CALL TO ORDER

At 10:00 a.m., Deputy Speaker Bai Sandra Sinsuat A. Sema called the session to order.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is now called to order.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Please rise for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

PRAYER

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Please remain standing for a minute of silent prayer.

Everybody remained standing for the silent prayer.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we defer the calling of the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we defer the approval of the Journal of the previous session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Reference of Business.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please read the Reference of Business

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary General read the following House Bills and Resolutions on First Reading, and Communications and the Deputy Speaker made the corresponding references:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 3658, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR THE FITNESS PROFESSION AND FITNESS CENTERS IN THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Del Rosario
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 3659, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CRIME OF ‘ILLEGAL WITHHOLDING OF PASSPORT’ AND A MECHANISM FOR ITS PROSECUTION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS

House Bill No. 3660, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO PAUL GERHARD SCHAFFER”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 3661, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING THE REGISTRATION OF ALL USERS OF PREPAID SUBSCRIBER IDENTITY MODULE (SIM) CARDS”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 3662, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THAT EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM AND THE CONSEQUENT PREPARATION OF TEXTBOOKS AND RELATED MATERIALS SHOULD HAVE CONTINUITY AND STABILITY, AND THAT THE SAME SHOULD NOT BE AFFECTED FOR A PERIOD OF AT LEAST SIX (6) YEARS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8047, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY ACT”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

OF VALENZUELA MEDICAL CENTER IN THE CITY OF VALENZUELA, FROM TWO HUNDRED (200) BEDS TO FIVE HUNDRED (500) BEDS CAPACITY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Martinez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 3667, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF AIRLINE PASSENGERS AND PENALIZING ACTS IN VIOLATION THEREOF”

By Representative Tambunting
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 3663, entitled:

“AN ACT AFFORDING MORE PROTECTION TO CONSUMERS AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7394, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘CONSUMER ACT OF THE PHILIPPINES’”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND
INDUSTRY

House Bill No. 3668, entitled:

“AN ACT EXCLUDING OVERTIME PAY FROM THE COMPUTATION OF TAXABLE INCOME AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 32 (B) (7) OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8424 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Tambunting
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND
MEANS

House Bill No. 3664, entitled:

“AN ACT TRANSFERRING OWNERSHIP OF THE LUMBIA AIRPORT PROPERTY IN BARANGAY LUMBIA, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY FROM THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF THE PHILIPPINES (FORMERLY THE AIR TRANSPORTATION OFFICE) TO THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 3669, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 10 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8239, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PHILIPPINE PASSPORT ACT OF 1996”

By Representative Tambunting
TO THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN
AFFAIRS

House Bill No. 3665, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND MECHANISMS FOR THE CREATION, OPERATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND COORDINATION OF THE PHILIPPINE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CENTER, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘BOOK CITY’, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE, THE BOOK PUBLISHING ENTERPRISE ZONE AUTHORITY (BPEZA) AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Rodriguez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION

House Bill No. 3670, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING EMPLOYERS TO GRANT TWO (2) WEEKS OF UNPAID LEAVE A YEAR TO EMPLOYEES WHOSE SPOUSE, PARENT, UNMARRIED CHILD, OR WHEN THEY THEMSELVES ARE SUFFERING FROM SERIOUS ILLNESS”

By Representative Tambunting
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND
EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 3671, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING THE ‘SUBSIDY INSURANCE COVERAGE OF CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION ACT OF 2016’ AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Tambunting
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 3666, entitled:

“AN ACT INCREASING THE BED CAPACITY

House Bill No. 3672, entitled:

“AN ACT UPGRADING THE MINIMUM SALARY GRADE LEVEL OF TEACHERS FROM SALARY GRADE 11 TO 15”

By Representative Calixto-Rubiano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 3673, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING A FIXED MONTHLY HONORARIA AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO ACCREDITED BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE SECTION 6 OF REPUBLIC ACT 7883 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE BARANGAY HEALTH WORKERS’ BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES ACT OF 1995”

By Representative Calixto-Rubiano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3674, entitled:

“AN ACT ABOLISHING THE SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN AND CREATING THE POSITION OF YOUTH REPRESENTATIVES IN LOCAL LEGISLATIVE BODIES, REPEALING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160 AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10742”

By Representative Sarmiento (E.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3675, entitled:

“AN ACT REMOVING THE CONDITIONS FOR THE CONDONATION OF ALL UNPAID TAXES DUE FROM LOCAL WATER DISTRICTS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 289-A OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Ungab
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 3676, entitled:

“AN ACT REGULATING THE DOWNSTREAM PETROLEUM INDUSTRY AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES”

By Representatives Zarate, De Jesus, Tinio, Brosas, Castro (F.L.), Casilao and Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

House Bill No. 3677, entitled:

“AN ACT CLASSIFYING THE SALE OR

IMPORTATION OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND RAW MATERIALS IN THE MANUFACTURE THEREOF AS VALUE-ADDED TAX EXEMPT TRANSACTIONS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 109 (1) OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8424, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE TAX REFORM ACT OF 1997, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9337, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Zarate, De Jesus, Tinio, Brosas, Castro (F.L.), Casilao and Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 3678, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTING CENTRALIZED PROCUREMENT OF PETROLEUM IN THE COUNTRY”

By Representatives Zarate, De Jesus, Tinio, Brosas, Castro (F.L.), Casilao and Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

House Bill No. 3679, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING THE AREA COVERED BY THE NORTHERN NEGROS FOREST RESERVE SITUATED IN THE CITIES OF TALISAY, SILAY, VICTORIAS, CADIZ, SAGAY AND SAN CARLOS AND THE MUNICIPALITIES OF E.B. MAGALONA, MURCIA, TOBOSO, CALATRAVA AND DON SALVADOR BENEDICTO, ALL IN THE PROVINCE OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, AS A PROTECTED AREA UNDER THE CATEGORY OF NATURAL PARK AND PROVIDING FOR ITS MANAGEMENT”

By Representative Cueva
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

House Bill No. 3680, entitled:

“AN ACT RECONFIGURING THE DISPOSITION OF THE MONIES COLLECTED AND DELINEATING THE STATUS OF THE SPECIAL FUNDS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTIONS 7 AND 8 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8794, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE MOTOR VEHICLE USER’S CHARGE LAW, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representatives Suarez and Cosalan
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 3681, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE VOLUNTARY ACCREDITATION OF PRIVATE

SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES BY INSTITUTIONALIZING THE EXISTING POLICIES AND PRACTICES AND PROVIDING GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THEREOF”

By Representative Olivarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE AND THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 3682, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE SECURED TRANSACTIONS LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THE PHILIPPINES, WHICH SHALL PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION, PERFECTION, DETERMINATION OF PRIORITY, ESTABLISHMENT OF A NOTICE REGISTRY, AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTERESTS IN PERSONAL PROPERTY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Yap (A.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 3683, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO IS SUBJECT TO INCOME TAX TO FILE A DECLARATION OF ESTIMATED INCOME FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE CURRENT YEAR ON OR BEFORE MAY 15 OF THE SAME TAXABLE YEAR, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 74 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8424, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997’, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Lazatin
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

House Bill No. 3684, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING A NATIONAL EMERGENCY AGAINST DRUGS AND TERRORISM, ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL POLICY TO AUTHORIZE THE PRESIDENT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION, TO EXERCISE NECESSARY AND PROPER POWERS TO ADDRESS SUCH EMERGENCY”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY AND THE COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS DRUGS

House Bill No. 3685, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 15 OF

REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7227, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE BASES CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1992”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASES CONVERSION

House Bill No. 3686, entitled:

“AN ACT TO BE KNOWN AS ‘THE PHILIPPINE GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISM (GMO) LABELING ACT, THE RIGHT-TO-KNOW-ACT’ REQUIRING THE MANDATORY LABELING AND REGULATION OF FOOD WHICH ARE GMOs OR CONTAINING SUBSTANCES DERIVED FROM GMOs AND THOSE PRODUCED BY GENETIC ENGINEERING TECHNOLOGIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 3687, entitled:

“AN ACT PROTECTING CONSUMERS’ PHONE RECORDS, PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 3688, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING THE POSITION OF BARANGAY NUTRITION WORKER IN EVERY BARANGAY PROVIDING INCENTIVES THERETO, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 1569”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3689, entitled:

“AN ACT ALLOWING THE RECTIFICATION OF SIMULATED BIRTH RECORDS AND PRESCRIBING ADMINISTRATIVE ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES

House Bill No. 3690, entitled:

“AN ACT REGULATING THE USE OF

FIRECRACKERS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER
AND SAFETY

House Bill No. 3691, entitled:

“AN ACT EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND STRENGTHENING THE MONITORING MECHANISMS, PROVIDING PROTECTIVE MEASURES AND PRESCRIBING PENALTIES THEREFOR, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7877, ALSO REFERRED TO AS THE ‘ANTI-SEXUAL HARASSMENT ACT OF 1995’ ”

By Representatives Brosas, De Jesus, Zarate, Casilao, Tinio, Castro (F.L.) and Elago
TO THE COMMITTEE ON REVISION OF LAWS

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 376, entitled:

“RESOLUTION ENCOURAGING THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION AND THE PHILIPPINE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE: (A) TO CONSIDER SURFING AS A ‘FOCUS SPORT’ FOR THE 2020 TOKYO OLYMPICS; (B) TO FACILITATE THE RECOGNITION OF THE RELEVANT NATIONAL SPORTS ASSOCIATION; AND (C) TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE TRAINING OF OUR LOCAL SURFERS”

By Representative Matugas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 377, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE INCREASING QUANTITY OF IMPORTED TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS ELECTRONIC WASTE IN THE COUNTRY AS PERMITTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR) THROUGH DENR-A.O. 2013-22, AND RECOMMEND MEASURES THAT WOULD IMPOSE STIFFER PENALTY ON ILLEGAL IMPORTATION, AND ENSURE PROPER HANDLING, DISPOSAL AND RECYCLING OF ELECTRONIC WASTE”

By Representatives De Jesus, Brosas and Zarate
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 378, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING MS. JOSEPHINE MEDINA FOR WINNING BRONZE MEDAL IN TABLE TENNIS IN THE 2016 PARALYMPICS HELD IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL”

By Representative Romero
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 379, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING FILIPINO CHESS MASTER EUGENE TORRE FOR BAGGING THE BRONZE MEDAL AT THE 42ND WORLD CHESS OLYMPIAD HELD IN BAKU, AZERBAIJAN LAST SEPTEMBER 14, 2016”

By Representatives Sambar, Nograles (J.) and Nograles (K.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 380, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTIONS 8 AND 9 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10752, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘RIGHT-OF-WAY ACT’ ”

By Representative Villarín
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 381, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING HEAD COACH MARK LOUIE EBALLA OF FILIPINA PARALYMPIAN BRONZE MEDALIST MS. JOSEPHINE MEDINA WHO RECENTLY WON IN THE 2016 RIO PARALYMPICS HELD IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL”

By Representative Sambar
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 382, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REFORESTATION TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED IRREGULARITIES AND WRONG POLICIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

THE NATIONAL GREENING PROGRAM
WITH THE VIEW OF ASSESSING THE
EFFECTIVITY OF THE PROGRAM”

By Representative Yu
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 383, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEES
ON AGRARIAN REFORM AND HUMAN
RIGHTS TO CONDUCT A JOINT INQUIRY,
IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPACT
OF THE 36,000-HECTARE CLARK GREEN
CITY PROJECT ON THE PEASANT AND
AYTA COMMUNITIES OF THE AFFECTED
AREAS IN THE PROVINCES OF TARLAC
AND PAMPANGA”

By Representatives Casilao, Zarate, De Jesus, Tinio,
Brosas and Castro (F.L.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 384, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE
RATIONALIZATION OF REQUIRED
PERMITS, LICENSES AND CERTIFICATES
FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
RENEWABLE ENERGY POWER
GENERATION BUSINESS”

By Representatives Batocabe, Garbin and Co
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

House Resolution No. 385, entitled:

“RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE
PHILIPPINE DELEGATION FOR THEIR
STERLING PERFORMANCE DURING THE
57TH INTERNATIONAL MATH OLYMPIAD
HELD IN HONG KONG ON JULY 6-16,
2016”

By Representative Cortuna
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 386, entitled:

“RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE
PHILIPPINE CANOE KAYAK
DRAGONBOAT FEDERATION
DRAGONBOAT TEAM FOR THEIR
STERLING PERFORMANCE DURING
THE 2016 INTERNATIONAL CANOE
FEDERATION DRAGONBOAT WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIPS IN MOSCOW, RUSSIA
ON SEPTEMBER 8 TO 11, 2016”

By Representative Cortuna
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 387, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND
COMMENDING JOSEPHINE MEDINA
FOR WINNING THE BRONZE MEDAL
IN THE WOMEN’S INDIVIDUAL TABLE
TENNIS-CLASS 8 DIVISION AT THE
2016 RIO PARALYMPICS IN BRAZIL ON
SEPTEMBER 13, 2016”

By Representative Roa-Puno
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 388, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING
THE PERLAS PILIPINAS WOMEN’S
BASKETBALL TEAM FOR SECURING THE
GOLD IN THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED
2016 SOUTH EAST ASIAN BASKETBALL
ASSOCIATION (SEABA) WOMEN’S
CHAMPIONSHIP IN MALACCA CITY,
MALAYSIA”

By Representative Sy-Alvarado
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND
SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 389, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING MEMBERS OF
THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO
DONATE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO
THE VICTIMS OF TYPHOON FERDIE”

By Representative Belmonte (J.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

ADDITIONAL COAUTHORS

*The list of additional coauthors is reflected in
Journal No. 27, dated September 27, 2016.**

COMMUNICATION

Report of the Secretary General, House of
Representatives, on enrolled bills, submitted to
the Office of the President, for His Excellency’s
consideration and signature, pursuant to the
provision of Rule VI, Section 18, Par. (h) of the
Rules of the House of Representatives:

1. House Bill No. 766, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE KALINGA
NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – SALEGSEG
ANNEX IN BARANGAY SALEGSEG,
MUNICIPALITY OF BALBALAN,
PROVINCE OF KALINGA FROM THE
KALINGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL,
CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT

NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BALBALAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10718)

2. House Bill No. 1268, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE ALFONSO CASTAÑEDA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – ABUYO ANNEX IN BARANGAY ABUYO, MUNICIPALITY OF ALFONSO CASTAÑEDA, PROVINCE OF NUEVA VIZCAYA FROM THE ALFONSO CASTAÑEDA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS ABUYO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10719)

3. House Bill No. 3233, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE STA. MARCELA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – CONSUELO ANNEX IN BARANGAY CONSUELO, MUNICIPALITY OF STA. MARCELA, PROVINCE OF APAYAO FROM THE STA. MARCELA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS CONSUELO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10720)

4. House Bill No. 3652, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE BACUNGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – PALANDOK ANNEX IN BARANGAY PALANDOK, MUNICIPALITY OF LEON B. POSTIGO, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE FROM THE BACUNGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS PALANDOK NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10721)

5. House Bill No. 4263, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE LIBERTAD NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – COLONGULO ANNEX IN BARANGAY COLONGULO, MUNICIPALITY OF SURALLAH, PROVINCE OF SOUTH COTABATO FROM THE LIBERTAD NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS COLONGULO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10722)

6. House Bill No. 4291, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE LUNA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – TUMOG ANNEX IN BARANGAY TUMOG, MUNICIPALITY OF LUNA, PROVINCE OF APAYAO FROM THE LUNA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND TRADE HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS TUMOG NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND TRADE HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10723)

7. House Bill No. 2081, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE LIMBAAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – STA. FE EXTENSION IN BARANGAY STA. FE, MUNICIPALITY OF NEW CORELLA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL NORTE FROM THE LIMBAAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS STA. FE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10724)

8. House Bill No. 3232, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE KABUGAO AGRO-INDUSTRIAL HIGH SCHOOL – LENNENG ANNEX IN BARANGAY LENNENG, MUNICIPALITY OF KABUGAO, PROVINCE OF APAYAO FROM THE KABUGAO AGRO-INDUSTRIAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS KABUGAO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10725)

9. House Bill No. 4367, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE GENERAL EMILIO AGUINALDO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX IN BARANGAY PASONG BUAYAI, IMUS CITY, PROVINCE OF CAVITE FROM THE GENERAL EMILIO AGUINALDO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS GENERAL LICERIO TOPACIO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10726)

10. House Bill No. 4631, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE SILAE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – ST. PETER ANNEX IN BARANGAY ST. PETER, CITY OF

MALAYBALAY, PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON FROM THE SILAE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS ST. PETER NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10727)

11. House Bill No. 4918, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE TUKURAN TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – TABUAN ANNEX IN BARANGAY TABUAN, MUNICIPALITY OF TUKURAN, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR FROM THE TUKURAN TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS TABUAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10728)

12. House Bill No. 5055, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE SAN JOSE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – DANIEL C. MANTOS ANNEX IN BARANGAY DANIEL C. MANTOS, MUNICIPALITY OF MAHAYAG, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR FROM THE SAN JOSE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS DANIEL C. MANTOS NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10729)

13. House Bill No. 4262, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY TICWAS, MUNICIPALITY OF DUMALINAO, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR TO BE KNOWN AS MA. CLARA LOBREGAT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10730)

14. House Bill No. 4853, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY JUBAS, MUNICIPALITY OF LIBAGON, PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN LEYTE TO BE KNOWN AS LIBAGON NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10731)

15. House Bill No. 4920, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL IN THE CITY OF NAVOTAS, METROMANILA TO BE KNOWN

AS NAVOTAS NATIONAL SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10732)

16. House Bill No. 3154, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE ANDRES BONIFACIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY JALANDONI-WILSON, CITY PROPER DISTRICT, ILOILO CITY INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS ANDRES BONIFACIO INTEGRATED SCHOOL”

(Now Republic Act No. 10733)

17. House Bill No. 3653, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE BACUNGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – TINUYOP ANNEX IN BARANGAY TINUYOP, MUNICIPALITY OF LEON B. POSTIGO, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE FROM THE BACUNGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS TINUYOP NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10734)

18. House Bill No. 3654, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE BACUNGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – TALINGA ANNEX IN BARANGAY TALINGA, MUNICIPALITY OF LEON B. POSTIGO, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE FROM THE BACUNGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS TALINGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10735)

19. House Bill No. 4287, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE HALAPITAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – LITTLE BAGUIO ANNEX IN BARANGAY LITTLE BAGUIO, MUNICIPALITY OF SAN FERNANDO, PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON FROM THE HALAPITAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS LITTLE BAGUIO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10736)

20. House Bill No. 4288, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE PIO DALIM MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF ARTS AND TRADES – STA. FILOMENA ANNEX

IN BARANGAY STA. FILOMENA, MUNICIPALITY OF CALANASAN, PROVINCE OF APAYAO FROM THE PIO DALIM MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF ARTS AND TRADES, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ARTS AND TRADES HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS STA. FILOMENA SCHOOL OF ARTS AND TRADES AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10737)

21. House Bill No. 4854, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE MIDSALIP NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – BULORON ANNEX IN BARANGAY BULORON, MUNICIPALITY OF MIDSALIP, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR FROM THE MIDSALIP NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BULORON NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10738)

22. House Bill No. 1772, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING AN ADDITIONAL BRANCH OF THE REGIONAL TRIAL COURT TO BE STATIONED IN THE SCIENCE CITY OF MUÑOZ, SITUATED IN THE PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA, IN THE THIRD JUDICIAL REGION, FURTHER AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 14, PARAGRAPH (C) OF BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 129, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘THE JUDICIARY REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1980’, AS AMENDED, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10739)

23. House Bill No. 4921, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE COMPOSTELA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – CORAZON C. AQUINO HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX IN BARANGAY OSMEÑA, MUNICIPALITY OF COMPOSTELA, PROVINCE OF COMPOSTELA VALLEY FROM THE COMPOSTELA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS CORAZON C. AQUINO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

(Now Republic Act No. 10740)

24. Consolidated House Bill No. 5306 and Senate Bill No. 2837, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE OPERATIONS OF THE NATIONAL LABOR

RELATIONS COMMISSION, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE ARTICLES 220 AND 222 OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES’ ”

(Now Republic Act No. 10741)

25. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2401 and House Bill No. 6043, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING REFORMS IN THE SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN CREATING ENABLING MECHANISMS FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN NATION-BUILDING, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

(Now Republic Act No. 10742)

26. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 510 and House Bill No. 4148, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING THE FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER OF EVERY YEAR AS THE NATIONAL TEACHERS’ DAY”

(Now Republic Act No. 10743)

27. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2909 and House Bill No. 6007, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CREATION AND ORGANIZATION OF CREDIT SURETY FUND COOPERATIVES TO MANAGE AND ADMINISTER CREDIT SURETY FUNDS TO ENHANCE THE ACCESSIBILITY OF MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES, COOPERATIVES AND NONGOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO THE CREDIT FACILITY OF BANKS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

(Now Republic Act No. 10744)

28. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2622 and House Bill No. 5587, entitled:

“AN ACT ALLOWING NATURAL GAS POWER GENERATING PLANTS IN THE COUNTRY TO USE NEAT DIESEL AS AN ALTERNATIVE FUEL, EXEMPTING THEM FROM THE REQUIREMENTS OF PARAGRAPH 5.3, SECTION 5 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9367, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘BIOFUELS ACT OF 2006’ ”

(Now Republic Act No. 10745)

29. House Bill No. 438, entitled:

“AN ACT CHANGING THE NAME OF SAN MANUEL NORTE NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF AGOO, PROVINCE OF LA UNION TO DR. MANUEL T. CASES SR. NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL”

(Now Republic Act No. 10746)

30. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2990 and House Bill No. 5973, entitled:

“AN ACT PROMULGATING A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH RARE DISEASE”

(Now Republic Act No. 10747)

31. House Bill No. 439, entitled:

“AN ACT CHANGING THE NAME OF SAN MANUEL NORTE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF AGOO, PROVINCE OF LA UNION TO DR. MANUEL T. CASES SR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”

(Now Republic Act No. 10748)

32. House Bill No. 440, entitled:

“AN ACT CHANGING THE NAME OF BAYBAY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY SAN MANUEL SUR, MUNICIPALITY OF AGOO, PROVINCE OF LA UNION TO SAN MANUEL SUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”

(Now Republic Act No. 10749)

33. House Bill No. 4008, entitled:

“AN ACT CHANGING THE NAME OF MAHINOG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY HUBANGON, MUNICIPALITY OF MAHINOG, PROVINCE OF CAMIGUIN TO SIXTO A. ABAO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL”

(Now Republic Act No. 10750)

34. House Bill No. 4009, entitled:

“AN ACT CHANGING THE NAME OF SAVERONA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY SAVERONA, MUNICIPALITY OF TALUGTUG, PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA TO ALBERTO G. BAUTISTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL”

(Now Republic Act No. 10751)

35. Consolidated House Bill No. 5588 and Senate Bill No. 3004, entitled:

“AN ACT FACILITATING THE ACQUISITION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY SITE OR LOCATION FOR NATIONAL GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS”

(Now Republic Act No. 10752)

36. House Bill No. 5532, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO THE INTERACTIVE BROADCAST MEDIA, INC. TO ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THAT SHALL TAKE EFFECT ON SEPTEMBER 5, 2021”

(Now Republic Act No. 10753)

37. Consolidated House Bill No. 1039 and Senate Bill No. 2890, entitled:

“AN ACT EXPANDING THE BENEFITS AND PRIVILEGES OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY (PWD)”

(Now Republic Act No. 10754)

38. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2693 and House Bill No. 2729, entitled:

“AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE PUNONG BARANGAY TO ADMINISTER THE OATH OF OFFICE OF ANY GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 41 OF EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 292, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ADMINISTRATIVE CODE OF 1987, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6733”

(Now Republic Act No. 10755)

39. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2178 and House Bill No. 5412, entitled:

“AN ACT RENDERING ELECTION SERVICE NON-COMPULSORY FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS, AUTHORIZING THE APPOINTMENT OF OTHER QUALIFIED CITIZENS, PROVIDING FOR COMPENSATION AND OTHER BENEFITS”

(Now Republic Act No. 10756)

40. Consolidated Senate Bill No. 2836 and House Bill No. 4271, entitled:

“AN ACT REDUCING THE RETIREMENT AGE OF SURFACE MINE WORKERS FROM SIXTY (60) TO FIFTY (50) YEARS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE ARTICLE 302 OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES’”

(Now Republic Act No. 10757)

TO THE ARCHIVES

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 3408, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is hereby directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 3408, entitled: AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND SEVENTEEN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that it is in the period of sponsorship and debate. I move that we begin consideration of the budget of the Department of Tourism.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session for a few minutes to allow the technical staff and resource persons of the Committee to access the floor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is suspended.

It was 10:13 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:26 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is resumed.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the Department of Tourism family led by its Secretary Wanda Corazon T. Teo; Katherine Chloe S. De Castro, Undersecretary, Administration and Special Concerns; Rolando Cañizal, Assistant Secretary for Tourism Development Planning; Bernardine R. Belmonte, Deputy General Manager for Operations; Atty. Guiller B. Asido, Chief Operating Officer Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA); Mr. Fidel M. Arcenas Assistant Chief Operating Officer for Administration and Finance Sector (TIEZA); Mr. Joseph Anthony M. Quesada, Executive Director of Nayong Pilipino Foundation; Elizabeth Espino, Director for the National Parks Development Committee; Mr. Orlando

H. Habitan, Officer-in-Charge, Department Manager III, Administration and Finance Service Department Philippine Retirement Authority; and especially, Secretary Wanda Corazon T. Teo, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Rizal, the Hon. Michael John R. Duavit to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Department of Tourism.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Duavit is recognized to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Department of Tourism.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. The Committee is ready. We hope that our explanation will be satisfactory.

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize our Minority Leader to give the first interpellation, the Representative from the Third District of Quezon, the Hon. Danilo E. Suarez, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Rep. Danilo Suarez is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some clarificatory questions.

REP. DUAVIT. It will be an honor, Mme. Speaker, to answer any question from the distinguished Minority Leader.

REP. SUAREZ. How much is the proposed budget for 2017?

REP. DUAVIT. The proposed budget of the Department of Tourism, Mme. Speaker, is, per new appropriations, P2.457 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Billion?

REP. DUAVIT. Billion.

REP. SUAREZ. As compared to 2015?

REP. DUAVIT. There has been a 39.87-percent drop, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. You mean decrease?

REP. DUAVIT. Decrease.

REP. SUAREZ. Can we get a historical data? Since 2014, binawasan ba sila? Were they given an increase as compared to 2013?

REP. DUAVIT. May I please have just a second to confer, Mme. Speaker. My data begins 2015.

REP. SUAREZ. Distinguished Sponsor, normally, what is happening is that the budget increases every year. That seems to be the trend.

REP. DUAVIT. I agree, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Now, the Gentleman is saying that for 2015, as compared to 2016, there was a slash from 2016 to 2017

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, from 2015 to 2016, there was an increase, Mme. Speaker, and then it was slashed for 2017.

REP. SUAREZ. May we know the rationale behind this.

REP. DUAVIT. Actually, Mme. Speaker, it was quite a surprise as well.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, some of the line ...

REP. DUAVIT. What was slashed, Mme. Speaker, was the branding campaign of the Office of the Secretary amounting to about P800...

REP. SUAREZ. Million?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, P800 million.

REP. SUAREZ. If I can surmise and remember the performance of former Secretary Jimenez, I think he did okay. Will the Sponsor agree with me on that? Tourism seems to be vibrant and doing well.

REP. DUAVIT. I would, Mme. Speaker. To get back to the Gentleman's original question, Mme. Speaker, 2014 had a budget of P2.112 billion. It increased in 2016 to P2.456 billion, and then increased—and this is when we saw a lot of the gains, Mme. Speaker—to P3.6 billion. Then at the last budget call, it was dropped to P2.492 billion.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, if we look at the statistical data being presented to us, distinguished Sponsor, the inbound visitors in 2012, it was 4.3 million; 4.7 million in 2013; 4.8 million in 2014, and they jumped dramatically by almost 800,000.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Then, you have a drop to 3 million, then a drop of 2.4 million.

REP. DUAVIT. This is for half of the year, Mme. Speaker. So, up to June of 2016, we had already hit three million.

REP. SUAREZ. We are just halfway.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Is the Gentleman saying that they may be able to catch up and maybe improve on this? What is their projection for 2016, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. The projection, Mme. Speaker, is a net increase of, if I am not mistaken, another 200,000.

REP. SUAREZ. From this month to the end of December?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes. The very optimistic is that we may hit six million, but the more realistic would be an increase of about 200,000.

REP. SUAREZ. There are only three months before the year ends.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes. Although their data for the third quarter is not yet in, we should get that in a few weeks, Mme. Speaker. Given the trajectory and the seasonality, and existing historical trends, ...

REP. SUAREZ. The Gentleman is saying that, with the ...

REP. DUAVIT. ... it is quite sizable.

REP. SUAREZ. ... balikbayans, the Christmas visitors, the number will pick up in the months of November and December, and fill up ...

REP. DUAVIT. Yes.

REP. SUAREZ. ... three million inbound passengers, visitors?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Do they have a categorical, tracked data that can substantiate ...

REP. DUAVIT. The seasonality? Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. ... the trajectory that in the months of November and December, there is suddenly a pick up of, maybe, millions?

REP. DUAVIT. Right now—yes, we have four distinct seasons, Mme. Speaker, wherein, actually, even the promotional plan goes on 90-day cycle. So, yes, the peak seasons are the summer season abroad for the countries we are hosting, and our own Christmas season.

REP. SUAREZ. So, distinguished Sponsor, the Gentleman is saying that this is a lean month, maybe typhoon season, August being, you know, the ghost month, et cetera? Bumababa tayo, but the Gentleman is saying that come October, November, December, pi-pick up na ito and we will have a tremendous number of inbound passengers that will surpass the 5.4 million of 2015?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker, in a continuous basis, this yearend bump also extends into January and February of the next year.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, it seems to be a very challenging figure that has to be achieved by the new set of officers. Can the Gentleman just ask them if they are comfortable that they can hit three million in three months? Ask them, distinguished Sponsor, as a favor.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker, as of August, the latest data, we are already at four million inbound passengers.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the Gentleman has here inbound receipts, meaning earnings, projected earnings of P306 billion for 2015. What is the projection for 2016? This is 2015, distinguished Sponsor. We are still three months shy, so, maybe the Sponsor can give me just a ballpark figure. I will just rephrase my question. Do we expect a performance of improving the 2015 figure of P306 billion?

REP. DUAVIT. It is around P400 million, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. 400...

REP. DUAVIT. It is P400 billion, I am sorry. My apologies, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. For 2016, and the bulk of this revenue will be generated by hotels, restaurants, et cetera?

REP. DUAVIT. Shopping, yes, Mr. Speaker, transportation. Basically, anything that they will spend on.

REP. SUAREZ. We will go back to that.

REP. DUAVIT. The bulk will be their accommodations, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Does the present leadership, because it has not even been 90 days since they started sitting in their positions, do they feel concerned and somewhat, the word may be “concerned,” or bothered by news coming from different tourists who are saying that they have problems sometimes in their scheduled touchdown in our terminals because of the traffic congestion? I am talking about the airside, not landside. So, may problema ka sa airside because of too much traffic, and you also have a problem on the landside.

Now, does it matter that there might be a side effect because, you know, the travel agency, et cetera, they normally come up with, “How was your vacation in the Philippines? They answer, “Ah, Boracay was fantastic. El Nido was great, but the traffic, the terminal is bad,” and that is a negative comment. So, may I ask from your resource persons whether they are communicating with agencies concerned to somehow do something about this problem of inbound passengers.

REP. DUAVIT. This, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, was discussed during the budget hearings at the mother committee and, yes, they are bothered as are we. Any complaint is taken very seriously because as far as tourism is concerned, what we are trying to offer, what we are trying to sell is the total experience. Anything negative must be dealt with.

To answer the second question, yes, there is a consultation going on with the DOTC, for example, and other agencies such as the DTI.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, distinguished Sponsor, I think you will agree with me that a case of first impression matters a lot. Just like meeting a girl, iyong unang tingin mo, that matters a lot, iyong nakakasindak ang ganda, ganoon, hindi ba?

REP. DUAVIT. Definitely, Your Honor, although it has been a while since I looked at another woman.

REP. SUAREZ. Ay, hindi, hindi naman ako authority doon. Sinasabi ko lang, iyong first impression matters a lot.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, po, Mme. Speaker, I totally agree.

REP. SUAREZ. So, iyong impression ko na pagdating ko sa terminal, maayos iyong terminal,

maayos iyong pagbibigay ko ng passport, napakabilis ng proseso. The reason I am asking is, there should be a working relation between the departments. Kung mayroon tayong mga bulk ng inbound visitors or tourists, maayos ba iyan, nabigyan man lang ng escort para medyo mabilis-bilis iyong kanilang biyahe papunta sa hotel?

REP. DUAVIT. That is something that we will look into, Your Honor, as far as opening ...

REP. SUAREZ. They do that in other countries, Your Honor.

REP. DUAVIT. They do, Your Honor, for some VIP arrivals, but as of now, from my recollection, the immigration claims are, indeed, separate for local and foreign passport holders. I do agree that there is more that can be done at our ports of entry, Your Honor.

REP. SUAREZ. Distinguished Sponsor, when we talk of investment, let us say that a foreign hotelier will come to the country and say, "This island has a potential." Then he says, "I will put, say, \$300 million to develop the area on the condition that they'll come up with the landing strip." Who normally spends for the landing strip, is it the government or the developer?

REP. DUAVIT. That would depend, Your Honor. There are cases where although they are not registered with the TIEZA, there are resources here where the landing strip was made by the developer. In most cases, this is the choice of the developer because if they really want it to remain private and deny its use to anybody else, then they are the ones who start to build it. If it is going to be done by the national government, then it will be open for everyone's use. It should be open for everyone's use.

REP. SUAREZ. I do not mean to be rude, distinguished Sponsor, but may we know the background of the head of this agency in terms of her job? Did she rise from the ranks or is she a hotelier? May we know the background in terms of tourism?

REP. DUAVIT. I do not want to err, Your Honor, so I would get the exact specifics. The honorable Secretary, Mme. Speaker, has been in the travel industry for the last 20 years, both on the service side and as a tour operator.

REP. SUAREZ. Okay. So, the distinguished Secretary might be able to answer my query on this. When we talk of inbound, we have remittances from OFWs, those coming from workers, and we have remittances coming from the tourists. So, on an average,

how much is the expenditure? Hindi naman iyong mga high rollers, but on an average, magkano po ang nagagastos ng isang turista sa isang araw, in dollars?

REP. DUAVIT. Depending on the country of origin, they can range per capita from anywhere between P40,000 to P50,000, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. A day? Is that for a day or for their trip?

REP. DUAVIT. This is per short trip to Asian destinations like Korea, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. How many days will that be, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. Usually, that would be around four days and three nights, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Four days, P50,000.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. That is practically P10,000 a day.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker. That is Korea, Mme. Speaker, as an example.

REP. SUAREZ. That is not even \$200—so, hindi ba ang hotels natin, iyong mga five-star natin, I think, it is already \$250? So, I would like to imagine that these tourists that you are mentioning do not stay in a five-star hotel.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker, exactly po. We have a wide range of product offerings, Mme. Speaker. I think, if we touch on the medium plan later ...

REP. SUAREZ. I noticed in this tourism performance that there is sudden, you know, in terms of number of warm bodies arriving, and Korea lists as number one, USA comes second, then Japan, China, Australia, Singapore, India. In this new foreign market, there seems to be a sudden interest coming from India.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. When they come here, do they pay in full or hulugan, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. They pay in full, Mme. Speaker. *(Laughter)*

REP. SUAREZ. Nagbibiro lang ako, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Iyong variation lang ho for every dollar that we earn from the tourists, how much is the local counterpart? Hindi ho kagaya ng mga OFWs na pure dollar, wala hong import additives, hindi po ba? E dito ho sa tourism?

REP. DUAVIT. The ratio is more or less 1:1, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. How is that again, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. The ratio is 1:1, Mme. Speaker, just the same.

REP. SUAREZ. So, it is 1:1.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. With the budget that is being asked for approval, that has a dramatic slash of almost 18 percent, or is that 15 percent?

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, it is almost 40 percent.

REP. SUAREZ. 14?

REP. DUAVIT. It is 4-0, Mme. Speaker, 40 po.

REP. SUAREZ. Wow, and the agency expects to fulfill its mandate of improving the number of incoming visitors, improving the 2015 numbers with that dramatic cut in their budget.

REP. DUAVIT. There are worries in the Committee and in the Department, Mme. Speaker, that there may be a negative impact on the targets, given that large budget cut.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, this is your turf, Mme. Speaker. We represent the Minority.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. SUAREZ. In a working relation, I would like to suggest, with the agency you are defending, that you keep a close communication with the Sponsor and the Sponsor takes the issue with the committees that pertain to enhancing their performance like, for instance, transport, peace and order, sanitation and health, et cetera. I will be looking forward to next year's budgetary proposal of this Department and I will check whether these data that are being presented here can be attained by the agency.

REP. DUAVIT. I would like to thank the distinguished Minority Leader. We assure that his advice will be taken to heart and acted upon.

REP. SUAREZ. Now, on some parochial concerns of some Members of the Minority, we have to look for new areas, kasi iyan pong El Nido, Boracay, Coron, kuwan na ho iyan, talagang by word of mouth, iyang underground river, hindi po ba? Napakaganda na ng exposure niyan. Can I ask the distinguished Sponsor to, for the agency, especially in Region IV-B, to take a second look at this Gumaer Falls in Barangay Tangkalan, Oriental Mindoro?

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, may I approach the honorable Minority Leader. I did not hear him exactly.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, can I request for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is suspended for one minute.

It was 10:51 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:53 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is resumed.

REP. SUAREZ. Because of the arrival of the Majority Leader, I do not have any more questions to raise on this proposed budget of the Department of Tourism, but we set some timelines, Your Honor. I hope the request of the Minority in terms of better and enhanced working relation between the agency and Congress will be given attention.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Minority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Mercedes "Didi" C. Cagas of the Lone District of Davao del Sur for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Cagas is recognized.

REP. CAGAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I share Secretary Teo's advocacy of promoting Philippine tourism to others, making her the administration's perfect choice for fulfilling the vision of President Duterte in making a change in the country through tourism.

Upon the invitation of the Department of Industry, this Representation was part of the delegation in the recent 13th China-ASEAN Expo in Nanning, China. The China-ASEAN Expo or CAEXPO is co-sponsored by the Ministries/Departments of Commerce and Industry and Trade of China and the 10 ASEAN member-states as well as the ASEAN Secretariat, and is organized by the People's Government of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Having been successfully concluded for 12 sessions, so far, the CAEXPO has grown into an event of special international influence and plays an important role in promoting China-ASEAN friendly cooperation and building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. For this year, the Philippine booth highlighted the products and services of GenSan in the field of agriculture and tourism.

In line with the 10-point agenda of President Duterte in promoting rural and value chain development toward increasing agricultural and rural enterprise productivity and tourism, may I, therefore, suggest to the DOT to coordinate with the Department of Trade and Industry and participate in the next expo which will be held in Guilin International Convention & Exhibition Center in Guangxi, China. The expo will showcase image displays of tourism spots, tourism products and tourism consumption. Our presence in this event conveys our country's interest not only in promoting agritourism in the Philippines, but because I believe that in order to continue to grow and create jobs at home, we must engage proactively with the world economy. Thus, we need to ensure the best possible coordination and exchange of information not only within ASEAN institutions but between ASEAN institutions, and it is through events like this that economic growth is achieved in the ASEAN Region.

Mme. Speaker, may I reiterate my suggestion made during the budget briefing that the DOT consider focusing their resources on the prospect of agritourism in our country. Agritourism may be a catalyst in improving the quality of life in the rural areas. Studies show that agriculture can be developed into agritourism attractions which, in turn, enhance the sustenance of these regions. As Chair of the Special Committee on BIMP-EAGA, I hope we can work hand in hand towards the promotion of agritourism.

Again, Mme. Speaker, and Mme. Secretary Teo, thank you for your time and good morning.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Jose "Lito" L. Atienza Jr. of BUHAY Party-List for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Atienza of BUHAY Party-List is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Will the Gentleman, our good friend, be willing to enlighten us on some issues surrounding the tourism program that we have?

REP. DUAVIT. I will give it my best effort, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. During the meeting or hearing on the budget, we inquired from the DOT Secretary, who was present, on the issues on the Duty Free operations.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Sir.

REP. ATIENZA. We asked for a report on the matter so that we could dispense with the topic in this plenary gathering but we did not get any response, so I would like to reiterate my questions, Your Honor.

Iyon pong Duty Free natin, sa isang iglap, makikita ninyo sa kanilang report na hindi nagbabago ang estimate ng kanilang kikitain in the past year, this present year, and next year. Para bang alam na nila na ito ay hindi kikita pero hindi rin malulugi. E, pagka ganoon po ang accounting figures na nakikita natin on any fiscal matter, you immediately raise a red flag. Mayroon pong nangyayari diyan na hindi tama. So I would like to ask, papaano po ba ang sistema ng Duty Free operations dito sa ating bansa? Who is managing it and what kind of money do we make or do we lose in the process?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DUAVIT. May I have a minute, Your Honor, to confer and to follow up on the original request of the honorable Gentleman from BUHAY.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is suspended.

It was 11:01 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 11:03 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is resumed.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Your Honor, looking back at the records, we would like to apologize to the distinguished Gentleman from BUHAY. The reply was sent to him but, apparently— anyway, we will track it down. In case it has not gotten to your office yet, we will furnish you, at this moment, the explanation that you sought during the budget hearing, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. We thank the Gentleman Sponsor for that assurance that we, indeed, were sent a copy of the report. Anyway, we would like to stress that the operations of Duty Free merchandising, sales and everything, in most countries generate a lot of funds for the tourism department, of their local tourism department. So, let me just ask a very general question, honorable Gentleman Sponsor: how much is the Duty Free making a year in the past two years?

REP. DUAVIT. Mmme. Speaker, net income, Your Honor?

REP. ATIENZA. Net income, yes.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Your Honor. The net income, Your Honor, varies from year to year. In 2014, it was P271 million; in 2015, P341 million; and we had a very big drop to P91 million in 2016 for various reasons. I think the question that the honorable Gentleman from BUHAY is asking, just to be more precise, is iyong dibidendo po. In 2014, that would have been P189 million; 2015, P135 million; and in 2016, P85 million po.

REP. ATIENZA. So, would you say that the Department of Tourism is happy with the net profits they are making a year on a nationwide operation of the Duty Free?

REP. DUAVIT. I would say, from our discussions with them, Mme. Speaker, is that improvements could be made. Personally, this Representation would also like a higher income, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. As we requested in the budget hearing, Mme. Speaker, we are reiterating our request, therefore, that we be given a copy of the contracts covering the operations of the Duty Free Philippines so that we may be able to study the matter and disprove our lingering suspicion that indeed, there is something wrong in the Duty Free operations, considering that it is not generating enough revenues that could very well help the tourism efforts of the country.

Tama po bang isipin na kapag malaki ang nage-generate na income diyan ay mas marami pong magagamit na salapi ang department at ang bago nating administrasyon sa pangangalap po ng promotional efforts para sa ating turismo.

REP. DUAVIT. I agree, Mme. Speaker, since Duty Free Philippines has transitioned into a GOCC from a private entity well within our purview and within our powers of oversight and indeed, we can look into this, Your Honor, perhaps through the appropriate standing committee.

REP. ATIENZA. Under the freedom of information direction of the President, which we are now looking into on how we can even legislate it, may we expect a copy of the documents covering the Duty Free operations?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. How soon, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, we have a commitment for 2:00 p.m. on October 5, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. Yes. We would appreciate that, Mme. Speaker. Before we even approve the budget, we would like to make sure that, indeed, our misgivings are unjustified if we see the documents before us.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Shifting to another matter, Mme. Speaker, again, on funds generation, the TIEZA is one of the primary sources of income that the department could be using. Am I right to assume that, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. Actually, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, TIEZA is an attached agency and the source of funds of TIEZA is the travel tax, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. I beg your pardon, Mme. Speaker, I did not hear fully.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes. The TIEZA, Mme. Speaker, is an attached agency and its source of funding is derived from the travel tax, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. So, you say that TIEZA has got nothing to do with the DOT, and the DOT has got nothing to do with TIEZA.

REP. DUAVIT. Structurally, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the TIEZA has its manager, but the Chairman

of the Board of TIEZA is the Secretary, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. So, the TIEZA is under the direct control of the DOT.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Yes. I would like to ask one simple question. I see this every day and I took note of this in the budget hearing for the Department of Tourism. I also asked about this, but I did not get an answer up to now.

Iyong Municipal Golf Links ng Lungsod ng Maynila na napunta sa PTA in a very miraculous manner, up to now, I am at a loss on how it got to the control of the PTA. Anyway, years have already passed and the PTA controlled the operations of the Muni Golf Links. Every night that I pass by there, I see one or two players using the Links with all lights aflame. Maliwanag na maliwanag po iyong golf course pero ilan lang po ang naglalaro. Samantala, tumawid ka lang ng Del Pan Bridge, wala na pong ilaw—halos iyong buong Tondo, R-10 Boulevard, Parola 1, Parola 3, Happy Land temporary housing, Katuparan. So, naitatanong ko sa sarili ko, ano bang klaseng sistema ito? Iyong mamamayan, hindi nakakakuha ng kuryente; iyong Golf Links, punong-puno ng kuryente at ilaw.

So, tatanungin ko po, iyon bang Golf Links ay nagge-generate ng income para sa TIEZA? I understand that it is under the direct control of TIEZA. Is it making money right now, or is it losing millions and millions of pesos on operations, which money should be going to the people rather than the golf course? Magkano po ba ang net profit, if there is any, out of the Muni Golf Links that TIEZA has arrogated upon itself to operate?

REP. DUAVIT. Right now, the Muni Golf Links, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is running under a deficit and is undergoing some subsidy in the amount of P2 million a year, although the target is to break even by the end of this year. The subsidy is coming from some refurbishments on the golf course, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, and some facilities.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, I would just be very interested on this, sino po ba ang namumuno ng TIEZA ngayon? Who is the head of this agency attached to the DOT?

REP. DUAVIT. Right now, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the OIC is Atty. Asilo. If we will recall, the former PTA or TIEZA head, Mark Lapid, ran for Senator, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. So, it is a certain Director Asilo.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, he is currently an OIC.

REP. ATIENZA. Hindi po ba siya dati na? So, he is on a holdover capacity, is that right?

REP. DUAVIT. Only for the past few months, our Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Holdover. Dahil sa bagong administrasyon, sana ay makaaasa kami na magkakaroon ng pagbabago dito sa pagpapatakbo ng ating mga proyekto ng dating PTA, na ngayon ay TIEZA na, sa kamaynilaan at sa buong bansa. So, we would keep it at that, and we will continue monitoring the operations of this white elephant which is using up a lot of people's electricity for a golf course that does not seem to be making money at all. Since we are at the Intramuros area, Mme. Speaker, iyon po bang Intramuros Administration remains to be managed by an appointee of the Secretary of Tourism?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Sino po ba ang bagong appointed administrator ng Intramuros Administration?

REP. DUAVIT. To this date, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, there is no new appointee, but the OIC is Ms. Mercy Sahagun, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. We would recommend to the department secretary, Mme. Speaker, that the TIEZA be led by an appointed official, and that the Intramuros Administration be also headed by an appointed official of the new administration, rather than relying on OICs, believing that OICs do not normally function on an optimum level sapagkat hindi po sila nakapagde-decide, on a long term basis, on their programs that affect directly the performance of the agency.

Naitanong ko po iyan sapagkat ang Intramuros Administration is one of the centerpieces of our tourism attraction. We know that, and as former mayor, I worked very closely with the Secretary of Tourism then, Secretary Gordon, and we planned very, very well the activities within the Intramuros area. It became a very, very wild attraction for local and foreign tourists dahil makasaysayan po iyang area na iyon. Mapalad tayo na diyan po nagmula ang buong kalunsuran, kaya masasabi din natin na diyan nagsimula ang development ng buong Metro Manila, sa Intramuros walls. So, therefore, we would like to see to it that it is managed well not by an OIC, but a permanent administrator who will work within the system, although we have our reservations as to the system itself.

We have a pending House bill now reconfiguring, restructuring the Intramuros Administration para po naman makatugon ng maayos sa mga problema sa loob ng ating Walled City. Otherwise, we believe that Intramuros will continue to lose its value if it is not managed well, and we find it out of tune, out of time, anachronistic that this prime spot right in front of the City Hall of Manila, is managed by an appointed official of the Department of Tourism not even by the President but by the Department of Tourism, rather than the elected officials of Manila. Who could better care for any part of any city, but the duly elected officials of that city?

Kataka-taka na mayroon tayong ganyang sistema pero tumatakbo po iyan taon-taon, pabago nang pabago ng administrasyon pero wala pong gumagalaw. So, we would like to help restructure this Intramuros Administration to make it conform more with correct urban planning so that the basic services within that area are answered and provided for by the Intramuros Administration. We will not change the concept that the area will be managed by Intramuros Administration, but the Chairman should be ex-officio, the mayor of Manila.

Dahil ang appointed official being the mayor or the mayor being the chairman or as a member, hindi po talaga magiging epektibo ito. I do not think Mayor Estrada attends the meetings of the Intramuros Administration. Correct me if I am wrong, hindi po a-attend ang superstar na mapapailalim lang sa ating appointed official at malamang isa lang ang boto niya sa board. Kaya kailangan baguhin po ito. I seek the support of the Sponsor of the department that we help reshape that anachronism. It does not belong to this period.

At the time when then First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos was ruling together with then President Marcos, she was appointed Chairman of the Intramuros Administration. Noong panahon iyon, tama, nakinabang po ang Intramuros pero noong wala na po si Mrs. Marcos at wala na rin si Presidente Marcos, nagpatuloy po ito. Hindi na po natin siguro dapat payagan ito at dapat baguhin na natin.

On general terms, Mme. Speaker, I would like to ask the Gentleman about the goals of the new Tourism Department head. We are putting this on record so that next year we will go back to it. Does she see an increase in tourist arrivals or what is her projection? She has an advantage because we asked that same question in 2014 to the past Tourism Secretary but he did not give an accurate projection. He failed miserably. In 2015, he gave another projection and again, he failed miserably. So we are giving the new Secretary the opportunity. Does she project an increase in the arrivals of tourists? If not, what figure can she now give this Congress as an assurance that our tourism program is well-managed?

REP. DUAVIT. To put to rest the new question, Mme. Speaker, I would just like to volunteer an information just given to me now that the recommendations have already been given to the Office of the President, and they are just awaiting the appointments. So, hopefully, we can just wait for the natural course. As for the new question, the department is working under a tourism plan that extends all the way to 2022, and the inbound expected for 2016, it appears that we may be able to match this 5.9 figure. For 2017, our inbound would be 6.5 million tourist arrivals, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, are we to believe that we are expecting at least 6 million but the projection is 6.9 million. Tama po ba, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. It is 6.5, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. So it is 6.5. The past administration failed because they projected and said in this halls of Congress that they were projecting 10 million but they only reached five point something. So, we hope that the new Secretary will succeed in her projections and that the department will succeed in their expectations that we will have more tourists next year.

Alam natin na ang turismo ay maaaring daan sa kaunlaran. If it is managed well, our country has everything to offer, as the best islands in the world are adjudged by the authorities of world tourism as coming from the Philippines. Nandiyan po ang Palawan, Boracay, Coron, just to name some. We believe that our department and our new Secretary can succeed if they are able to do their tasks more effectively now.

As a matter of note, hindi po tayo magsa-succeed kung hindi tayo magpo-promote. Magkano po ba ang budget for promotions ng Department of Tourism ngayon, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. We have over P2 billion for the tourism promotion body. As discussed earlier during the interpellation of honorable Minority Leader, sadly, there was a cut of almost P800 million, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker

REP. ATIENZA. Binawasan po ba ang budget nila?

REP. DUAVIT. Nabawasan po noong submission ng budget call, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, this Representation sincerely believes that the two most promising industries in the Philippines that could generate economic income would be from tourism and agriculture. If we succeed

in both, I believe that our country will be better off economically. E kung babawasan po ang promotions budget, hindi talaga siguro magiging epektibo ang ating turismo. No country will succeed in its tourism program without effective promotions. Tourism industry is basically promotions.

Ang nakaraang gobyerno, hindi na nga effective ang kanilang kampanya dahil ang kanilang pangako ay “It’s more fun in the Philippines.” That is one of the weakest promises that one could have heard from any tourism world, of any tourism department. Sana po nag-isip sila ng mas magandang tema ngayon na magkakaroon ng selling point ang pagkatao ng Pilipino, ang kagandahan ng Pilipinas, ang yaman natin sa kalikasan, ang yaman ng ating kultura. O, binibigyan ko kayo ng idea, Mme. Speaker, para po naman huwag na kayong lumayo diyan.

Our country is rich in culture and natural beauty, including our people. The distinguished Sponsor is a good-looking Gentleman, and the Ladies of Congress are all good-looking.

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, we share the same concerns. I think it was unanimously raised in the committee hearings, and it has also been raised here, that we are concerned about the budget cut, but it is not something that we can address right now but at the appropriate time, during the period of amendments.

I just would like to have my own interjection, Mme. Speaker. By just looking at it, as it was already mentioned by the Gentleman from Buhay Party-List, this budget is not just for buying ads, but it is also actually for producing ads. When we will be doing these ads that we will show internationally, we cannot just show ordinary ads. My personal background po is in media and we have a company that does shoots for the big companies like Unilever et cetera. When we are using, let us say, a 4k camera, Mme. Speaker, actually, it is using film which can really eat up a budget fast.

We have to show our quality tourism products with quality commercials. That is one of the reasons there is this concern, and I would like to thank the honorable Gentleman from BUHAY for bringing this up and bringing it to the Plenary Hall for all of the Members to hear.

REP. ATIENZA. Yes, Madam Speaker, I believe that the budget deliberation is the best avenue for us to work together for the successful administration of our nation, and coming from the government, kailangan po tingnan natin kung saan makakatulong tayo. Kung ganiyan po ang budget nila for promotions ay talagang kulang iyan and so, maybe in the middle of the year, they can work it out with the President and the DBM so that they get a bigger promotions budget. We in the Minority will support such efforts so that our country

will gain from tourism, at hindi iyong para magbigay lamang ng trabaho o magbigay lamang ng puwesto sa mga kinauukulan, kung hindi mag-generate ng income para sa mamamayan.

Napakalaki po ng maaaring kitain sa turismo ng pangkaraniwang Pilipino. Kailangan lang talagang epektibo ang kampanya para ang mga turista ay dumarating sa bansa at hindi binubura ang Pilipinas sa kanilang itinerary. Hopefully, the President will succeed in fighting criminality and lawbreakers in the country, so that the negative elements hindering our government from attracting visitors are neutralized as soon as possible. Hanggang may naki-kidnap, mayroong napatay, mayroong naho-holdap, hindi po talaga tayo pupuntahan ng turista because the number one in the tourist list of requirements is safety and security. Kung hindi po sila puwedeng mag-kamping dahil baka habang nagka-kamping sila sa may mountainside, maging sila sa tutok ng barrel ng baril. Hindi po tayo pupuntahan ng turista kung ganyan.

In the expected number of tourists of 6.5 million, how many are foreigners and how many would belong to the balikbayan category?

REP. DUAVIT. Only 2 percent are balikbayans, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. So kalahati po balikbayan, kalahati foreigners.

REP. DUAVIT. Hindi po, 2 percent lang ang mga balikbayan.

REP. ATIENZA. So 2 percent lang, Mme. Speaker?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, 2 percent lang po.

REP. ATIENZA. Meaning 98 percent are considered foreigners and not Filipinos returning home?

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. We also have a different category like for retirees who come, they are not counted as tourists.

REP. ATIENZA. When I mentioned the word “balikbayan,” it means the generic Filipinos coming home for Christmas, for the fiestas, for Todos los Santos, for Holy Week—mga Pilipino po iyan. Ang tinatawag natin na mga balikbayan, Pilipino po sila at umuwi sa bansa, but I do not accept the figure stated that they comprise only 2 percent of the visitors; sa palagay ko, ito ay baligtad.

REP. DUAVIT. I will find out, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. It may be different if the basis is the nationality

on the passport, but I will check. Mme. Speaker, yes, they are of Filipino descent but now have foreign citizenship and so, they are counted as belonging to the country of the passport which they are holding. The aggregate or the percentage would be 2 percent plus 3.52 percent. So that would be about 5.52 percent.

REP. ATIENZA. I would not belabor the point but I would like to sit with any official of the department so I can compare notes and information with any one of them on this issue. Dahil sa figure po namin, karamihan po ng mga nabibilang na turista sa ating bansa ay mga Pilipino na bumabalik sa Pilipinas at ang foreigners. The Europeans, Americans and Koreans ay nabibilang po naman as being foreign tourists. I would be very happy to sit down with any one of them so that we can reconcile our definition on tourists.

REP. DUAVIT. Yes, I would like to do that as well, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, because they are also visitors numbering in millions, domestic residents coming in and out. That figure is very large. If so, it may just be a matter of definition, Mme. Speaker, and I would like to join the Gentleman from BUHAY in seeking that clarification.

REP. ATIENZA. Yes, Mme. Speaker, because we are sincerely of the belief that tourism would very well be one of the mainstays of any administration to prop up the economy. Some nations succeed in depending only on tourism to support their economies. The Philippines has an abundance of what they are offering, and we see no reason the Philippines would not gain from the income generated from tourism.

Again, we wish the new Secretary all the luck and the best, considering that she is new on the job. We hope she learns fast because hindi po maghihintay ang bansa sa pagkukulang ng namamahala kaya kailangan pong bilis-bilisan natin ang ating trabaho. Kami sa Kongreso belonging to the Minority, as we have committed from the very start, we are willing to help but definitely, if we see anything wrong, we have to fiscalize responsibly. Kapag mali, ito ay pupunahin namin at ituturo namin sa buong bansa kung ano ang pagkakamali. Kapag tama, tutulungan namin sapagkat gusto nating lahat na umunlad ang ating bansa.

With that, Mme. Speaker, I will wait for the records that we requested for. I am not threatening, but if we do not get these records before the plenary again to support the approval of the department's budget, we will be forced to point that out—and that we are frustrated and

continues to be frustrated. Therefore, we will be forced to move for the deferment of its budget but, otherwise, we wish the whole family of the Tourism Department all the best.

Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat, G. Sponsor ng ating panukalang batas. Thank you.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Gentleman from BUHAY Party-List.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the period of interpellation on the budget of the Department of Tourism.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

ROLL CALL

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we call the roll of Members.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General will please call the roll.

*The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is reflected in Journal No. 27, dated September 27, 2016.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mme. Speaker, the roll call shows that 201 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). With 201 Members present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 3408, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is hereby directed to read only the title of the measure.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 3408, entitled: AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND SEVENTEEN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that it is in the period of sponsorship and debate.

I move that we resume consideration of the budget of the Department of Tourism.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Michael John R. Duavit to answer questions on the budget of the Department of Tourism.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Duavit is recognized to answer questions.

REP. DUAVIT. Ready to resume, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, may we recognize the Hon. Rodante D. Marcoleta of SAGIP Party-List for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Marcoleta is recognized for his interpellations.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker. Good morning, distinguished Sponsor.

I have very, very few questions to ask. I will start with the mandate of the Department of Tourism which is, I think, primarily planning, programming, coordinating and implementing, it being the regulatory government agency in the development and promotion of the tourism industry.

Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, in the provinces where traditional tourist spots are quite visible and quite numerous, I think the active administration for planning, programming, coordinating and implementing will have no problem with the DOT. What about for a province, for example, the province of Tarlac? Tarlac province,

Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I think has no notable mountains or volcanoes. We have no Mayon Volcano like Albay. We have no beautiful beaches. We have no bay like the Misibis Bay in Legazpi where tourists flock and where visitors traditionally go to. What can the DOT do for the province in order to give flesh to the mandate of implementing, coordinating, developing and promoting the tourist industry?

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, first of all, I would like to just say that it is an honor to be interpellated by my very old friend, the Gentleman from 1-SAGIP.

Normally, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, there are many ways in which the Department can help. Typically, what happens is, if it is eco-based, there can be eco-based attractions, and a good example of this would be the beaches, the bays and other scenic sites. There are also tourism destinations that are purely manmade, Your Honor, and an example would be amusement parks. An amusement park, for example, would fit in well with the flat landscape in a province like Tarlac and similar places in Central Luzon which has favorable weather for much of the year.

So, as far as the support of the Department and its attached agencies, it could be—well, first, there should be a locator; secondly, its registration as a tourism zone with the DOT; after that, public hearings, et cetera, where it could be infrastructure support, the roads leading to that location; or it could be actual site development, and a host of other things, Your Honor.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, we have no amusement parks where people who go can be amused.

I think the mandate of the DOT can be best served, and probably can be more challenged, if a province like Tarlac with no natural scenic spots to be proud of, can be attended to by way of installing man-made tourist destinations, probably not in the proportion of, for example, the Epcot, the Animal Kingdom or Disneyland in America—not that sort, Mme. Speaker, but an area where people can go to and that can also stimulate people's interest, if not employment.

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, the amusement park was just an example. Basically, we are looking at something that is not exactly that capital-intensive. We look at activity-based attractions and there are quite a few. I know that in Tarlac, there is a world-class shooting range, for example, at dinadayo po ito. So, we consider things like these, Mme. Speaker. The main point is, as far as the Department is concerned, it is there to support private sector initiatives primarily at this moment and in very rare instances, to be an originator of said attraction. An example po would be the Nayong Pilipino which

has yet to be done and this is a P1.4-billion project. Its po is handled by an attached agency but, of course, that is contingent also, Mme. Speaker, on subsidies and the capitalization from the national government which is not included in this budget po.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, that particular statement only proves that there is not much being done so far when we talk about provinces that have no natural beauties to offer to tourists, unlike Albay—the great Joey Salceda is signaling me, Mme. Speaker. They are quite fortunate, and that is why I am trying to make the point that for provinces that are not traditionally flocked to by tourists, I think some initiatives should also be made by the DOT in order to rationalize, if not to harmonize, the mandate of helping most of our people in the rural areas, which is also one of the central objectives of the administration. The DOT should also be a department for all provinces with scenic spots or without.

Let me go to the last question, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, we have this Tourism Road Infrastructure Program, which for some period has been initiated by the Department of Tourism. Several areas benefitted from this program because those areas which were not traditionally accessed by tourists have been assisted by this program, particularly through the roads leading to these tourist areas. For unknown reasons, Mme. Speaker, very recently this program, we called this “TRIP,” has not been endorsed by the DOT for, as I said, reasons only known to them. What happens now to the areas where at least a kilometer was installed and then, considering that it requires three kilometers to reach that area, it was not continued? What happens to the rest of the area? This means that the initial investment of the government in trying to go to or penetrate those areas has largely been wasted. The DPWH cannot do otherwise because it is no longer in their budget because, principally, it was already slashed by the DOT. What happens here?

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, that TRIP budget is in the current Bill. It is present there, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. We have to check the records because I think this program was already devolved to the respective LGUs and there is now no central authority trying to continue those projects started. Sayang naman po kasi iyong investment.

REP. DUAVIT. I would like to give the assurance to the honorable Gentleman that it is definitely in the budget now. As this is also pursuant to RA 9593 po, or the Tourism Act of 2009, it has a legal basis. It is not something that we can just simply set aside, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. I raised this issue, Mme. Speaker, not only because of the investment that should not be wasted, but also because we should maximize the little resources that we have. I am referring to what we call the “Pareto efficiency,” but sometimes it is called Pareto optimality. It is defined as a state of allocation of resources in which it is impossible to make any one individual better off without making at least one individual worse off.

What I am saying is, I do not know those individuals who became better off by suspending the TRIP, Mme. Speaker, but certainly, I know the people in those areas that became worse off because it was discontinued.

Having said this, Mme. Speaker, I just want this to be recorded for purposes of handling the intricacies of the entire budget in the days to come.

Thank you very much for your time. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr. of the Third District of Camarines Sur for a three-minute manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Honorable Bordado is recognized.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I empathize with the Department of Tourism for the 40-percent cut in its budget. Mme. Speaker. Mr. Guenter Taus, the President of the European Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was quoted by a major newspaper as saying that Philippine tourism lags behind its regional peers. He proceeded to point out that in 2014, Thailand had 25 million international tourist arrivals; Singapore, 15 million; and the Philippines, 5 million.

Now, Mme. Speaker, with the 40-percent cut in the budget, how can the DOT address this pressing concern? By the way, Mme. Speaker, let me just know the 2015 figure in international tourist arrivals here in the Philippines, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Kindly see, Mme. Speaker, if we have the data on the international tourist arrivals in the Philippines for 2015.

REP. DUAVIT. For 2015, yes, Mme. Speaker. I am sorry, I thought this is just a manifestation.

REP. BORDADO. I am just interested in the figure.

REP. DUAVIT. For 2015, just from memory, that would be about around 5.5 million, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Okay, thank you. So, in 2014, we had 5 million; and in 2015, we had 5.5 million ...

REP. DUAVIT. We are expecting...

REP. BORDADO. ... tourist arrivals. So, Mme. Speaker, I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with the Secretary of Tourism. We will have to support the DOT in its move to focus on the local tourism aspect, Mme. Speaker, particularly the one discussed by the Honorable Cagas regarding farm tourism or what we call agritourism. I understand, Mme. Speaker, that the DOT has a comprehensive program on farm tourism and I do hope that this will be implemented this year.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Minority Leader is recognized.

REP. GARBIN. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Minority, there being no other member of the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I now move to terminate the period of interpellation on the budget of the Department of Tourism.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, in behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in their motion to end the period of interpellation for the budget of the Department of Tourism. I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). There is a motion by the Minority and Majority to terminate the period of interpellation on the budget of the Department of Tourism. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. (*Applause*)

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 3408 contained under Committee Report No. 2. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, for the information of the Body, we will be suspending for one hour to give way to a lunch break.

With that, Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend

the session until one o'clock in the afternoon. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is suspended until one o'clock in the afternoon.

It was 12:13 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 1:01 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is resumed.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 3408, contained in Committee Report No. 2, as reported out by the Committee on Appropriations.

May we request that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Secretary General is directed to read only the title of House Bill No. 3408.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 3408, entitled: AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND SEVENTEEN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, before we proceed, may we acknowledge the presence of our guests in the gallery from the Department of National Defense family. They are Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana, Usec. Ricardo A. David Jr., Usec. Eduardo D. Del Rosario, Usec. Raymundo DV. Elefante, Dir. Peter Paul Reuben G. Galvez, MNSA, CESO III, Lt. Gen. Eduardo M. Año, Lt. Gen. Edgar R. Fallorina AFP, Vice Adm. Caesar C. Taccad, Chief of Staff Gen. Ricardo R. Visaya, Dir. Jonathan C. Martir, Dir. BGen. Fermin R. De Leon, Jr., Exec. Dir. Ricardo B. Jalad, Dir. Ernesto G. Carolina and Dir. Nona F. Legaspi, CESO III.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that we are still in the period of sponsorship and debate.

I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the Department of National Defense, including its attached agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Rozzano Rufino B. Biazon to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Department of National Defense.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Biazon is recognized to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Department of National Defense.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. BIAZON

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, and fellow Members of Congress.

We have the honor to present this afternoon the proposed budget of the Department of National Defense, its attached agencies and other major services for 2017. The budget proposal is P134.54 billion. The Secretary of Defense is present, along with other officials of the department, and the Committee is ready to answer questions, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Emmi A. De Jesus from Gabriela Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Honorable De Jesus is recognized for her interpellation.

REP. DE JESUS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, and good afternoon to my honorable colleagues.

Mme. Speaker, is the distinguished Sponsor willing to yield to some of the questions of this Representation?

REP. BIAZON. Gladly, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. DE JESUS. Maraming salamat po. Iyong unang punto, at dahil ang badyet ng

Department of National Defense ang ating tinatalakay ngayon, gusto ko pong bigyan ng diin ang kaugnayan nila sa continuing CAFGU and paramilitary operations.

Last September 22, Pres. Rodrigo Duterte gave the AFP marching orders to take full control and stop paramilitary groups, citing specifically the Magahat-Bagani operating in Surigao del Sur and North Cotabato. The President underscored the importance of this pronouncement saying further that the presence of paramilitary groups undermines the peace process. We would like to know what measures have been undertaken towards complying with this pronouncement of the President and the AFP's Commander-in-Chief, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker. We do recognize the importance of the CAFGU in maintaining peace and order in the communities, and it has been used by the Armed Forces as a force multiplier from way back. Of course, we do take note of the President's pronouncements, and the defense establishment will be doing a continuous assessment in complying with what the President said, taking into account the situation on the ground and the security situation in the communities. If we come to that point of disbanding or downsizing or totally eliminating the use of CAFGUs, it should be done in partnership with the program of ensuring that the Armed Forces will be able to sustain its mandate of securing territorial integrity, and peace and order of the country.

REP. DE JESUS. Actually, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ginamit po namin ang datos ng isang human rights group, Karapatan, which was able to document 94 individuals from 2010 to 2016 killed by government-backed paramilitary troops, at ang binabanggit ko po ay isa lamang dito ang CAFGU at kasama rito ang Special Civilian Armed Auxiliary, Investment Defense Force and other groups. Kasama na nga po ang nabanggit natin kanina na kagyat na nagbigay ng command ang ating Presidente kaugnay noong Magahat-Bagani group operating in Surigao del Sur and North Cotabato. Gusto ko ring dagdagan pa, kasi ang binanggit ninyo, ito ay katuwang pero marami-rami na po ang mga nakuha naming mga datos kaugnay noong mga nagagawa nilang damage doon sa ating mga komunidad.

Gusto kong i-cite, noong September 1, 2015, ang 36th Infantry Battalion, Philippine Army—ito po ay 2015 pa nangyari at nailagay na sa pambansang balita ang tungkol sa isang alternative school natin kung saan ang executive director nito na si Emerito Samarca, isang Lumad leader, at si Dionel Campos ng Lianga, Surigao del Sur, ay parehong napatay at ang Magahat-Bagani forces, under the 36th Infantry Battalion, ang tinutukoy na perpetrators.

July 30, 2016—ito po ay malapit sa isyu namin bilang sektor ng kababaihan and how it is vulnerable. Isa pong six-months pregnant na nagngangalang Makenet Gayoran, kasama po ang mga bata, were injured in a shooting rampage doon po sa—committed by the New Indigenous Peoples' Army Reform which is under the command of the Eighth Infantry Battalion. Mayroon din po nito sa Negros at sa Panay.

And very recently, September 13, ang mag-asawang Totong Gascon at Rita Gascon, parehong pesante sa Arakan, Cotabato, Bagani paramilitary forces naman po ang sinasabing nag-o-operate sa area since 2016 with the 37th Infantry Battalion. Ito po ang concern namin. Sa pagkakaunawa po namin, under the AFP Modernization Program, the CAFGUs are supposed to be demobilized on the theory that a modern, well-equipped AFP would no longer have any need for armed civilian auxiliary. Ito po ay nakababahala, starting in 2013, patuloy pa po ang kanilang damages na nagagawa.

Ang gusto ko pong ipahayag din, from 2016, tumaas pa ang allocation ng CAFGU na naging P3.413 billion. Ano po ang masasabi dito ng ating Sponsor? Habang mayroon nang sinasabing demobilization at ipinakikita na talagang mas marami, in fact, ito ay ilan lamang sa mga nagawa nilang karahasan. Kaya ang katanungan ay ano po ang take ng Sponsor sa may demobilization na nga, nag-increase pa ang budget, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Dito po sa mga isyus na natalakay ng aking butihing kasamahan, una po, magbibigay lang ako ng komento tungkol doon sa mga ilang insidente na may kinalaman ang ilan nating CAFGUs. Ang insidente sa Surigao del Sur, sa Lianga, nagkaroon na rin po ng pagkilos ang Armed Forces of the Philippines sa pamamagitan ng pagpaparusa o pagbibigay ng sanction sa platoon leader, sa company commander at sa battalion executive officer. Pinanagot na rin po sila at kumilos naman ang Armed Forces dahil kinikilala ang kahalagahan ng pagpapanatili ng integrity ng operations, hindi lamang ng Armed Forces, pero lalo na po ng mga civilian auxiliary.

Pagdating po doon sa issue ng demobilization of CAAs, sa kasalukuyan, hindi na nag-recruit ang Armed Forces ng mga karagdagang CAAs. Kung sakali man na may pinapalitan, ito ay doon lamang para sa mga na-terminate na CAAs.

Totoo po na kasama sa istrategiya ng ating Armed Forces at defense establishment ang demobilization. Ito po ay nakadikit sa hangarin na mapa-modernize natin ang ating sandatahang lakas. Kaya po hindi naman natin agad-akaran na masasabing i-demobilize sa kasalukuyang ang mga civilian auxiliary dahil nga hindi pa naman nakakamit ng Armed Forces natin ang ideal modernization status. So mahalaga po na matukoy natin ang sinasabi na ang demobilization ay nakadugtong sa modernization. Dahil iyon nga po ang hangarin, na kung

tayo ay mayroong modernized Armed Forces, hindi na natin kakailanganin ang civilian auxiliary.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, so ito pong budget na allocated for 2017, ang take ninyo rito ay karapat-dapat, when in fact towards demobilization, ano po ang paglalaanan dahil ang binabanggit nga po, batay sa aming research, lumaki pa from 2016 to 2017.

REP. BIAZON. Tama po, tumaas ang ating budget para sa Department of National Defense by 14 percent. Naniniwala po tayo na kakailanganin ito para matustusan natin ang pangangailangan ng ating modernization. Nasabi nga natin, kung makamit natin ang modernization, doon tayo magpupunta naman or tutungo sa demobilization ng ating CAFGUs?

REP. DE JESUS. Just to reiterate, Mme. Speaker, very specific po na ang allocation for the CAFGUs ay na-increase. So, this Representation would like to comprehend ano, towards demobilization, pero bakit lumaki? May we know saan po ba ang paglalaanan nitong paglaki na ito?

REP. BIAZON. Dahil po sa layunin ng ating administrasyon na bigyan ng karapat-dapat na emoluments ang ating mga naglilingkod sa bayan. Ang pag-increase po para sa mga civilian auxiliary natin ay para sa pag-increase ng subsistence allowance. Hindi po ito mapupunta sa karagdagang bilang ng CAAs o kaya ang pag-aarmas sa kanila. Ito ay mapupunta sa kanilang benepisyong bilang naglilingkod sa ating bayan.

REP. DE JESUS. So again, Mme. Speaker, just to clarify, ang increase ay madadagdag sa benepisyong current number ng CAFGUs. Puwede po bang malaman kung ilan ngayon ang current number ng CAFGU and other paramilitary groups batay sa record ng DND?

REP. BIAZON. Tama po iyong nabanggit ninyo kanina na sa benepisyong ay mapupunta at habang kinukuha natin ang bilang o headcount, gusto ko lang na bigyan kayo ng assurance na ang increase na iyan ay pawang para lamang sa benepisyong. Habang sa taong ito, September 2016, ang ating authorized number is 62,348, pero ang actual po na warm bodies ay 54,852.

REP. DE JESUS. Lahat na po ito, Mme. Speaker, ng ating paramilitary forces?

REP. BIAZON. Yes. Mga CAFGU at iba pang paramilitary forces sa ilalim po ng pangangasiwa ng Department of Defense.

REP. DE JESUS. Puwede rin bang malaman saan po ang konsentrasyon, patuloy na konsentrasyon ng bilang ng ating paramilitary forces na nabanggit na lampas sa 50,000, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Ang karamihan po ng deployment ng civilian auxiliary forces natin ay sa Eastern and Western Mindanao. Primarily, para makontra ang paglaganap ng extremist forces sa lugar na iyan.

REP. DE JESUS. So for that, Mme. Speaker, I take the Sponsor's word na ito po ay nakapatungkol lamang sa extremist forces. Mme. Speaker. Can the Sponsor please define kung sino po ba ang tinutukoy natin na extremists forces?

REP. BIAZON. Ito po ang mga grupo na nagbabanta sa peace and order natin, tulad na rin ng mga grupo na nakikilala na bahagi ng terrorist influences dito sa ating bansa.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kami po, lalung-lalo na bilang kumakatawan sa sektor ng kababaihan na nakakatanggap ng iba't ibang ulat kaugnay ng harassment ng paramilitary groups, kung saan ang pinakamasahol nga ay ang kamatayan o kaya ang dislokasyon ng buo-buong komunidad, at the proper time, tinatanaw po namin ang tuluyan nang pagkalusaw ng paramilitary groups. Kung sinasabi ninyo na working within the framework of the AFP modernization, at the proper time, I think ito ang mas importante, I will propose that we delete the provision on the budget allocation of the CAFGU and other paramilitary forces, and realign the said amount to supplement the budget for more basic needs of our people. For example, ang mga pangangailangan ng ating public hospitals.

To go to my second point, Mme. Speaker, ito po ay nalagay na rin sa pambansang consciousness kaugnay ng continuing presence ng ating puwersa mula sa AFP sa mga komunidad ng ating indigenous communities. Ano po talaga ang patakaran ng ahensya, particularly the AFP, concerning IP communities na naninindigan at ayaw nga ang presensya ng AFP troops in their villages and ancestral domain?

Ano po ang policy dito ng DND?

REP. BIAZON. Well, sunod po sa mandato ng Armed Forces na panatilihin ang katahimikan. Habang nandiyan po iyong pangangailangan ng Armed Forces na sila ay magpatupad ng mandatong ito ay mananatili sila sa iba't ibang lugar ng ating bansa. Pero kinikilala naman po siyempre ng ating Armed Forces na ang mga hangarin ng indigenous peoples at kung ang sitwasyon ay magpapahintulot na sila ay madestino sa iba naman pong lugar ay gagawin po ng Armed Forces iyan. The

primary mandate and role of the AFP is to ensure that peace reigns all over the country, whether it is in the urban areas or in the indigenous peoples' areas.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I would just like to remind you na iyon pong ating ahensya, even if AFP troops are there in IP communities in the exercise of national security functions, at sinabi ninyo na rin, they remain under obligation to behave as mandated by our very own Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act at iyon pong mga prinsipyo o guiding principles on internationally displaced persons. Binanggit ninyo rin na dapat mass proteksyon at promosyon ng ancestral domain rights ng IPs at iyong kanilang karapatan na sila ang magtatakda, to chart their own development and not the kind of development imposed on them doon po sa mga higit na makapangyarihan na nagtatalaga sa kanila doon. Kung gayon, Mme. Speaker, kung nananatili ang AFP sa mga komunidad ng katutubo sa kabila ng hindi pagsang-ayon ng mga katutubo sa kanilang presensya, ano po ang tingin ninyo ngayon dito? Kasi ang tingin talaga ng—sa amin pong karanasan, talagang more than iyong sinasabing proteksyon, talagang mas marami pang recorded na paglabag sa kanilang karapatan ang nagaganap. Kaya presensya pa lamang ng AFP ay nagiging sagka na doon sa katiwasayan at paggampan, at pagpapatuloy ng kanilang cultural practices. So, hindi ba paglabag na rin ito sa mga pandaigdigang kasunduan, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Well, the Armed Forces respects the rights, cultures, customs, and traditions of our indigenous peoples, as well as all other Filipinos in general. The AFP has already reached a high degree of professionalism and the AFP, the defense establishment, will not tolerate any violation of the law by its own ranks. That is why there is an established system of holding their personnel accountable and they will be held accountable under processes; provided, that these are brought to the attention of the establishment; and that the AFP and the DND will cooperate with the organizations, entities which bring to its attention these kinds of violations. Rest assured that it is not a policy to violate the law and the AFP will punish its own members if proven that they have been guilty of violating the rights of IPs and other Filipinos.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, at this juncture, I would like to share with the honorable Sponsor iyong amin pong mga ulat na nakuha dahil binanggit po ninyo na tutugunan ninyo o iimbestigahan ang mga ito. Itong nakaraang taon, ang panghimasok sa kabahayan at pagkampo sa di kalayuan ng mga elemento ng AFP sa bahay ng isa sa aming lider ng organisasyon sa Cordillera na si Beatriz Belen. So, isa pong residential at may nagkampo sa tabi ng bahay nila. Unang dumating

noong October 5, 2015 sa Ag agama, Western Uma, Lubuagan, Kalinga ang 50th IB. Ang huling ulat na natanggap naming kalagayan ng kanilang komunidad just last September 16, a little less than two weeks ago, napag-alaman naming naroroon pa rin pala ang mga naturang elemento ng AFP. Ang presensya nila ay nagdudulot ng takot sa mga naroroon at may ulat: “Kami po ay may recorded ng sexual harassment at pang-a-abuso sa mga kababaihan.” Marami ay takot nang magpunta sa kanilang sakahan dahil pinagbibintangan silang mga miyembro ng armadong grupo kapag umalis sila sa kanilang tahanan.

Ito pa, I would like to take this opportunity para ibahagi po ito sa Kapulungang ito. May fact-finding mission na ginawa sa Lubuagan, Kalinga noong September 9. Ang mga salaysay na sumusunod ay para po sa ating kaalaman:

October 29, 2015, around 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., one of the soldiers was drunk and he fired his gun, disturbing the whole community and causing fear not only among children but to all villagers.

August 17 at 5:00 a.m., a teenager was traumatized upon seeing a rifle pointed at him. Women also expressed their disgust due to catcalling by the soldiers to teenagers and even to married women. As always po, ito talaga iyong vulnerability ng mga kababaihan. They always fear for the safety of their female children especially because the soldiers are often drunk.

In one of the community gatherings, one of the soldiers who was drunk sexually harassed the women who were serving food. The women were also complaining that they cannot do their regular washing of dishes and clothes in the nearby public washing area, because the soldiers are always using it. They are forced to do their duties farther away from the river. They said that the soldiers want to use the river rather than do their obligations. The villagers are also complaining that the women and children are not comfortable with taking a bath in the public washing area because of the presence of the soldiers. In short, the presence of the army troops has disturbed their daily routine. Ito po iyong nangyari dito sa area ng Lubuagan, Kalinga sa fact-finding mission. Iyan po iyong mga ulat.

Doon naman po sa Asipulo, Ifugao, the Kalanguya farmers of Barangay Tukucan, Tinoc reported to Karapatan that on July 17, around 300 soldiers from the 54th IBPA and 77th IB CAFGU conducted a military operation. The government troopers set up camp at the elementary school and in some of the farmers' houses in Sitio Cocoy, Barangay Tukucan. So, ito po, area na naman po ito ng ating mga katutubo. Iyong mga farmers refrained from hunting and gathering firewood within their communal forest due to fear. The operation continued until August 3 sa Buguias, Benguet dahil may naka-set-up ding kampo sa Bot-oan Elementary School. Ito po ay ilan lamang.

Iyong mga farmers naman sa Danggo, Ifugao, the soldiers slept in the barangay hall before transferring their quarters to the farmers' homes. Ito pong mga binabanggit sa area ng ating mga katutubo ay malinaw sa *punto de vista* po ng pagkilala nga sa karapatan ng mga katutubo na panghihimasok, at dahil sila ay nanatili sa mga lupaing tinatawag na ancestral domain. Ayaw nating masaksihan sa iba pang lalawigan sa ating bansa ang mga masaker, sapilitang paglikas at matinding paglabag sa karapatang pantao na nasaksihan din natin sa mga Lumad sa Mindanao.

At this point, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, ano pong mga hakbang ang mga isasagawa para tugunan po iyong mga reklamo ng paglabag sa karapatan ng mga katutubo, at pagkilala sa kanilang karapatan doon sa kanilang ancestral domain?

REP. BIAZON. Iyong naiparating po ng ating kasamahan tungkol sa mga insidente ay talaga naman hong nakakabahala. Kinikilala po ng Armed Forces, ng Defense Department ang responsibilidad na tumugon sa mga nasabing report. Kung hindi pa man nila natatanggap iyong opisyal na reklamo, sabihin na lang din po natin na itong pagkakataon ngayong hapon na ito ay ituring na nating senyales para sa Armed Forces at Defense establishment na kumilos tungkol diyan sa partikular na insidenteng nabanggit po ninyo, dahil ang Armed Forces ay hindi naman po siyempre—it does not tolerate violations of human rights by its members. Matapos po ang masusing imbestigasyon ay paparusahan po nila ang mga kailangang parusahan na guilty ng kahit na anong violation.

Rest assured, my dear colleague, that the Defense establishment and the Armed Forces are taking this seriously, this issue that you have brought out in this plenary this afternoon, and they will take the appropriate action.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, I appreciate the response of our Sponsor, and of course, iyong follow through naman dito will be done. We will exert our effort to formally ask questions regarding the cases mentioned.

On the third point that I would like to question, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, iyong papel ng ating Armed Forces sa pagtitiyak naman ng victory ng peace talks. Dahil ito po ay pangarap at maraming mamamayan ang naghahangad talaga na magkaroon ng usapang pangkapayapaan para iyon pong armadong conflict ay malutas. Gusto ko pong i-quote doon sa inyong budget briefing that the “AFP remains supportive of the peace process especially in the implementation of signed as well as new peace agreement.” So, ito po, katulad ng tagubilin ng ating Pangulo, tiyak na matitigil. Kayo po ba ay sumasang-ayon sa pagpapatigil ng mga paglabag ng grupong para-militar at pagtitiyak ng kondukta ng

AFP na naaayon sa ceasefire? Sang-ayon po ba rito kayo, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, the DND and the AFP are fully supportive of the peace process. The initiatives of both parties, both the President and other parties concerned, in fact—the AFP was one with the President when he declared unilateral ceasefire. And there is no other, probably, no other group of people who would like to have peace than our soldiers who also put their lives in the line of defense for the country. Indeed, the AFP, the Defense establishment is fully behind all efforts to achieve peace in our lifetime.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, at this juncture, again, may mga natanggap pa rin po kaming ulat, at gusto kong basahin ang mga sumusunod bilang sunud-sunod na paglabag sa kinikilala ninyo at binanggit na kinikilala ng AFP na ceasefire:

September 10 po, mayroong inaresto na 73 years old, at ang banggit sa kanyang matandang edad na ay matagal na siyang wala doon sa kanyang armadong grupo sa Kalinga. At lalo na, sa kanyang edad, nauna nang nabanggit ng iba pa na siya, ang kanyang hangarin na lang ay maging aktibo doon sa organisasyon sa paglaban doon sa pananatili ng mga militar sa kanilang lugar. Ibig sabihin, hindi na siya maituturing na combatant, pero siya po ay dinakip.

Iyong isa pa po na naisadokumento ay ang patuloy pa ring operasyon ng militar sa pangunguna ng 31st Infantry Battalion sa mga barangay, sa Sinabaran, Bon-Ot, Coron-coron, Cabagahan at Bariis. Ito naman po ay sa Matnog at sa Barangay San Antonio, Barcelona sa Sorosogon, mula pa po noong September 13, gayon din sa Barangay Calateo, sa munisipalidad naman ng Juban, Sorsogon, mula pa rin naman noong September 15. Kaya, iyong binabanggit po ay ito iyong patuloy na operasyong militar sa iba't ibang lugar sa Bicol.

September 5 naman po, ang 70th IB sa Barangay Namitpit, Quirino, inakusahan ang mga magsasaka na kabilang si Ronald Lakbaona, na pilit umano silang sumali sa CAFGU para patunayang hindi sila miyembro ng NPA.

Ang panghuling kaso pong naiulat din ay ang tuluy-tuloy na operasyon ng mga miyembro ng 5th ID sa mga lalawigan ng Isabela, Cagayan, Apayao, Kalinga, Mountain Province, Ifugao at Benguet. Ito pong mga naturang insidente ay nabanggit na nga po ng ating Presidente sa deklarasyon ng ceasefire ay nangangahulugan ng pag-pull out bilang pagrespeto po at pagkilala sa nagaganap na usaping pangkapayapaan. Ano po kaya ang kagyat na puwedeng aksyon, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, ng ahensya dito sa mga nabanggit? Habang, sabi ko nga, itong usaping pangkapayapaan ay talagang pangarap natin na maging matagumpay para magkaroon ng pagkakataon na mapag-usapan ang ugat,

bakit nagkakaroon ng ganitong armadong tunggalian, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, the DND-AFP is very much concerned, of course, with these recent incidents that have been related to us by our distinguished colleague, and we will treat this as a formal complaint and we will take action to investigate, and again, to hold accountable any of its officers and men who may be found to be violating the policies and laws being upheld by this administration. Of course, those events being related here in plenary, in Congress, this Representation will join our distinguished colleague, of course, in making sure that the Defense establishment will take action on these.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, I appreciate your response.

Dito po sa huling punto, hindi ko alam kung napanood din ng mga kasamahan ngayon dito sa Kapulungan, iyong isang video na lumabas sa news, iyong pagbibigay—nais ko itong bigyang-pansin, iyong kaso ng pagpaslang sa isang lider-magsasaka sa Coron, Palawan. Ang pangalan po ay Arnel Figueroa, tinamaan ng bala mula kay Dan Nelson Mayo, isa po siyang guwardiya ng Bureau of Animal Industry sa Yulo King Ranch.

Puwedeng ipakita na ang video.
(Audio-video presentation)

REP. DE JESUS. May yugto po kasi sa video na ito na sumigaw iyong babae, at ito iyong gusto kong malaman, kasi po dito, namatay po iyong isang lider-magsasaka na nandoon nga sa paligid ng Yulo King Ranch sa kamay ng guwardiya ng Bureau of Animal Industry. Pero ang sigaw po noong babae, kasama ng guwardiya ang mga miyembro ng Philippine Marines sa naturang insidente. Gustong malaman ng Representasyong ito, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, kung anong unit ng Philippine Marines o ng Philippine Army ang naka-deploy at naglulunsad ng operasyon sa naturang lugar sa Coron, Palawan.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

This Representation personally saw the video yesterday on a social media site, but what we gathered was that the person involved in the shooting was a blue guard, a civilian hired by an entity. And as I verified with our representatives from the AFP, there were no military personnel present in that incident. As we have heard, the person involved is already under the custody of the Philippine National Police.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, siyempre, bagong-bago itong insidente, but is the

Gentleman still willing to pursue iyong presensya po ng Philippine Marines o ng Philippine Army dito sa Coron, Palawan? Is he still willing to pursue?

Kasi baka po dito sa nasabing insidente ay wala, but is he willing to pursue this? Kasi baka hindi po isang isolated case ito. Baka during that moment, wala, pero just the mere presence or deployment, puwede talaga silang magamit ng mga private entity.

REP. BIAZON. The AFP has given its word that they will look into the incident on whether, indeed, there were military personnel involved. There were no army units in that area. In the place of Coron, Palawan, there are some Marine units who are primarily tasked to ensure the safety of tourists who go to that area because Coron is a prime tourist destination. So, there are Marines deployed in that area to ensure the safety of those who visit. But in that particular incident, while there were no military personnel involved, the AFP has given us its word that they will look into the possibility of involvement or presence of soldiers during that incident.

REP. DE JESUS. Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, again, what this Representation would like to register is our seriousness. Matapat po kami at sinsero na sana po ang usapang pangkapayapaan ay maging tuluy-tuloy at mailatag yaong mga batayan ng magaganap na armadong tunggalian. Kaya sa bahagi po ng Representasyong ito, habang nandiyan po iyong mga kaso na ibinahagi at habang hindi nalulubos ang imbestigasyon doon sa mga nakaraang paglabag ng mga puwersa sa pangangasiwa ng DND, naninindigan po kami na kung anuman ang inihahapag na badyet ng ahensya ay baka dumating po ang pagkakataon, maliban po doon sa intent namin na at the proper time, ang mga badyet na para sa paramilitary groups ay ilaan na lang, ilaan na lang doon sa higit na kailangan ng ating mamamayan. Pero, kapagka magpapatuloy o hindi rin maibibigay ang buo-buong ulat at assurance ng ahensya, this Representation even intends to defer the budget of the agency.

So, Mme. Speaker, iyon lamang po at maraming salamat po sa responses ng ating Sponsor. Good afternoon.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, my distinguished colleague.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Tomasito "Tom" S. Villarín of AKBAYAN for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Villarín is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Distinguished colleagues, good afternoon.

I would like to propound some questions to the honorable Sponsor, first, with regard to certain policies of the DND, the AFP. But first, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, this Representation, together with the Minority in this Chamber, would like to commend our Armed Forces for its commitment to the peace process, not just under this administration but previous to this administration. As we can see, in the past administration, we came out with the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro, and I think our Armed Forces was very instrumental and key to that success. For that, we would like to commend our Armed Forces.

As a second manifestation, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, again we would like to commend the AFP for its continuing professionalism. As we all know, ever since, there were problems with regard to military *coup d'états*, with our soldiers taking on some political roles. I think, over time, this has been resolved and this professionalization is also key to the stability that we now enjoy with regard to our AFP. Corollary to that, I would just like to ask a question about the promotion of our generals. Are there some instances that the batches, because we have heard that in the PNP, four batches were, kumbaga, nalaktawan. So, in the AFP, did that happen? Is the ruling class Batch '86 or Batch '82 pa rin?

REP. BIAZON. The Armed Forces has its own system which contributes to the increasing professionalism with regard to the promotion of officers. It has a board of generals and it has set standards for promoting officers based on merit. While seniority does come into play, the Armed Forces has been careful not to show that there are biases or favoritism among its ranks. It has learned from its past experience, way back during the Martial Law regime, where it was already proven that such kind of practices would contribute to the degradation of professionalism in the service. That is why they are strictly adhering to a system of promotion that would largely be based on merit.

REP. VILLARIN. So, I thank the Gentleman for that assurance, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Now, on another point, I would like to propound the issue of security sector reforms. If you look at this budget, I think the DND, the Armed Forces, is fifth among the agencies. While this could have some implications dahil panglima lang tayo doon sa mga ahensiya na may nakuhang budget. But I would also like to commend the AFP, the DND for instituting security sector reforms. When we talk about security sector reforms, essentially, this is about the democratic control of our Armed Forces. For that matter, over time, you have seen that in the military. Now, again, on the issue of

the modernization plan of the AFP, does the Gentleman think that the present budget, along with the initiatives of the past administration to increase the capacity, the capabilities of our Armed Forces, is adequate?

REP. BIAZON. Well, of course, when we talk about AFP modernization, more funding would be better. But we are working on what is available to us, and so far, the AFP has given its best in evaluating what should be prioritized in relation to its strategies and, of course, its priorities in performing its mandate. So, they will do with what we give them.

REP. VILLARIN. Now, if we talk about the mandate and priorities of the AFP, basically, our AFP is really geared towards our external defense. Does the Gentleman agree with that statement, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Well, based on the Horizons of the AFP modernization, it gives attention and importance to maritime security, internal security and, of course, humanitarian aid and disaster response. Those are in the Horizon 1. In Horizon 2, there is what we call the “minimum credible defense” that is within our period now, what we are in in Horizon 2. Further down the line in Horizon 3, that is where we are looking at the Armed Forces being a credible defense force, one which could match those of other countries. So, we are indeed going into that direction.

REP. VILLARIN. I would agree to that, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. But again, if the Gentleman wants to refer to what should be the mandate of the AFP, let me refer him to Executive Order No. 112, when it states in Section 1, and I quote:

Consistent with the provisions of the Revised Administrative Code (E.O. No. 292), the DND is hereby mandated to maximize its effectiveness for guarding against external and internal threats to national peace and security, promote the welfare of soldiers and veterans, and provide support for social and economic development.

So, if we look at these specific mandate, the range of what our Armed Forces should do is very broad: not just external, but also internal threats, even socio-economic development. So, and pursuant to this mandate, the DND was again assigned to a role as an advocate for social and economic development concerns, to include resource and environmental protection, and the preservation of our exclusive economic zone, emergency preparedness, and mitigation. So, in other words, what we have now is an AFP that is not just for external defense, but also for some civilian roles. Does the Gentleman agree with

that, with this existing mandate, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, of course, because we do acknowledge the potential of, for example, the West Philippine Sea, economically, for us, especially since it has been acknowledged as part of our territorial responsibility, and there is no other agency, I guess, which is capable of enforcing or ensuring Philippine presence there but the AFP. Likewise, in terms of disaster management, response and mitigation, the capabilities of the Armed Forces make it a natural component in that regard.

So, we do accept what the Gentleman stated a while ago.

REP. VILLARIN. In relation to our claims in the West Philippine Sea and, of course, we have now seen an increasing build-up of the military capabilities of China in the Kalayaan Island Groups, even in the Scarborough Shoal. Does the Gentleman think these initiatives by China would render us ineffective to maintain or to exercise sovereignty over our claims at this point, given the capabilities of our Armed Forces?

REP. BIAZON. Well, what we have going for us really is the ruling of UNCLOS, giving us legal backing to stake a claim. This Representation thinks that that is one major card that we have on our sleeves. Of course, if we compare it directly, China’s military capability versus Philippine military capability, of course, we are at a big disadvantage. But that is where our other assets come in, one of which is our allies in this cause, meaning to say, those who recognized the legal recognition that our country has already achieved and, of course, our allies in terms of defense and military capabilities, those who help us in defending our territory and other concerns.

REP. VILLARIN. So we would welcome assets, ships, equipment from our allies, from our established allies to upgrade.

REP. BIAZON. That is always an option for us. As we have seen, countries like Japan, Australia and even, of course, the United States, have been assisting us in terms of military hardware. In fact, some of those contained in this budget are things that we will be acquiring from our allies.

REP. VILLARIN. So it is not good policy to antagonize these allies, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. BIAZON. I do not think there is a country that would antagonize its allies. While there may be exchanges in views and opinions among leaders, I

think the bottom line is, alliances will remain, and all we need to do is just focus on the objectives of those alliances.

REP. VILLARIN. I would agree to that, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, but in connection also with the capabilities of our Armed Forces, I would just like to recall that, before, we had this innovative approach to protect the KIG. I think, one approach made by our Armed Forces was to deploy a ship and it was scuttled precisely to put a claim. So, do we still have ships like that, that can be scuttled in some of these islands so as to reinforce our claim?

REP. BIAZON. As of this moment, the naval assets that we have are probably operational and we will need them to operate continuously. We do have scuttled ships there with the deployment of Marines, and they have been gallantly defending our territory for quite some time. Of course, for any other additional deployments, they would require budgetary support. So, if Congress will allocate support, then the AFP is very much willing to extend its services and presence in that area.

REP. VILLARIN. So, I hope that the AFP, not just in terms of asserting our claim sa Kalayaan Island Group, West Philippine Sea, again, I would say—the Minority would say that it has been doing its best to assert that claim. In fact, even one of our islands, Kalayaan, is inhabited by our soldiers. And, even the civilian government in Kalayaan is composed, maybe, of active and retired soldiers. So, they have been doing their best to protect our interest.

So, again, let me stress that this claim, the West Philippine Sea, this claim on this island should be a matter of pride for the AFP that they have been at the forefront. I think Congress, no doubt, will lend its support to extend any budgetary allocation na kailangan natin to really assert that claim even if in the face of insurmountable odds that at this point hindi natin kaya. But, with our allies, with our AFP doing its best, I think we can assert that claim.

Now, on another point, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, let me focus our attention on the role of the AFP as part of doing disaster preparedness and risk mitigation. Of course, we have the Office of Civil Defense as the one primarily mandated to administer a comprehensive national and civil defense, and risk reduction management program. Now, do you think that the OCD now has the adequate budget to do disaster preparedness?

REP. BIAZON. As of the moment, it has requested the appropriate funds that it will need to operate under its mandate. The defense establishment has done some

tweaking in this in terms of how to utilize the Quick Reaction Fund by shifting the funds from the OCD to the NDRRM fund. It is now able to respond effectively to the needs of disaster mitigation, preparation and management. So, one feature, we would say, is that it has more flexibility now rather than what it had in the past.

REP. VILLARIN. In terms of specific facilities and equipment, does the OCD now have the capability to conduct post-disaster needs assessment on a real-time basis, on a basis na, in a way, within the 24-hour response that we need; meaning, if we look at the damage, the structural as well as the physical damage due to disaster. So, does the OCD have that capability of doing post-disaster needs assessment in real time?

REP. BIAZON. One good thing about the paradigm shift in handling disasters brought about by the passage of the NDRRM Law is the shift from responding to that of preparing. So far, the defense establishment and other agencies involved, which is—actually, an interagency team is tasked to manage disasters in the mindset of preparation and, for example, prepositioning of resources so that the response is immediate, especially in areas where the predictability of disasters is possible. Like, for example, when a storm is coming in, resources equipment are prepositioned so that when the storm comes in, there would be an immediate response. But if we are looking at, for example, an earthquake and then an immediate response is expected, we can still improve on that in the idea that the Gentleman is thinking of as a quick response.

REP. VILLARIN. In the prepositioning of the Armed Forces, so, we usually preposition our regular forces, meaning, the army units, the engineering brigade, ...

REP. BIAZON. They can form part of the prepositioning, but as mentioned, it is an interagency team that does this preparation, like the prepositioning of relief goods would be under the responsibility of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. So, there is a need for government agencies to work together in that preparation for disasters.

REP. VILLARIN. Well, as I understand, disaster management is inter-agency. The role of the AFP really is to prevent, to quell possible riots or unpeace brought about by disasters. But oftentimes, the AFP is there, firsthand, to do the clearing operations. So, what happens is that, like in calamities and typhoons, it is the AFP, I think; but in particular, the engineering brigade does the road clearing operations because the DPWH, I think, still does not have those equipment; and if they

have, they have not been prepositioned. So, usually, it is the AFP which is the first responder in these calamities.

Now, I am again pointing out that, of course, the capacity of the AFP is both for the external and the internal, and even the civil defense roles. Now, with the current situation of having tension in the West Philippine Sea, our Armed Forces now being redeployed to go after the Abu Sayyaf and extremist groups, so, we are pulling out troops from Samar, from Bicol, particularly in the Eastern Seaboard of the archipelago. Do you think that with this pullout, the civil defense capabilities of the AFP will be hampered, in case God forbid, another typhoon with a magnitude of Yolanda will again strike?

REP. BIAZON. The repositioning or redeployment of troops to other areas, to certain areas to beef up operations is carefully considered by the Armed Forces. It is not a complete pullout from a certain area to be redeployed to another. There will just be some selected units to be redeployed to assist in other areas. So, the establishment does not think that it would really hamper to a big extent the ability of the Armed Forces to respond. The nature of the AFP is that they are easily deployable, their personnel are well trained to respond to various situations, and they have the equipment and the means to move the equipment from one area to another.

So, at this point, we do not think that we are severely put under a disadvantage by this redeployment of forces.

REP. VILLARIN. So, there are adequate assets like sea assets, because in disasters and typhoons, when access to land is problematic, we usually use sea vessels. So, do we have those vessels that can immediately deliver repositioned goods or emergency relief to the areas, particularly in the coastal areas? Because what usually happens, again, in the Eastern Seaboard which is usually hit by typhoons, these are not accessible by land so it is more of bringing in the relief by sea. So, what the Sponsor is saying is that we do have these sea vessels, these assets that can be prepositioned any time.

REP. BIAZON. In terms of naval vessels which the Gentleman specifically cited, it might require a little bit of response time owing to the huge territory that our navy has to cover, and the available vessels that we have right now. But they are ready to respond to any occasion and, of course, during that kind of special time where there is a disaster, the government may also tap other assets even from the private sector to assist in and respond to the needs of stricken citizens.

REP. VILLARIN. Because as I understand, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, in the last typhoon Yolanda, that was precisely what was pointed out, the lack of

our vessels that can be prepositioned either in, like for Mindanao, it could be in Cagayan de Oro, or in the Pangil Bay area, or in Iloilo, or somewhere in areas that are safe, I mean, when the typhoon strikes. So, what the Sponsor is saying that right now, these vessels are enough and you do not need additional vessels.

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, I do not think I have to ask the Flag Officer-in-Command but I will speak on his behalf. Yes, we need more. But the Gentleman pointed out the experience of Yolanda and, in fact, the navy now has a new vessel, the BRP Tarlac which is precisely envisioned to do disaster response as the need arises.

REP. VILLARIN. So these types of vessels, the former cutters, coast guard cutters that are now being handed down to us are really the types of vessels that are needed. So, those are the kinds of assets that hopefully the AFP can acquire in the immediate future.

Now, going to my last point, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, there is this plan, the revival of the Philippine Constabulary. If we look at our history, the PC has really a bad name. It invokes memories of Martial Law. It invokes how the PC was used by the dictatorship. So, do you think it is a good policy to revive the Philippine Constabulary?

REP. BIAZON. Well, we do recognize that there was mention of a revival of the Constabulary, but at this point, it has yet to be discussed on the policy table. So, we would refrain from further commenting on the proposal until such time that the security sector sits down and discusses the implications of such a proposal. As this Representation had heard, it was mentioned by the President. It has not yet reached the point of a serious policy discussion.

REP. VILLARIN. Because as I understand and if you review history, the 1987 Constitution precisely, in effect, disbanded the PC because the PC was also used as a law enforcement agency. But in our Constitution, it is expressly stated that we will have a national police that is civilian in character. So, we do not need a Philippine Constabulary to do law enforcement, and I hope this constitutional mandate, this prohibition can be looked into if this proposal is discussed on the policy level. I think given that, again, as I have said earlier in my manifestation, the key to security sector reforms is really the democratic control of our Armed Forces. It should not be in the hands of a dictator or in the hands of one person. So, I hope that the gains made in the past and what history has taught us, again, would be instilled in our modernized and our professional AFP that never again should dictatorship be allowed to rule in this country.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of BAYAN MUNA for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Zarate is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

May the Sponsor accommodate some clarificatory questions.

REP. BIAZON. Willingly, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po.

Just recently po, hindi lang ho lahat nagkaroon ng pagbabago sa sibilyan na bukrasya at maging sa military bureaucracy. Marami hong mga pagbabagong nangyayari. Even ho doon sa usapin ng ating policy in dealing with our foreign neighbors, in dealing with other countries, mayroon hong mga sinasabi nga silang tectonic shifts, may mga pagbabago.

Just a few days ago, President Duterte made mention that, "I am about to cross the Rubicon between me and the United States." Sinasabi po niya dito na he would seek closer ties with other countries especially Russia and China. My question now, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor: Is the Department of National Defense, the Armed Forces of the Philippines ready to walk with President Duterte in crossing that Rubicon that he mentioned?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the DND itself is but an alter ego of the President. Of course, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is subservient to civilian authority, most particularly the leadership of this country. If it becomes a final policy decision of the President to enter into an alliance that we have not been a part of in the past, the DND and the AFP are duty-bound to obey and pursue the direction of a duly elected leader of this country. Of course, it also follows that entering into new alliances does not necessarily mean breaking old ones. So, there is also that possibility. So, as a part of this government, the defense establishment will, of course, be ready to respond to the leadership of this country.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Of course, the President also mentioned that this new policy does not mean a total break of ties. What he mentioned was that we are just opening other doors. I ask that question, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, in relation to the fact that we have been discussing year in and year out during budget deliberations the AFP modernization. It has been a decade for the so-called AFP modernization. The Sponsor earlier, I heard, was mentioning that still, up to now, we are trying to create an ideal AFP modernization status. In fact, in the previous years, ang gusto na lang ho nating abutin is we have credible minimum AFP capacity to respond to the changing times. So, sa tingin ho kaya ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, itong pagbubukas natin ng—iyong sinasabi ni Pangulong Duterte na cross the Rubicon by talking to other countries when it comes to our, the modernization of our Armed Forces of the Philippines, will be an opportunity na hindi natin nakikita nitong mga nakaraang dekada, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Yes Mme. Speaker. Definitely, it opens up a new opportunity for us. There is a possibility that there will be some equipment that the AFP needs and are available from our new allies that could be more efficient, and more affordable for us. Of course, we do hope that it would be taken into consideration that in the end, we should give priority as well to the end users. One basic concern there, if we get from different sources, is the interoperability of equipment. Mahirap din ho kasi na bawat uri ng gamit natin e mayroong partikular siya na paraan para i-maintain o i-operate. Isa ho iyon sa mga bagay na kung tayo ay mag-a-acquire ng mga kagamitan ay siguruhin natin na hindi mahhirapan iyong end users natin.

Isang example na lang ay ammunition o bala, kung masyadong marami tayong variety ng bala, baka mahirapan tayo sa supply. So, mga ganoong bagay, and in the end, kailangan din nating i-consider ito while opening new channels or sources for our AFP Modernization Program. I guess it will boil down to policy, when it is discussed as to how it will also benefit the end users, for them to perform their mandates.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Matanong ko lang po since you mentioned na end users nga ang dapat titingnan natin. Nitong mga nakaraang panahon ho kasi, mga dekada na, lahat ho o kung hindi man ho marami sa kagamitan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of National Defense, umaasa lang ho tayo doon sa Excess Defense Articles ng America, through the US Excess Defense Articles Program kung saan nga po sinasabi rito na bibigyan ng mga kagamitan ang Armed

Forces of the Philippines pero hindi naman ito lahat libre. May puntong US aid daw pero mayroon ding puntong pagbabayaran. Kaya kahit na ho andito na iyong ating defense policy for the past so many decades ay nakadikit sa kanila, andito pa rin ang Armed Forces of the Philippines trying to modernize its forces. Halos after World War II, ilang dekada na ho iyan, we are still trying to modernize and modernize. So, P25 billion na ho ang nagastos natin sa AFP modernization, but I do not know if we can call our armed forces now being already modernized.

Matanong ko lang ho. Halimbawa, sa ating Air Force ho, ilan ho ba ang mga eroplanong na ibinigay ng Amerika sa atin nitong mga nakaraang panahon na gumagana pa ho hanggang ngayon?

REP. BIAZON. Well, masasabi naman po natin na modernized na tayo, particularly, iyong mga nabanggit po ng ating kasamahan na nasa Air Force na. There was a time nga po, ang sabi ay, "It is all air and no force."

REP. ZARATE. Without force.

REP. BIAZON. This time around, masasabi po natin na mayroon tayong isang maipagmamalaki sa ating Sandatahang Panghimpapawid sapagkat mayroon na rin ho tayong jets na makagagawa ng function of patrolling our skies. Naabot na rin natin kahit papaano ang isang credible minimum defense, at kung maidagdag ko lang po iyong ating bagong acquisition na mga aircraft, acquisition po natin ito mula sa South Korea, so, hindi pa nga ho nanggaling sa Estados Unidos.

REP. ZARATE. Tama po. Bumili po tayo ng dalawang FA...

REP. BIAZON. FA-50

REP. ZARATE. ...mula ho sa South Korea. Ano ho bang aircraft ito—at any rate, mukhang wala ho yatang galing sa Amerika ang nasa ating Air Force ngayon. Iyong mga lumang-luma noon, iyong mga tora-tora, mukhang naubos na.

REP. BIAZON. Para lang po sa accuracy ng information natin, iyong ating sinasabing attack and lead-in fighter, ito po iyong jet na aking nabanggit kanina, mayroon din naman US made in the form of the C-130s. These are transport planes na nagagamit natin not just for military use, but also for civil defense during disasters. Tulad nang nabanggit ho kanina, ang naging problema sa Yolanda ay iyong problema ng pag-transport ng relief goods at personnel at diyan po nagagamit ng Air Force ang C-130 transport planes.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat ho, G. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Tama po, noong mga panahon na mayroon nga ho tayong problemang *coup d'état*, ang naalala ko hong nagpapalipad-lipad ng eroplano noon to dissuade the military rebels ay nagmumula pa ho sa mga tropang Amerikano dahil wala tayong capacity at that time. At any rate, naitanong ko rin ho ito dahil ito ay patungkol uli doon sa naging subject na ng aking interpellation in the past. Ito hong pagbili natin ng high-endurance cutters, itong Hamilton-class cutters, gusto ko lang ho i-hammer uli ito dahil nangako ho ang Armed Forces of the Philippines, ang DND, sa budget deliberation ng 2014 that they will already scrap or cancel the purchase of the third Hamilton-class cutter na ito. Sinasabi nila na maghahanap na tayo ng ibang puwedeng pagbilhan ng ganitong sasakyan na pandagat.

I was surprised really during the budget presentation last month or two weeks ago that this year, bumili ho tayo ng another high-endurance cutter, Hamilton-class, and I know, from my readings, that these are decommissioned coast guard ships in the US at ito nga ay pinangalanan nating BRP Andres Bonifacio sa ngayon. Mas mahal pa siya sa nauna nating binili kung saan gumamit tayo ng Malampaya Funds noon, na sinabi na ng Supreme Court ngayon na illegal at unconstitutional iyong paggamit ng Malampaya Funds doon sa mga expenses katulad ng pagbili ng Hamilton-class cutter. So, as admitted, and I thank the good Secretary for providing us with this information, nagbayad ho tayo ng halos isang bilyon uli, P756,377,524 for this high-endurance cutter, PF-17 for this year.

Ano ho ba talaga ang ating policy sa usapin na sinasabi natin that we will modernize our Philippine Navy, and you had the commitment before, when we deliberated your budget here, that you will cancel the purchase of this third Hamilton-class cutter. Ang term pa na ginamit noon ay magsa-shopping pa kayo sa Europe for even a modern at bagong sasakyang pandagat, hindi ho katulad nito ngang decommissioned Hamilton-class cutter, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BIAZON. Yes. Ito pong nabanggit na pangatlong Hamilton-class cutter na pangangalanan nating BRP Andres Bonifacio, ang mga sasakyang pandagat na ito—these are grants from the US government at ang cost sa ating ay iyong tinatawag na transfer cost, at ito ay kinabibilangan ng cost to cover fuel, husbandry, minor repairs and upgrade, training, integrated logistic support and other requirements.

Ang difference nitong pangatlong Hamilton-class na ito doon sa dalawang nauna, ito ho ay iyong tinatawag nila na "hot transfer," ibig sabihin, nasa kasalukuyang serbisyo pa siya sa Estados Unidos at iyan po iyong inilipat sa atin. Samantalang iyong naunang dalawa ay decommissioned na sila at the time na na-transfer

sa atin. Ito po ay bahagi noong nasasabi nga nating benepisyong nakukuha natin sa alliance natin with the United States at ito rin po iyong gagamitin natin doon sa pagbabantay ng ating territory at exclusive economic zone dahil nga po sa ating vision na makapag-project tayo diyan sa mga areas na iyan para po maisakatuparan din naman natin ang economic activity natin sa mga lugar na iyon.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po, G. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Then again, matanong ko lang po. Tama na ho iyong naturan ninyo, iyong sinabi ninyo na itong pangatlong Hamilton-class cutter ay still in use in the US, hindi pa siya decommissioned, pero sa mga pagbabasa ko po, lahat naman itong mga Hamilton-class cutters ay talagang papalitan na ng National Security cutter type ng United States. Even on that score, kahit sabihin na natin na compared to the two previous Hamilton-class cutters na binili natin using the Malampaya Funds, ano ho ang nangyari doon sa commitment ng Department of National Defense na i-kansela na ho itong pagbili or pag-acquire nitong third Hamilton-class cutter? Para hong sinasabi pa ninyo na iyong mga statement ninyo rito during our budget deliberation ay walang halaga at ito ay puwede ninyong bawiin kung kailan gusto ng Department of National Defense? It was a commitment made during the plenary that the acquisition of a third Hamilton-class cutter will be canceled, or was it already canceled at that time, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker. To my understanding, indeed, the AFP has not purchased or did not proceed with the purchase of the Hamilton-class using the Malampaya Funds. Of course, we know that there is a controversy regarding those funds. So, this third cutter that will be christened BRP Andres Bonifacio, it is actually charged against the AFP Modernization Fund through the GAA.

REP. ZARATE. Again, thank you, but it still did not answer the question. It begs the question as to why, despite the commitment of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the DND to cancel it, at sinasabi nga ho nilang we will look for some other sources using the same funds, na mas maganda ho ang puwedeng mabili—may binanggit ho noong panahon na iyon ng debate sa budget na with the same amount na gagamitin natin ay mas modern iyong puwede nating mabiling sasakyang pandagat. So, ang tanong ko ho ngayon, ano ho ang dahilan that the same commitment made here, in the same hall, by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Navy, ito ay bigla ho nilang binawi? Ano ho ang nangyari? Puwedeng paki-explain ho because I can again summon, we can retrieve the transcript of the deliberations here on that budget hearing where there was a categorical commitment

made by the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine Navy, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. BIAZON. It was the understanding, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, that the commitment was not to acquire the vessels using Malampaya Funds. With regard to the question this was considered instead of getting a more modern vessel, being the end user, the Navy determined that a state-of-the-art current vessel may not be necessarily what we need because the operational requirements do not call for it. In fact, there are four primary considerations for the selection of the Hamilton class:

1. Hamilton class ships are comparatively newer, more capable and are better at seakeeping than the three major ship classes of the Philippine Navy;
2. The Hamilton class ships were transferred to the Philippines at a very low price;
3. The Hamilton class ships have the basic modern technology that the Philippines needs to train its personnel, and have the size to install current and future weapons and sensors to keep them up-to-date for another decade; and
4. Hamilton class ships are readily available and can be put to sea in a shorter span of time than most years to the frigates in the market.

In other words, kung minsan po, ang konsiderasyon natin ay iyong gagamit. Para ho bang kung kukuha tayo ng isang napaka-modernong kagamitan pero ang skill level o iyong operational adaptation sa ating sitwasyon ay hindi naman tugma, nababale-wala o nasasayang din po iyong paggastos.

Sa pag-aaral or pag-assess ng Philippine Navy, batay sa ating kakayahan at saka sa ating kinakailangan, nakita naman at nagtutugma naman itong mga Hamilton class ships sa operational requirements ng Philippine Navy.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Iyon din po ang, actually, na-point out natin noong mga nakaraan at ang sabi pa po ninyo, very low price. Sa katunayan po, noong we acquired what is now BRP Ramon Alcaraz, we paid P688,078,000,635 para ho dalhin iyong barkong ito dito sa Pilipinas pero after that, mayroon pa hong halos isang bilyon uli na budget na kinuha sa Malampaya Funds para ho i-refurbish ito, ayusin ito, et cetera. In fact, noong panahon na iyan, kung akin pong maaalala, ang sagot po sa akin ng Kagawaran, ng Philippine Navy, during the budget deliberation ay kailangan pa nilang lagyan uli ng makabagong radar and armament ang barkong ito dahil mukhang binaklas ng Amerika iyong kanyang radar and armament kaya kailangang lagyan uli siya ng bago kaya gumastos ulit tayo.

Ito na lang po ang tanong ko, dahil you mentioned that this Hamilton class—although this type of ships

are now being replaced na rin doon sa United States at saka sa pagkakaalam ko ho, halos ang gumagamit na lang nito ay tayo at Bangladesh—the Gentleman mentioned that P756,377,524 is a very low price. My question now is, if we have this kind of amount, ano ho ang kaya nating bilhin sa ibang bansa na sasakyang pandagat na puwedeng gamitin ng Philippine Navy? Mayroon ho ba tayong ma-acquire na mas modern at mas bago, hindi iyong 1960s model pa ho? During the budget deliberation before ay may sinagot ho ang Philippine Navy dito.

REP. BIAZON. Ang Armed Forces naman po, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, ay patuloy na naghahanap ng iba't-ibang mga sources. Sa katunayan, may nasa pipeline ngayon na mga frigates galing naman sa Korea. So, ang Armed Forces naman at ang Defense establishment ay tumitingin ng ibang options aside from the United States. Siguro, isa lang na masasabi natin dito sa mga acquisitions noong nakaraan—sa assessment ng Philippine Navy, ito iyong tutugma doon sa operational requirements nila. Halimbawa, kung sila ay ating ipadadala sa lugar tulad ng West Philippine Sea, iyong size nito, iyong capability nito, ito ang tumutugma sa pangangailangan nila. Doon naman sa mga nakalinya na mga proyekto, mayroon din mas makabagong naval vessels na nasa shopping list kung tawagin natin, sa shopping list ng Philippine Navy.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Siguro po I will just end there. Maalala ko noong 2014, uulitin ko lang dito, and probably the transcripts of the deliberations we had in 2014 will bear me out, sinabi ng DND at ng Philippine Navy na hindi na ho sila bibili using the Malampaya Funds. Clearly, they mentioned that they already cancelled the acquisition of the third Hamilton-class cutter because they already have a shopping list. They said—at ito rin iyong mine-mention nila, that Korean frigate was already being mentioned—sabi nila “no, Korean made, mas moderno ito, mas makabago at ang operationability nito, pasok sa pangangailangan ng Philippine Navy.”

Kaya po tinatanong ko, what happened in between? Bakit nagbago iyong desisyon ng Armed Forces of the Philippines on this, especially the Philippine Navy. Iyan ho ay kailangang sagutin ng malinaw ng ating pamunuan ng Armed Forces of the Philippines, especially the Philippine Navy, dahil malinaw ho iyong sinabi nila noon na it was already cancelled, although I understand na kabahagi pa rin ito ng US Excess Defense Articles Program. Ganoon na lang. As I pointed out earlier, ang AFP modernization sa kalakhan ay nakatali pa rin doon sa kung ano ang gusto ng America sa atin.

No wonder, the President now is saying that, “probably, it is time to cross the Rubicon,” especially

sa usaping we want to modernize the Armed Forces of the Philippines. So, are we expecting that we will again have another Hamilton-class cutter in next year’s budget deliberation? Will we be debating again on this, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. At this time, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the AFP is not expecting another Hamilton-class cutter. As a comparison, I was informed by the Flag Officer in Command that a new vessel with the same capability of the Hamilton-class cutter would cost about P8 billion as compared to what we have spent for this latest vessel which is about P756 million. So, there is a great disparity between getting a new state-of-the-art naval vessel with the same capability, and getting these ships that we have acquired through the Excess Defense Articles Program.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Tama po kayo siguro na mas mahal iyong bago. Pero para rin bumibili ka ng sasakyan niyan, at mas mabuti ng bumili ka ng brand new dahil wala kang maintenance sa loob ng limang taon, kasya bumili ka ng—1960’s pa nga iyong dalawa, for example, na-decommission na nga ng Amerika, pero pinagbili sa atin, ano, kaya tinawag kong junk na iyon, pagkatapos nilang i-decommission e pinagbili sa atin ng halos P2 billion pa rin, ano. So, ganoon lang ho ang usapin diyan. Kahit na iyong sinasabi nating minimum credible defense posture, if we will be content with mga ganitong junk, then, talagang hindi ho natin maaabot iyong sinasabing modernization. At any rate, I will limit it to that.

I will go to another point, Mme. Speaker. Though naitanong na rin ito ng ating mga kasamahan kanina, gusto ko lang ho balikan ulit iyong usapin on our decision to demobilize the CAFGUs. Doon po sa pinaabot na report sa atin ni Secretary Lorenzana, sinabi dito na 62,348 pa rin ang ating CAFGUs sa buong kapuluan. Ang actual strength nito is 54,852 at mayroong in training na 4,475, for appointment ay 1,005, and itong appointed, may in processing na 7,496—sa kabuuan, 62,348. Tiningnan ko po kung saan nga ito naka-deploy at nakita ko nga na halos 56 percent ng mga CAFGUs na ito ay nasa Mindanao. Andoon po sa amin, sa Southern Mindanao, sa Caraga at sa Zamboanga Peninsula.

I raised this point again, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, dahil ho nitong nakaraan, narinig naman natin ang madiin na statement ni Pangulong Duterte na he has ordered, not only us but the military, to take full control of the paramilitary groups. He even particularly mentioned the Bagani paramilitary group.

I know that the Armed Forces will always deny this, dahil talagang dine-deny naman ito. This Bagani-Magahat group is responsible, if I may put it on record

again, for the cold-blooded murder of a school official in Lianga, Surigao del Sur, and two leaders ng mga Lumad. Then Gov. Johnny Pimentel at that time, who is now our colleague here, Cong. Johnny Pimentel, said that the Bagani-Magahat group is a creation of the military. In fact, it is now becoming a monster in Surigao del Sur. But as I was reading this report submitted to me, as of this date, the Philippine Army has not received any report of the displacement of Lumads in Surigao caused by any paramilitary troops or civilian active auxiliaries. Hanggang ngayon po ba ay nasa denial mode pa rin ang ating mga Armed Forces of the Philippines sa usapin nitong paramilitary groups kagaya ng Bagani-Magahat, despite the issuance of warrants of arrest against the leaders of this group? In fact, mayroon pang patong sa ulo o bounty for the arrest of the leaders of the Bagani-Magahat group pero wala pa rin nangyayari, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, the Bagani group which is considered as a paramilitary force, does not fall under the sanction of the Armed Forces unlike the CAFGU Active Auxiliary or the Special CAFGU Active Auxiliary, both of which are even being issued serial numbers. The Bagani group being referred to is a paramilitary force, and the AFP and even the PNP are conducting inquiries into the activities of atrocities by the said group and other paramilitary groups.

Just to make a distinction, hindi po sila sakop ng command authority ng Armed Forces of the Philippines, and that is why even the President himself gave a direct order to address the problem of that Bagani group. Para lang po malaman natin na hindi naman sila sakop ng awtoridad o ng direct command authority ng Armed Forces, ang Armed Forces ay handa pong kumilos sa mga ganitong grupo, ayon na rin sa pag-uutos ng ating Pangulo.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Alam ninyo po, talagang ganon e, dine-deny but it has already been established na bago po nangyari ang madugong pagpaslang na iyan na nasa visual screen presentation natin, nandoon rin po ang Armed Forces of the Philippines at parang nanonood lang. Hindi man sila sakop pero parang ang nangyari rito, hinahayaan ang grupong ito na mag-commit ng karumal-dumal na mga krimen, grave human rights violations against hapless civilians, sa mga mamamayan, lalong-lalo na ang mga Lumad, mga indigenous peoples, na ang gusto lang naman nila ay magkaroon sila ng eskuwelahan para makapag-aral sila pero ito pa ho ang nangyari.

Now, in line with the clear directive of the President to the Armed Forces of the Philippines to take full control of these paramilitary forces, may I now inquire, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ano na po ang ginagawa ng Armed Forces of the Philippines on this?

REP. BIAZON. Nabigyan lang po ako ng impormasyon na iyong ating tinutukoy na partikular na insidente ay nagkaroon na nang imbestigasyon at may natukoy po na ilang mga military personnel na siyang nabigyan din ng karampatang aksyon. The platoon leader was admonished and the company commander was reprimanded for failure to provide clear guidance and to exercise supervision over the conduct of the operation. The battalion executive officer was relieved, being the officer-in-charge during the incident, for failure to supervise the conduct of the operation.

Tulad po ng nasabi kanina, the Armed Forces po will not tolerate atrocities. As long as we in the civilian authority exercise as well our oversight function over them, we can be sure that they will respond to our calls for upholding the rights of our citizens in the countryside. Ako rin naman po ay nakikiisa sa kasamahan ko na nais nating makita na walang ganoong klaseng karahasan ang mangyari sa ating mga kababayan. Sa kasalukuyan, kung kumilos naman po ang Armed Forces sa partikular na insidenteng ito, makikisama po tayo na siguruhin na maiwasan ang pag-uulit niyan at kung may mangyari man ay gagamitin natin ang kapangyarihan natin para po managot ang dapat managot.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat po doon sa naturan ninyong commitment. Sinabi ninyo po na iyong mga sundalong dapat ay mayroong responsibilidad doon ay they were admonished, they were reprimanded, pero alam din po ninyo na hindi ho katanggap-tanggap iyan doon sa mga Lumad at mga mamamayan, na more than a year na ho sila andoon sa evacuation center dahil ho sa takot nila sa mga taong ito, na alam naman nila na kasa-kasama— at nakikita nila dahil ho mga relatives din nila ang mga ito—na kasa-kasama ho ng mga sundalo in the conduct of their operations. Hindi ho nila maintindihan, nandito ho ang ating kasamahan na si Governor Pimentel, na wala hong magawa ang military para pigilin ang mga ito na nasa kanilang poder.

Probably, they are not in the roster of the regular CAFGUs, but ito hong Bagani-Magahat group ay nakikita ng mga civilians, ng mga bakwit na, before the incident, ay kasa-kasama ito ng mga regular na tropa ng sundalo, at kung sasabihin natin na, anyway, after that incident we investigated, we admonished them, we reprimanded the soldiers, parang sinampal ho uli natin sila, parang diniinan ho natin iyong sugat na ginawa ng insidenteng iyon.

Siguro ang kailangan ho natin ngayon, ano ba ang magagawa, sabi nga ni Gov. Johnny Pimentel, with the monster created by the military, how can the military now stop this monster? Mga concrete actions ang gusto o nating marinig, not just to admonish or reprimand an ordinary soldier.

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, as I have been told, the CAFGU now has been withdrawn from doing frontline operations in order to avoid a situation where they function directly as frontliners. The President has stated his orders or given his instructions and the AFP is duty-bound to obey the directions of the President.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Importante ho na mayroong clear and decisive move na mangyayari sa Armed Forces of the Philippines. Sa aming pagtatala, pag-aaral, there are at least 25 paramilitary organizations still existing in the country, contrary to the statement of the Department na all paramilitary forces had already been dissolved by virtue of Executive Order No. 275, dated July 15, 1987, issued during the incumbency of Pres. Corazon Aquino. Papel lang ho ito pero ang realidad ho, kahit sa ngayon, inaamin ninyo na mayroon pang paramilitary forces na gumagala-gala, lalong-lalo na sa Mindanao. Binabalik-balikan ko ho ito dahil every budget deliberation ay may mga pangyayaring ganito. For example, during the 2014 budget deliberations, the concrete case na ni-raise ko tungkol diyan noon ay ang kaso naman noong pag-masaker sa pamilyang Capion doon ho sa Tampakan, South Cotabato. Ang involved din dito, mayroong mga regular troops at mayroon mga CAFGUs or paramilitary groups. Pauli-ulit po ito na, parang bangungot na pabalik-balik, kaya ngayon ay hindi puwedeng sabihin ng ating Sandatahang Lakas Ng Pilipinas na, anyway, we already admonished and reprimanded our troops. Isang kongkretong aksyon ang hinihingi natin dito. By the way, puwede ko ho ba malaman kung ano na ang naging update doon sa na-mention ko na Capion massacre? Before, the Armed Forces of the Philippines said that there is an ongoing court martial proceedings doon ho sa involved na mga sundalo. Ano na ho ang mga nangyari dito?

REP. BIAZON. I have been informed, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, that the PNP has taken over. The Philippine National Police took over to investigate the incident and determine the persons who would be liable under the law. We have confidence that the PNP will be able to do its job in gathering the facts and pointing us in the right direction towards prosecuting those who are responsible.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Yes, indeed, a case is now lodged against some suspects, but what I am trying to know now is, ang sinabi ng Armed Forces of the Philippines that they subjected to court martial proceedings ang mga involved na sundalo doon sa Capion massacre, kung ano na ho ang nangyari dito. In fact, they said that there was an ongoing proceeding?

REP. BIAZON. The Armed Forces team here in Plenary is looking at the data, although in the initial information that they shared, the subject personnel are undergoing the process for court martial. They are just verifying the information, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Anyway, I will go to another point since they are still verifying the status of that court martial proceedings.

As already mentioned by my colleagues earlier, the ongoing peace negotiation between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front is in a very crucial stage. Nasa isang pambihirang pagkakataon tayo ngayon. Halos sa loob po ng 18 taon, walang magandang ibinunga after both parties signed the Comprehensive Agreement for the Respect of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law or CARHRIHL in 1988, hindi na umusad ang pag-uusap pangkapayapaan at wala nang nalagdaang kasunduan.

Now, under the current administration, in fact even before President Duterte was sworn into office, he already sent emissaries to Oslo, Norway to meet with the panel of the National Democratic Front that resulted to the opening of the formal talks last August 22-27. Sa kasalukuyan nga, kabahagi noong pag-uusap na iyan ay mayroong mga unilateral declarations of ceasefire, indefinite ceasefire. Ang nakakabahala lang po sa akin, habang nagkakaroon ng ganitong mga usapin ay mayroon mga nauulat ho na mga apparent violations of the ceasefire by the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

For example, napaabot ho sa opisina namin iyong isang kaso ng paghuli ng isang certain Jeffrey de los Reyes doon sa Mindoro na hinuli noong September 19 habang nandito itong ceasefire na pinag-uusapan natin. Mayroon din hong nauulat na doon naman sa Cebu, hinuli iyong isang teacher ng mga Lumad, si Amelia Pond, na isang 64-year old member ng Rural Missionaries of the Philippines. Hinuli siya pero iyong ipinakita namang warrant, ang nakalagay doon ay hindi pangalan niya. Pangatlo, mayroon ding isang hinuling 73-year old na former guerilla who was arrested in Kalinga Province last September 16.

So, ito ho ay mga instances ng mga paghuli despite the fact that there is an ongoing peace negotiation at mayroong ceasefire. Ang tanong ho natin, gaano ho ba kaseryoso ang Department at ang Armed Forces of the Philippines dito ho sa ating usaping pangkapayapaan, given that there are these cases that I had already mentioned, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. As mentioned earlier, the Armed Forces is but an obedient entity under the direction of the President, and since it is the President's policy direction to open up and proceed with the peace talks in all fronts, the AFP is duty-bound to follow that direction of the President. If there are specific incidents or instances, like what the Gentleman cited, rest assured that it is not the direction of the Armed Forces. These might be isolated incidents separate from the direction of the institution, and the institution is committed to look into these reports to determine liabilities by its members.

The Armed Forces and the Defense establishment do not want to jeopardize the peace talks, the peace initiatives of the President and so, they will show their sincerity by acting on reports of these incidents and hold their people accountable.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Salamat po doon sa mga sinabi ninyo. I know that both panels are still discussing the modalities and probable protocols noong indefinite ceasefire pero sana ho maiwasan ang mga ganitong insidente. In fact, even the President admitted, I think last night he mentioned that actually there are rumblings in the Armed Forces of the Philippines because of the ongoing peace talks. I hope that the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Department of National Defense can put a check sa mga so-called rumblings dahil dito ho sa usaping pangkapayapaan naman, sa unang pagkakataon ay nakita natin na talagang seryoso rin ang both panels to come up with a substantive agreement sa remaining agenda ng peace negotiation as laid down in the 1992 Hague Joint Declaration. So, we will leave it at that.

Sa panghuli na lang po, doon ho sa usapin ng parang pag-realign ho ninyo—there were COA findings in Audit Report 2015, at isa ho sa notable findings doon was that there is a QRF in the aggregate amount of P128,626,827 which was utilized for fund transfer for repairs and reconstruction of the DND and bureau facilities which are not in accordance with the purposes of the QRF. So, paano ho ito, ano ho, hindi ho ito ang purpose ng QRF. Bakit ho ang pera na ito ay ginamit doon ho sa repairs and reconstruction ng DND facilities, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, while our colleagues from the AFP and the DND are gathering information on that specific question, let me just share information regarding a point that you, the distinguished Gentleman, raised earlier regarding the AFP personnel who was suppose to undergo general court martial. Let me just share that on July 5, 2013, after their arraignment, the general court martial proceeded and trial began on August 2, 2013. So, there was action taken by the AFP.

With regard to the peace process, the AFP is solidly behind the initiatives of the peace process and in fact, they are doing their best to restrain themselves in terms of operations. So as of the moment, there are no major skirmishes or clashes involving the AFP and other forces.

With regard to the QRF, this Representation is just awaiting the response of the concerned staff.

I move for a minute suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is suspended.

It was 3:07 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:10 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is resumed.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Distinguished colleague, just to give a bit of a background, the expense in question is with regard to repairs done in facilities that were destroyed by a storm or a disaster, and the DND utilized the QRF to repair the said facilities. It was at this point that the Commission on Audit took note of the expenditure, saying that the QRF should not have been used to repair these particular facilities because to the COA's mind, the QRF should only be utilized for civilian communities. But it is the position of the Defense Department that communities would also include those within military facilities or properties which, in this case, was the subject of the repairs. At this moment, there is no disallowance of the expenditure, and the Defense Department is simply explaining to the COA the nature of the expenditure and justifying it accordingly.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Just last one point on that QRF. In the same COA Finding No. 11, it made mention that there were items procured out of the QRF that were priced higher or excessive by at least P1,967,000 that are disadvantageous and likewise, it rendered unreasonable the procurements from the QRF. So, these procurements pertain to medicines, medical supplies and bottled water that are allegedly costlier. Were these already addressed by the Department, or what is the explanation for this?

REP. BIAZON. Distinguished colleague, the Department of National Defense is taking note and considering the observations of the Commission on Audit, and is currently doing its inquiry with the end in view of determining if, indeed, there was any anomaly in the transaction. Right now, it is in the process of reviewing the case, reviewing the observation of the COA. Rest assured that the Defense establishment is giving serious thought on what the COA has cited and is now doing its best to clarify those observations.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Just one last point kasi persistent itong mga lumulutang and in fact, even jokingly, the President is saying something about this issue. Just for the record, is there an attempt to oust the current administration via a *coup d'etat* as far as the Armed Forces of the Philippines is concerned? Earlier in the week, Secretary Andanar even mentioned that, from reliable sources, some US-based personalities are hatching that type of action, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BIAZON. The military has always been seen as a relevant factor in terms of regime change but as we see it right now, the Armed Forces of the Philippines is on a high state of professionalism. They are respectful of duly-elected authority. They have been standing by the Constitution as we have seen in the recent past, and as long as they are focused on the mandate given to them, which is preserving and protecting the territorial integrity and maintaining peace and order in our country. We believe that they will not interfere in the democratic institutions that our country has. We have seen the President engage our soldiers and we think that this is one way of ensuring that there is harmony between the Armed Forces and the civilian leadership of this country. So, we can rest well that the AFP is behaved.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. So, we are saying that military adventurism, as we had seen in the past, is no longer in the horizon now.

REP. BIAZON. We do not see it happening and as we have seen recently, those who had, in their mindset, military adventurism, have already taken the path that the distinguished Gentleman and I have taken, and that is, to enter Congress through the House and the Senate.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. That would be all.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, before we recognize the next to interpellate, may we acknowledge the presence of some guests in the gallery: the guests of the Hon. Florida “Rida” P. Robes from the Lone District of San Jose del Monte City, Bulacan—the PREX/ El Shaddai, BEC/BA from the Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Please rise to be recognized. (*Applause*) Welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. GULLAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of KABATAAN Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Elago is recognized for her interpellation.

REP. ELAGO. Good day, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

My first set of questions pertains to the Major Final Outputs of the DND and its attached agencies. First question: The Philippine Army targets to increase the number of tactical battalions that it maintains from 188 in 2016, to 190. Now, how many additional personnel will this entail? How much does the Army need for the said increase in the number of tactical battalions, and why do we need the number of tactical battalions to be increased for next year?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BIAZON. May I ask for a minute suspension of the session, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is suspended.

It was 3:18 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:22 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The session is resumed.

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, for clarification, while indeed there will be an increase of battalions from 188 to 190, we would like to inform the Body that the additional two battalions are

actually just installation battalions. They are not tactical battalions, meaning to say, these are battalions meant to just maintain bases and installations of the Philippine Army and it is internal, basically a reorganization of troops which will comprise these installation battalions. They will not be assigned to the frontlines as tactical battalions.

In the meantime, though, the Philippine Army has also proposed that they will create an engineering brigade, which would require an amount of P559 million for 1,100 personnel, and these units, these engineering brigades will be used to implement the PAMANA projects of the government.

REP. ELAGO. I thank the Gentleman for that clarification, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Now, the Philippine Air Force, meanwhile, targets to increase its number of aircraft from 146 in 2016 to 154 in 2017. Now, what types of new aircraft will the Air Force be procuring? What is the cost of new aircraft and where will the Air Force use the said aircraft? Are we procuring new aircraft? Ito ba ay mga bagong-bagong aircraft, o ito na naman ba ay mga refurbished na mga military aircraft na formally used in conflict with other countries, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, iyon ating bagong acquire po na eroplano ng Philippine Air Force ay mga brand new, the model is FA-50, at ito po ay nagmula sa South Korea. Nagbibilang ito ng 12 units at mayroon na pong unang dalawa na naideliver sa atin at mayroon pa hong parating na 10. Mayroon din po isa pang aircraft na isa pong unmanned aerial system. Ito po, sa layman's language, siguro ay drone kung tawagin. Mayroon din donated po sa atin na D412 na mga eroplano at tatlo po ang bilang ng mga iyon. So, ang ating Philippine Air Force, sinisikap po nila na ma-regain ang kanilang kakayahan para po maipagtanggol ang ating bansa.

REP. ELAGO. Indeed, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, kakabisita ko lang din po sa ating museo ng Air Force sa may Villamor Airbase at tunay nga na malaki pa ang kailangan nating habulin hinggil sa kakayahan natin sa depensang panghimpapawid.

Ngayon, hinggil naman po sa General Headquarters natin. The report in the committee deliberations showed that our current capacity for detection and identification of intrusions in the West Philippine Sea is only at 18 percent of our maritime domain as of 2015. Now, the 2017 target is for this coverage to increase from 18 percent to 40 percent of our maritime domain. Is this a realistic target distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, and how will the AFP reach this target?

REP. BIAZON. To its assessment, it is a realistic target and this is the reason behind the direction of

the Philippine Navy to acquire vessels, including the previously discussed BRP Andres Bonifacio and, of course, the frigates that were also mentioned earlier. This will greatly enhance the capability of the Philippine Navy to cover its area of responsibility, particularly the West Philippine Sea. Let us bear in mind that we also have another area that we should be projecting ourselves to now in the eastern side of the Philippines, the Benham Rise, but of course, the immediate concern now is the West Philippine Sea.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, tayo po ay talagang concerned dito sa Major Final Outputs na ito dahil, mula na rin sa report na binigay ng ating good Secretary Lorenzana sa Representasyon na ito, higit sa P100 billion na ang naibigay natin, ang nailaan natin sa AFP Modernization Program at nananatili na relatibong mahina ang ating defense system, barely nakaka-achieve na ito doon sa ating minimum. Napakarami pang kailangang gawin.

Hinggil sa aking susunod na tanong, ito ay may kinalaman din sa ating Quick Response Fund na naunang nasimulan na talakayin ng ating previous interpellator. In the 2017 Budget under the SPF or Special Purpose Funds, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund, Special Provision No. 2, there is P500 million allotted for the DND Office of Civil Defense, and P750 million under the DND-AFP as Quick Response Fund or the QRF. Now, the QRF is defined as a standby fund in order to assist in the situation and the living conditions of people in communities or areas stricken by calamities, epidemics, crises and catastrophes, and thus, such amount is allocated. Now, how can we be assured that these hundreds of millions of allocations for the DND's QRF in 2017 will be used as intended, and no similar controversy katulad ng overpricing or excessive na paggastos dahil, kung hindi naman ito gagastusin, ay hindi na muling mangyayari sa susunod na taon, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, tulad po ng kaninang napag-usapan o discussion, kinikilala ng AFP at DND ang obserbasyon ng Commission on Audit at magsisilbi iyang isang aral para po sa masusing paggastos sa tamang paraan ng pondo ng QRF. Kaya po sa darating na taon ay sisikapin po nila na matugunan iyong obserbasyon ng COA at ganoon din sa paggastos ng pondong ito upang maging sang-ayon sila sa mga probisyon ng batas na umiiral, whether it be the Procurement Law or any other law that would cover such expenses. Kaya nga po ang isang ginawa rin dito sa pagkakataong ito, para po iyong pangangailangan ay tutugma doon sa pondong available, ginawan ng proposal na ang QRF ay mailagay doon sa pondo ng NDRRM instead of manatili doon sa OCD para po

naman iyong intensiyon na ang QRF ay magamit sa mga pangangailangan sa panahon ng sakuna ay covered ng tamang batas.

REP. ELAGO. I thank the Gentleman for that assurance, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. My next batch of questions pertain to the move to revive the mandatory nature of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps or the ROTC, which the AFP leadership has been very vocal about recently. Now, what is the AFP Reserve Command's rationale behind supporting such move, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Well, maunawaan po natin ang pagsuporta ng AFP Reserve Command sa ganoong klaseng pagkilos dahil, unang-una, ang kalidad ng papasok sa ating reserve force ay masasabi nating aangat kung mayroong formal training ang citizens. Lalawak din ang mass base ng pagkukunan natin ng reserve force kung saka-sakaling kailanganin. Ito naman po ay mananatili pa rin na responsibilidad natin sa Kongreso kung ipapasa o hindi dahil sa pagpasa natin ng panukalang batas na iyan, tayo rin ang magdidikta kung anong direksyon ang susundin ng Armed Forces. Samantalang sila ay nagsasabing pabor sa idea, sa panukala, mananatili pa rin sa atin sa Kongreso kung ipapasa natin iyan o hindi.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, maaari po bang malaman ng Representasyong ito ang rationale, ang dahilan kung bakit tinutulak din ito ng AFP, bukod doon sa pagpapalawig nga ng ROTC ng ating reserve force sa bansa. Iyon lang po ba ang dahilan, ang pinakalayunin ng pagkakaroon ng mandatory ROTC?

REP. BIAZON. Siguro po, kung naririnig natin iyong iba pang mga argument para doon, tulad ng paglawak ng disiplina sa ating mga mamamayan, ako mismo ay produkto ng Citizens' Army Training at masasabi kong may benipisyo pagdating po sa disiplina. Pagdating po ng panahon ng pangangailangan ng ating bansa, at hindi lang naman ito sa conflict o sa giyera pero kahit na po sa panahon ng disaster, iba po talaga ang responde ng mamamayan na sumailalim sa isang citizens' military training dahil iyan po ay nabibigyan sila ng konsepto ng pagsunod sa isang istruktura, organization and, of course, iyong sinasabi nga nating patriotic service to the country.

REP. ELAGO. Sinusuportahan natin, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang layunin na tayo ay magpatimo ng nasyonalismo, ng disiplina, ng kahandaan sa hanay ng ating mga kabataan, ng ating mga mamamayan, bagamat nais din po nating sabihin na hindi lang naman ang pag-i-institute muli ng isang

compulsory, mandatory ROTC sa ating mga paaralan ang sagot dito because, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, no other school program holds a record as violent as the ROTC. Hazing in the ROTC has again figured in a viral video which came out last June, showing a cadet from a university in Mindanao, University of Mindanao in Tagum in particular, being hit hard repeatedly on his chest and stomach. Recently, this September 2016, former cadets of the ROTC of the Benguet State University, coming from the lower ranks, reported rights' violations by first class officers of the main campus unit. Violations reported included sexual and physical abuses of both male and female cadets and, according to the reports of the students, female cadets were forced to stay at the barracks for consecutive nights. On some cases, lower ranking cadets were given P5, limang piso, para bumili ng isang bote ng beer at mga meryenda para sa kanilang mga opisyal. Nawa ay makatulong namin, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang AFP, ang DND at ang mga attached agencies nito hinggil sa pag-iimbestiga sa mga reports na ito at nawa ay itigil na natin ang kulturang ito. Imbes na makapagpatimo ng kultura ng discipline sa ating mga kababayan, sa ating mga kabataan sa loob ng mga eskuwelahan, ang naituturo nito ay subculture ng fear and even corruption sa hanay ng ating mga kabataan.

Further, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, with all due respect, again, we do not subscribe to this view of the AFP on the revival of the mandatory ROTC. First of all, if the AFP has trouble in its recruitment process, at katulad po ng sinabi ng ating distinguished Sponsor ay nais nating palawigin ang balon ng ating mga reservists, it is not the task of our civilian academic institutions to fill that gap and use the campuses for military training. For some campuses, the provision of a barracks is inconsistent with Rules 22 and 24 of the International Humanitarian Law and other treaties which restrict the use of schools for military purposes. Muli, tinatawagan, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang Kapulungan na ito at ang ating distinguished Sponsor na suportahan ang move para mapa-imbestigahan ang mga reports na ito hinggil sa ating mga ROTC units.

Ngayon, hinggil naman doon sa order ng ating Presidente sa pagkokontrol sa mga militias, and from the previous interpellators, sinabi nila rin ito, pero sinabi ng ating Presidente na, and I quote: "I am now ordering the army to take full control of the Bagani Command and the — there is another group, I forgot the name, so many." Ayan, sinabi po niya iyan, "so many." Can we emphasize those words—"So many"—napakarami po. Kaya we really have high hopes for the assurance given earlier by the AFP, the DND and the other attached agencies that as regards the President's order, we will really comply with stopping, taking full control of the Bagani Command and the so many paramilitary

groups operating in our country. Napakarami na pong buhay ang naatake—hindi lamang buhay kung hindi kinabukasan, lalong-lalo na noong ating mga batang Lumad, ng mga kabataan na nais mag-aral ngunit hindi makapagpatuloy ng pag-aaral dahil po sa presence ng mga paramilitary organizations na ito sa kani-kanilang mga lugar.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, would the Sponsor like to comment on that concern.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker. Immediately after the President stated that directive or order, the AFP has sent out its own directive to account for all of its personnel, all of the CAFGUs, and gave specific instructions to limit their area of operation and function. With regard to the Bagani group, the AFP, following the instructions of the President, is poised and ready to take action should there be another instance of atrocities to be committed by the said group.

REP. ELAGO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Now, for my next concern, the 2017 budget allots a total of P1.6 billion for confidential funds or funds for surveillance activities in civilian departments and agencies, and a total of P2 billion for intelligence expenses or funds for intelligence information-gathering activities of uniformed personnel and intelligence practitioners that have direct impact on national security.

These funds are scattered in the MOOE of various national government agencies. Iyan po ay lumaki—mula noong huling taon, ito ay nasa P250 million; ngayon ay nasa P1.25 billion na. So, iyan ay lumobo ng higit 400 percent para sa taong ito.

Now, for my questions about these Confidential Funds, what warrants the 127-percent increase in the budget for Confidential Expenses and 135-percent increase in the budget for Intelligence Expenses? Can the distinguished Sponsor share on the floor the cost parameters used to estimate these funds?

REP. BIAZON. As we take a look, Mme. Speaker, at the comparative table between 2016 and 2017, for the DND Office of the Secretary, it basically remained the same: Confidential Funds at P23 million; Intelligence Funds at P10 million; and for the Philippine Air Force, Philippine Navy, there is an increase for the major services and the GHQ. Now, these increases in the Intelligence and Confidential Funds are in anticipation of the progress of various operations of the AFP. This is also in line with the administration's initiatives in the peace talks with various groups. The Army hierarchy stepped up its intelligence efforts on counter-terrorism, counter-intelligence operations and counter-cyber operations. That is why the bulk of it is with the Army and the

Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces. It will also be used in intelligence and information gathering with regard to the West Philippine Sea issue. Transnational crimes are part of the concerns because it is also considered as a threat to national security.

Cyber operations shall be divided into cyber offensive and cyber defensive. Cyber defensive operations shall focus on the protection against hacking, the use of cyberspace in the spread of propaganda, attack of websites and stealing of information, military and trade secrets; and cyber offensive operations shall be used to identify and counter cyber criminals or terrorists conducting offensive operations against military and government installations, taking advantage of the interdependence of critical infrastructure used by the country.

So, as gathered from the response of the AFP and the DND, it covers a wide range of national security concerns from the physical threats that we have to threats from cyberspace. That is why there was a felt need to augment or to increase the funds of the security establishment.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, how can the Secretary of the Department of National Defense assure Congress that these funds, especially the amounts allotted directly to the DND, dahil nakakalat nga po ito sa iba't ibang ahensiya, are used prudently and not for nefarious activities?

REP. BIAZON. Well, for one, Mme. Speaker, the AFP is living by its Major Final Outputs, and those are one of the measures that we can use if, indeed, the these Confidential and Intelligence Funds are being used in the proper manner according to its objectives. Of course, the regular requirements, accounting procedures in reporting the use of these funds will be adhered to by the Defense establishment and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, can you give us a general report on how the DND spent its Confidential and Intelligence Funds in the past year? Mme. Speaker, the distinguished Sponsor, can just give it after my interpellation.

REP. BIAZON. At this moment, Your Honor, distinguished colleague, there is a reservation as regards sharing in this venue the actual activities and outputs of the expenditures on the Confidential and Intelligence Funds, precisely, because of the confidential nature. Rest assured that the COA has a special audit unit which goes over these Intelligence Funds and Confidential Funds to ensure that they are used within the parameters of legal expenditures.

REP. ELAGO. Then, we will just enjoy the COA and the assurance given by the DND earlier and, you know, prudently, a study and review on how these funds, especially, given the substantial amounts, are being used to finance different project, programs and activities.

Now, for my last concern. In the annual report of the AFP General Headquarters for 2015, it is reported that 114 BTA or Bayanihan Team Activities were completed out of 247 programs, and 7 unprogrammed BTA in affected barangays. The report further stated that 944 Bayanihan activities or operations were conducted in the affected barangays as part of the clearing concept. Can the distinguished Sponsor report on the nature of the so-called Bayanihan Team Activities? Ano po ba ang ginagawa dito sa mga team activities na ito? How much is the AFP spending for this so-called Bayanihan Team Activities at sinu-sino po ang participants natin sa mga BTAs na ito? Itatanong ko na rin po kung magkano ang ginagastos natin sa Bayanihan Team Activities na ito na higit 1,000 ang bilang para sa taong 2015?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, Bayanihan Team Activities are, to use a more common term, like civil military operations wherein personnel of the AFP are deployed into local communities to assist the local governments in the delivery of certain projects and programs, including but not limited to the use of engineering brigades, medical teams, and other activities that contribute to the development of the locality, more particularly in areas where it is a bit of a distance from urban centers. That is why we use the AFP because of their ease of deployment and their capabilities in operating outside, and they have an operating budget of about P30,000 per barangay. That is a rough estimate or just a ballpark estimate of how much it costs for these things to operate in our barangay.

REP. ELAGO. For 2017, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, how many of the BTAs are civilian—civil military operations rather, or targeted in which specific areas or barangay? Can the distinguished Sponsor provide this Representation a detailed list after this interpellation?

REP. BIAZON. It might take a little bit of time for the information to be gathered, but if the distinguished Lady is willing, she can be provided with the information a little bit later.

REP. ELAGO. All right. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Hintayin po natin ang detailed list na iyan hinggil sa pagpapatupad ng mga Bayanihan Team Activities

sa iba't ibang barangay na may pondo na P30,000 sa pagpapatupad nito kada taon. Nagtatanong tayo hinggil sa mga Bayanihan Team Activities na ito o mga civilian military operations dahil sa tingin natin, at nanggaling na rin sa mga reports na nakukuha natin mula sa ilang mga komunidad na ito, maaaring ito ay mga counter-insurgency measures designed to pacify, militarize and even terrorize communities in the guise of service. Kaya talagang tayo ay interesado na mas ma tingnan ang mga iyan, lalo na at naglalaan tayo ng signipikanteng amount mula sa kaban ng bayan para diyan.

We strongly denounce the continuation of Oplan Bayanihan kung saan nasa loob ang pagpapatupad ng mga BTAs na ito, including such devious schemes and the allotment of public funds for such operations that only inflict more harm than good to our people. Katulad po ng sinabi ninyo, ito ay para sa pagtulong sa ating mga mamamayan, para sa ating mga barangay, at nawa ay iyan din ang talagang makita natin sa ating mga barangay kung saan nagaganap ang mga Bayanihan Activities na ito.

With that, I yield the floor to the next interpellator, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Thank you.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, distinguished colleague, Mme. Speaker, and just by way of information, I was just handed this info that about 1,000 barangays are estimated for 2017. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Thank you for that information, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ORTEGA (V.). Mme. Speaker, I would like to recognize our next interpellator, Rodante D. Marcoleta of SAGIP Party-List.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Sema). Representative Marcoleta is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Good afternoon, distinguished Sponsor.

Mme. Speaker, the favorable decision handed down by the Arbitral Tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, in relation to our dispute on the West Philippine Sea, I would like to believe, is a sense of confidence for our people; more particularly, it will probably overwhelm our leaders in any bilateral dealings with China.

Would you agree to that statement, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. BIAZON. There is no debate with the Gentleman from 1-SAGIP.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, while the domain of diplomacy and the task of building consensus with our neighbors in Asia is primarily the obligation of the Department of Foreign Affairs, this Representation also believes that the Department of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the Philippines have no reason to be complacent or less vigilant.

Do you still agree to statement, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. BIAZON. Well, a famous US President once said that you talk softly but carry a big stick. So, I think the Defense Department is the big stick.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you. I premised the questions, Mme. Speaker, this way, because it is incumbent upon all of us to manage the expectations, or shall we say the uneasiness, and probably, the fears of our people in relation to our dispute with China in the West Philippine Sea. In doing so, I am compelled to ask: How prepared is the AFP, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, God forbid, with respect to any eventuality of confronting China militarily?

REP. BIAZON. Any soldier would say that he would rather not fight if given the choice, but if it is in the performance of his duty, he will lay his life in sacrifice just for his country. I believe that the armed forces, we believe that the armed forces are ready to give their best if it comes to that point. As far as readiness is concerned, we may not be at par with China, it being a superpower militarily, but we are pretty sure that the AFP will do its best.

In its readiness, it does not have to rely only on itself. We must also remember that the Philippines is an ally of other parties who also have interests in the West Philippine Sea and so, we believe that, as we are ready to fight as soldiers, the country is also ready to fight as part of an alliance.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, if we break up those very patriotic statements, let us say, on a scale of 10 with 10 being the most adequate military preparations that we have, where do you place the armed forces today, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. BIAZON. Well, let us just put it this way, distinguished Gentleman. Just yesterday, I read somewhere in the news that China flew several of its aircraft numbering more than 10 near the area. If that happened in the West Philippine Sea, we have, at this moment, two fighter jets ready to respond. So, if we will just use the numbers and we place the number 10 versus

two, then probably the Gentleman will have an idea of the challenges that we are facing militarily.

REP. MARCOLETA. So, where are we, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. BIAZON. Well, if the Gentleman is asking for a blunt answer, then we are really at a great disadvantage. That is why the call right now really is, are we in Congress, which is tasked with appropriating funds for the expenditures of the government, are we willing to put our money where our mouths are in terms of defense? If we will compare defense spending by the Philippines with other countries, we really cannot be in a fair competition. So it really is up to us if we are about to question the capability of the armed forces, and I think the answer to that question of why we are not prepared would be in Congress because we appropriate the funds.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, when we get to see the statement in our Constitution that the Armed Forces of the Philippines is the protector of our people, we cannot escape responsibility in asking how can we break this into some manageable parts. Let us exemplify: this Scarborough Shoal is ours, and this was part of the decision of the Arbitral Tribunal. Traditionally, it was a fishing ground for our fishermen near the area, particularly those in Zambales. Of course, our people are expecting the armed forces to at least handle the situation in a way that we are able to protect them. We are protecting their livelihood, we are protecting their families.

We won the case in the Hague, Netherlands. How can we maximize that very important victory that we had? I think the world is looking at us, and whatever disadvantage that we have right now, no matter how decrepit the Armed Forces of the Philippines is today, admittedly, I think we can rally behind that victory and probably offset whatever perceived weakness we have in order to tell China that we are also a people who know how to care and protect what is legitimately ours.

It is in that sense, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, that this Representation would like, at least, to hope that we are in a position also to defend something and that China should be able to understand that we will when there is a need to do so, to do that becomes self-evident. The next question therefore is, do we really need the United States of America to compensate our disadvantage, and how much do we need it and what do we really need, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, the Philippines is a sovereign nation but in spite of that, we do need to enter into alliances and the

United States is a valuable ally; that cannot be denied. But we are also open to engaging other nations or other alliances to ensure that our interests are protected. So, while we say we benefit from an alliance with the United States, it should not also be a closed door for us to explore other alliances that would enable us to pursue our sovereign objectives.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I think the United States of America made it clear that for the Mutual Defense Treaty to operate, there should be an actual armed conflict that will obtain between the Philippines and China. That is most unfortunate. I think we are a people who approach everything in peace. Like what the President says, "We do not want war." America promised us an iron-clad alliance with their country but it does not show. Anyway, Mme. Speaker, it is not for you to answer that. I will leave a statement, I do not know who it came from, I do not know if it was Rudyard Kipling or Ernest Hemingway, but somebody said, "Good fences make good neighbors." I would like to see the Armed Forces of the Philippines build strong forces, no matter what and whatever happens.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Your Honor.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Sema relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Mercedes K. Alvarez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (A.D.). Mme. Speaker, may we acknowledge the next interpellator, Rep. France L. Castro, of the Party-List ACT TEACHERS.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable France L. Castro of the Party-List ACT TEACHERS is now recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Good afternoon distinguished colleague. So, would the Sponsor yield to a couple of questions, Your Honor?

REP. BIAZON. With pleasure, dear colleague.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ang akin pong questions ay may kinalaman po doon sa guidelines, ito po iyong No. 25, dated July 20, 2013. Aware po ba ang ating Sponsor dito sa guidelines in the conduct of the AFP activities inside or within the premises of school or hospitals?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BIAZON. Allow me to familiarize myself, Your Honor. May I request a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is suspended.

It was 4:05 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:06 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is resumed.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you, thank you, Mme. Speaker. Distinguished colleague, just for clarification, is the distinguished Lady referring to Letter Directive No. 25, dated 15 July 2013; Subject: Guidelines in the Conduct of the AFP Activities Inside or Within the Premises of a School or Hospital?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mme. Speaker, yes, Your Honor. Nakalagay po dito iyong mga references na kung titingnan po natin, ito iyong nagbibigay ng mga karapatan, humanitarian law, na magpo-protecta po doon sa ating mga estudyante, sa mga bata, sa pagko-conduct po ng mga activities ng ating mga military inside the campus. In page 2, ang purpose po nito:

This Directive prescribes the policies and guidelines in the conduct of any and all AFP activities, independently or in coordination with government and/or non-government entities, inside or within the premises of a school or hospital in order to prevent the occurrence of the six (6) Grave Child Rights Violations or Grave Violations Against Children During Armed Conflict pursuant to and in compliance with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), more specifically the violations known as "Attacks on Schools and Hospitals.

So, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ano po ba iyong mga tinatawag natin o magbigay nga po kayo ng mga halimbawa ng mga activities na kino-conduct po ng ating mga AFP sa mga schools para malaman po natin. Ano po ba ang mga activities na ito?

REP. BIAZON. Distinguished Lady, sa ngayon po, ang sinusundan po ng Armed Forces of the Philippines ay ang Directive na ito at hindi po sila nagsasagawa

ng mga operations sa loob ng mga paaralan o ng mga ospital, maliban sa ilang mga pagkakataon na nagkakaroon ng leadership summit kung saan ito ay bahagi ng kanilang pagkilos ng pagtuturo ng leadership in partnership with local governments. Otherwise, lahat po ng isinasaad ng Letter Directive No. 25 ay madiin na ipinatutupad ng Armed Forces of the Philippines.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you, Your Honor. Aware po ba iyong ating Sponsor na nagagamit po ang Directive o ang mga guidelines na ito ng AFP o ng ating mga kasundaluhan para po magkalat ng mga misinformation? Lalung-lalo na po doon sa ating mga eskuwelahan kung saan nag-oorganisa ang ating mga teachers, nagdudulot po ito ng intimidation at naha-harass po ang ating mga teachers kaugnay ng mga ginagawa po na mga “information dissemination” o leadership training kaugnay nito.

Halimbawa po, Your Honor, mayroon po tayong mga insidente sa mga paaralan sa Tarlac, na kung saan sa pagko-conduct po ng mga ganitong aktibidad, ang pagko-conduct po ng mga ganitong seminar, nababanggit po iyong mga organisasyon na lihitimo naman po na nag-oorganisa o lihitimo naman pong organisasyon na kumikilos para po sa pag-oorganisa ng mga estudyante at ng mga teachers po natin.

REP. BIAZON. Sa kasalukuyan, this Representation, ang Kinatawan na ito ay hindi po aware doon sa mga nabanggit ninyo at marahil, kung mayroong mga specific instances o incidents, magandang pagkakataon po sa kasalukuyan, sa ngayon, katulad kanina, na ipaalam natin sa harap ng plenaryong ito ang mga insidenteng iyan para po magkaroon ng commitment ang ating Armed Forces of the Philippines ng pagkilos. Katulad po kanina, noong may mga partikular na insidenteng tinukoy, nasabi dito sa plenaryo ang mga insidenteng iyon; at sa ganoong pagkakataon din sana, kung mayroon tayong maibahagi para po magsagawa ang armed forces ng kaukulang aksyon, investigation, prosecution para matukoy kung sino ang involved na lumalabag sa mga kautusan at batas tungkol diyan sa bagay na iyan.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Sige po magpapadala po kami ng mga examples ng mga video kung saan nagpapakita na ang mga leadership training na ito na nagbibigay ng impormasyon ay talagang nagdudulot po ng harassment sa ating mga kaguruan at mga estudyante.

Ang pangalawa po, Mr. Sponsor, ay iyong mga reports din ng mga human rights violations na nagaganap sa ating mga eskuwelahan. Ang iba po ay nabanggit na ng mga previous interpellators at ito po specifically iyong mga attacks na nangyayari sa mga schools natin.

Kung babanggitin ko lang po iyong una, noong October 7, 2015, Butchoy Tumagsa, 25, an evacuee from Kapalong, Davao del Norte was stabbed with an ice pick by one of the two men who were following him on his way back to UCCP-Haran. Tumagsa came from the market when the incident happened. Fortunately, Tumagsa was only grazed. Prior to this, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, a volunteer teacher for the Lumad pupils at UCCP-Haran was tailed by men riding a motorcycle.

Isa pa pong insidente ng mga attacks sa school, ito po ay naganap din doon sa Southern Mindanao. Cabugnason was one of the incorporators of the Lumad school, but had turned around since August 25 when soldiers started to encamp at the village hall where he holds office. Soldiers tagged the Lumad school as “NPA school.” Since August, Cabugnason made several attempts to implement the school’s closure. On October 23, when most of the residents were at the evacuation center, Cabugnason and his men were reported to have demolished the school building and ordered the teachers and students to leave the dormitory. Ito po iyong mga data na nakuha po natin sa KARAPATAN.

Pangatlo po, iyong Save Our Schools Network-Southern Mindanao (SOS-SMR) reported that teachers, students and parents attending the 11th Foundation Day of the Salugpungan Ta Tanu Igkanugon Community Learning Center STTICLC) and Bwalawan Festival in Talaingod, Davao del Norte were blocked on their way to the school by members of the Alamara paramilitary group. Isa pa pong insidente, iyong Save Our Schools Network-Mindanao reported that from September 2014 to September 2015, there were 95 documented cases of attacks on schools by soldiers and paramilitary groups all over Mindanao, 81 of which were Lumad community schools affecting 4,265 students.

Marami pa po, Mme. Speaker, na mga insidente ng mga atake sa eskuwelahan natin. Mr. Sponsor, sa ngayon po, sa kasalukuyang dispensasyon kung saan mayroon na po tayong usapang pangkapayapaan, paano po natitiyak ng AFP iyong safeguard, iyong safety po ng ating mga schools, ng ating mga estudyante at mga teachers po.

REP. BIAZON. Una po, ang kanilang pagsunod sa direktiba ng Pangulo na ipatupad ang usapang pangkapayapaan na may kaakibat na ceasefire, iyan ay kinikilala at siyempre sinusundan ng armed forces. Ganoon din ang kanilang pagpapatupad ng mga kautusan tulad po nitong Letter Directive No. 25 na nagsasaad ng Guidelines in the Conduct of AFP Activities Inside or Within the Premises of a School or a Hospital. Nandiyan na po iyong patakaran.

Ibig sabihin po, as far as policy is concerned, the Defense Department and the AFP are not remiss in recognizing the rights of our countrymen. If there are incidents such as the ones mentioned, the AFP

leadership is committed to look into these and hold people accountable.

Hindi naman po patakaran ng Armed Forces na lumabag sa sariling kautusan nila. Kung mayroon man at mapatunayan na mga tauhan ng Armed Forces ay hindi po sila—they will not be tolerated and the AFP will take action against them.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. Ang Representasyon pong ito ay magsa-submit po ng mga insidente ng mga mga human rights violation, at inaasahan ko na sana po ang AFP ay makapagpapadala dito sa atin pong opisina at sa komite ng mga updates kung paano po nila nilulutas ang mga ganitongkarahasan, at mga updates po kung paano natin pino-protectahan ang mga karapatan po ng ating mga estudyante at teachers at ng buong komunidad po.

REP. BIAZON. Nakikiisa po tayo sa panawagan na iyan at naririto ang pamunuan ng Armed Forces. Naririnig din nila ang ating pinag-uusapan at ating pinararating sa kanila ang ating adhikain na maging tapat ang Armed Forces sa pagbabantay ng human rights ng ating mga kababayan.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Your Honor.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (A.D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Honorable Ariel “Ka Ayih” B. Casilao of ANAKPAWIS Party-List.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Ariel B. Casilao of the ANAKPAWIS Party-List is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. CASILAO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Will the Gentleman yield to three clarificatory questions?

REP. BIAZON. Gladly, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Sa budget po ng DND, hindi po na-itemize iyong allocation per unified command. We have at least six unified commands, and the Philippine Army for 2017, is allocated P56.9 billion or 42 percent of the DND budget. May I know, honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, the allocation per unified command?

REP. BIAZON. We will just get the information, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, from the resource persons

although, indeed, the presentation of the budget of the AFP is based on the major services, instead of by unified commands. Our resource persons are just gathering the data. We may go back to that information if the distinguished Gentleman so desire.

REP. CASILAO. Yes, honorable Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. My second question would be on the policy. I have here a copy of the Joint DAR-DILG-DND Memorandum Circular No. 05, dated June 10, 2002. May I know if this Memorandum Circular No. 05 is still in effect?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BIAZON. The resource persons are also gathering the information, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. Unfortunately, it is not readily at hand at this moment.

May I request for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is suspended.

It was 4:20 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:21 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is resumed.

REP. BIAZON. Distinguished Gentleman, Mme. Speaker, in the previous question about the unified commands referring to the Central Command, Northern Luzon Command, Southern Luzon Command, EastMinCom or the Eastern Mindanao Command, the WestMinCom and the WesCom, looking at the budget, the MOOE for the CentCom, around P58 million; the NolCom, around P57 million; the SolCom, around P49 million; the EastMinCom, around P59 million; the WestMinCom, around P81 million; and the WesCom, P29 million. The information available to this Representation, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is with regard to the MOOE for the unified commands.

REP. CASILAO. Thank you for that, Mme. Speaker.

How about the memorandum circular? I raise this inquiry, Mme. Speaker, because this Representation received several complaints from my constituents and from my members. Because of this circular, the 40th Infantry Battalion stationed in Sitio Mangga, San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, under a certain Corporal

Francisco and Sergeant Dueñas, conducted several community peace and development outreach programs where, in fact, it is a disputed land because it is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Agrarian Reform. Because of this memorandum circular and the deployment of military troops during several occasions of community outreach programs of these certain military officers, it mentioned in several occasions that the local organization of farmers protesting the ongoing MRT-7 construction within the disputed land, particularly accused our leaders, the ANAKPAWIS Party-List, as legal fronts of the NPA. Being so and doing that, it resulted in several inconveniences to their security, their lives, and even restricted them from roaming around, doing their duties as leaders of the local chapter in continuing their education, mobilization of their organization with regard to the opposition on that particular dispute. Because of this memorandum circular, these reports reached this Representation. Not only that, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija, because this is a military reservation, there are areas also that had been in constant land dispute.

Again, there are similar cases of red tagging, we call it “red tagging” or “allegations” coming from military, uniformed personnel, accusing those progressive organizations in the area as communist and NPA fronts. It resulted in threatening their lives and their security. If you are considered a part of, you may not be directly part of the New Peoples’ Army. But as long as you are tagged as legal fronts, you will be subjected to being a target also of military activities, especially combat operation activities.

So, if there is a process between the DND, I believe the Department of Agrarian Reform is working on it, but for the DND which is deploying armed personnel, will there be a process of reviewing the memorandum circular? As I understand it, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, in every land dispute, the adjudicating body is only the Department of Agrarian Reform; but interventions, direct and indirect participations of security forces result in much complicated situations.

REP. BIAZON. As a matter of policy, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the AFP does not allow its personnel to intervene or participate in the resolution of disputes, particularly land disputes.

This Representation has yet to see the memorandum in question. But I would assume that as the distinguished Gentleman has described it, Mme. Speaker, it appears to be an agreement between the AFP and the DAR. Please correct me if I am wrong. I have just been handed a document. Is this the memorandum, DAR-DILG-DND Joint Circular No. 0502, dated June 10, 2002, the Law Enforcement of Agrarian Reform, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

I just browsed through quickly over the memorandum and had a short discussion. The participation of the AFP is supposed to be limited to just security concerns. As a matter of policy, they are not supposed to be engaged in the actual discussion of issues. With the particular instances that the Gentleman has raised, the AFP will cooperate in an inquiry to determine the liability of said personnel who appeared to be, based on the account, going beyond the mandate that was given to them with regard to the said memorandum and their role in the issue. The AFP once again, being given notice of those specific instances, will take the initiative to look into the matter, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Yes, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, if I may humbly request the leadership of the Defense Department, if ever the DAR, being the lead agency of this memorandum circular, would recommend to review and eventually replace this with a new circular, I urge the Defense Department to concur in order to limit, to maintain and to refrain from similar situations like that in San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. That would be a humble request from this Representation for the leadership to consider, as especially, as we are in the process of talking peace. Again, this Representation has been very vocal in protesting in the previous years the tagging of our organization and affiliates as legal fronts. We will continue to protest in whatever forum and arena.

The last question, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, dito po sa special provision on the CAFGU. The 62,348 CAFGU, including the supposed new recruits will be given P4,562 every month at the average or only P54,750 for each CAFGU annually. Being a labor leader, Mme. Speaker, kinukuwenta ko po ang P4,562, nasa P152 lang kada araw. With a very hazardous nature or the job description of the CAFGU being in the frontline in every combat and military operations, hindi po ba hindi makatao or sabihin na nating kung sa batas ng labor standards, this will definitely not qualify a humane working condition, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, we do recognize the concern about labor standards. The Armed Forces, the Defense establishment is endeavoring to provide resources commensurate to the duties and responsibilities of our CAFGUs. That is why in this particular budget proposal, there is even a proposed increase in terms of subsistence allowance which was the subject of our query earlier. Aside from that, the AFP provides the training boots, certain equipment, and uniforms, on top of the basic emoluments that were mentioned earlier.

If there is a proposal perhaps to increase it to current standards, probably, that would be really up to the House, to Congress, to propose those increases

to make them at par with other labor standards, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Yes, I raised that concern, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor because they are holding arms and eventually it may invite them in a situation that they would be using the arms issued to them to cope up with their economic hardships. May mga posibilidad at hindi malayo sa posibilidad na gamitin ang naisyung baril sa kanila para gumawa din ng anti-social activities. This has been reported a few years ago that there are even CAFGUs who have been involved in cattle rustling, banditry because maliban doon sa hindi nari-release, hindi nila regular natatanggap ang bigas, ang rice allocation at allowances. Dahil nga may baril sila, sumasama ang pag-iisip nila at nakagagawa sila ng sabihin na nating masamang gawain tulad ng pagnanakaw, banditry dahil nga may armas sila. That concern will eventually be addressed if proper compensation will be given.

Of course, the original position of this Representation, Mme. Speaker, is for the dismantling of the CAFGU, but with the current law that provides for the mobilization of this force multiplier, still, the need for them to be provided with humane working conditions or within the bounds of the labor standards is still a humane act for the government because they are, again, the nature of their jobs is that their life is at stake in every operation that they conduct.

That will be all, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BIAZON. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ROMERO. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMERO. I move that we recognize the Hon. Bayani F. Fernando from the First District of Marikina for his interpellation.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Bayani Fernando of Marikina is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. FERNANDO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the officers and gentlemen of the army, good afternoon.

May I know if the army has enough funds for their combat boots. I am concerned because, for one, I am from Marikina and I understand they have been making combat boots for the army. Do we have enough funds? Baka hindi kumita ang taga-Marikina. *(Laughter)*

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, tapos na po ang mga panahon na ang ating mga sundalo ay nagkukulang sa kagamitan. Sa ngayon po, provided naman sila ng mga bota.

REP. FERNANDO. Since when? I still can vividly recall, in 2009 when Ondoy struck Marikina, the army sent I think a battalion. I received them in the market zone of Marikina to help clean up the tons of mud and I noticed that the soldiers would not want their boots soiled. I was there in the middle, all muddied up, and the soldiers would be on the sidewalks. They do not want to dip their boots in the mud so I got mad. I just wondered, are those boots so rare, so valuable for the soldiers? I understand that those boots were designed for mud, for snow, slick and storm, for all-weather and in any terrain. Yet, our soldiers would not want theirs soiled and for a very important mission—that of helping a community that has suffered from such a disaster. I know that everything in the military is designed for the foot soldier. To this Representation, that could be a good measure of how well we can depend on our forces. It is the foot soldiers that need everything designed for them. And that foot, literally, foot soldier, and that is—the boots. It is a good measure of it.

Well, anyway, that is the first instance that I have encountered in my 18 years of service in the government. There were so many instances that I have been with the military in disaster response. We were among the first responders in the Cherry Hills disaster in Antipolo. I am surprised to see military men opening up cabinets inside the homes, ransacking, looking for some valuables. It shocked me. I thought the area was cordoned off because the residents were asked to leave the area, but unfortunately, there, I saw this thing. And that is a question of discipline, I guess. I do not know if we are aware.

Some other, in the trash slide in the big dump site of Quezon City, Payatas, I was still Mayor of Marikina, we were also among the first responders, and I observed, maybe, the military is well imbued in the soldier, the team spirit, so they protect the image of the military that is good. Unfortunately, the military was there looking. If we retrieve a dead body, the military would swarm around the body in time for the media to take a shot. I did not find it good. And maybe, you will not find anything of value to the organization.

In the typhoon that ravaged Aklan, in Caticlan, no, not Caticlan, the capital of Aklan, Kalibo, the MMDA coming from Manila, with its heavy equipment that we have to load on the ships from Manila, we were even ahead of the military to get there. So, I am wondering whether we are really serious in these things. But I do not think it is—maybe, I think, we should have some reforms in this regard.

So, I would say, this is a budget meeting, and I would say let us look at the budget of the military and put something more, on the logistics, on trainings, and most of all, let us put a budget for such disasters. Because walang ibang ahensya ng gobyerno tayong maaasahan kung hindi ang militar. Unfortunately, iyon ang nangyayari sa atin. Iyong inaasahan natin eh hindi talaga ano. I am sorry I have to ano, this is my first time to stand up in this plenary hall. Hindi ako makatiis. Gusto kong sabihin ito at nakakaawa naman ang ating mga tao sa ganyang sistema.

Now, I heard from some quarters, I do not know if it came from the military, the pushing for the revival of the ROTC. I attended three universities noong araw. So, I happened to be wearing three uniforms, the first one was with the Air Force ROTC. Hindi man lamang ako nakasakay ng eroplano kahit di umaandar. We were there in Nichols field, marching. Hindi man lang ako nakahawak ng buong baril. And wala ako narinig man lang any seminar to learn of citizenship, call on duty, of military Code of Honor and all these things. Then came the time when, as a student of another university, we were supposed to be with the artillery, hindi man lang ako nakahawak ng isang kanyon.

The next semester I was with another university, so I changed my uniform three times. Nasaan na naman kami? In the infantry and I was only able to handle a Garand rifle—a broken Garand rifle, once in that day in all those years that I attended this ROTC. So, what I mean is, let us take a look at it seriously before we embark on another venture.

Tingnan natin, baka naman our funds ay talagang kulang na kulang to increase our number. I think it would be preferable to have a small number of fully equipped, logistically supported Army. Kesa tayo, marami tayong reserve na hindi pinakikinabangan because we have limited budget. But I know, somehow, we can be optimistic in some ways, mukhang ang technology have changed. Now, we can afford an aircraft carrier because the drones do not need big aircraft carriers. So, medyo kaya na natin bumili ng aircraft carrier ngayon for the drones. At least, that is one thing we can now afford to say, we can now dream of having our aircraft carrier. But before that time, let us, I think, temper our dreams and address these things that we have problems like these that I had.

Please put some budget, instead for the ROTC, equip our Army for disasters, not for war, but for disasters. So at least, we can have a population that we can serve and look up to our military with respect.

So, with that, I say, pasensiya na kayo, I have been harboring these things for too long. This is not anything na—not for any purpose but to challenge the military, and I know that we can do it.

Thank you very much.

REP. BIAZON. We thank you, Your Honor, for your support and, of course, for your passion for the Armed Forces. We expect your support in the budget as well.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Acting Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMERO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Noel L. Villanueva of the Third District of Tarlac for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Noel L. Villanueva of the Third District of Tarlac is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some few clarificatory questions?

REP. BIAZON. With pleasure, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mme. Speaker, matagal ko na rin pong tinitimpi ang magtanong sa plenaryo ng mga bagay na masasabing parochial in nature. Kung kaya't akin na lang pong idinadaan sa pagliham sa mga matataas na opisyal ng Armed Forces of the Philippines, katulad ng sa chief of staff para makahingi ng paglilinaw sa mga bagay na may direktang kaugnayan sa mapayapang pamumuhay ng mga mamamayan ng Capaz, Tarlac, partikular na ang mga naninirahan sa loob ng Crow Valley Gunnery Range. But instead of getting a clear response to my queries, all I got is more questions to my questions.

In my letter, in my last correspondence to then Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Iriberry, I brought his attention about the written complaints of the Tribung Ugnayan ng Katutubong Aeta at Abelling, a duly registered organization of indigenous peoples in the municipality of Capas, Tarlac, particularly, the indigenous peoples' residents in Barangays Sta. Juliana and Maruglu where the Crow Valley Granary Range is located. Among their complaints is the prohibition imposed by the Philippine Air Force on the ingress of construction materials like lumber, cement, hallow blocks to be used for their house repairs and the construction of the public buildings like school buildings, multi-purpose halls, and the like, and the prevention of ingress of forest and agricultural products, thus, depriving the Aetas of their main source of livelihood.

The letter, that was my last correspondence to then outgoing Chief-of-Staff Lt. Gen. Iriberry, was dated October 7 of 2015. In his reply dated December 2, 2015, signed by General Ronald Albano for the Chief of Staff, the letter cited the Crow Valley Gunnery Range strategic location and operational importance, which is invaluable to the Armed Forces, which we, the population of Capas, Tarlac, believe in. And, likewise, in that letter, it also

cited the Philippine Air Force legal authority on the administration and control of the Crow Valley Gunnery Range Complex. In here, we cannot fully agree, as the area is a subject of ancestral domain claim by the Aetas and Abelling Tribe of Capas, Tarlac.

In the last paragraph of the letter-reply, it was cited that the Philippine Air Force and the National Commission on Indigenous People agreed on the creation of a joint technical working group to address the issues and concerns, particularly, the presence of IPs within the Gunnery Range Danger Zone.

Ito po iyong sinasabi kong more questions are being raised in their reply. Alam ninyo po ang Crow Valley Gunnery Range ay matagal nang pinananirahan ng mga indigenous peoples, particular ang mga Aeta at Abelling sa bayan ng Capas. The purpose of the joint technical working group is to serve as a mechanism to ensure that both parties will be apprised of the issues at hand and that those individuals who have both personal interests on the area will not exploit the IPs. Isa na naman pong katanungan ito.

Ngayon, ang tanong ko po, Mme. Speaker, was the joint technical working group ever created? Naitayo po ba ito?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Chairman, distinguished colleague, what you described is such an important and relevant concern especially those that you represent.

If this Representation may humbly suggest that the distinguished colleague sit down with the AFP Chief of Staff who is presently here in the plenary, he is most willing to address the concern of the Gentleman, so that the issue may be threshed out as quickly as possible with the two Gentlemen present this afternoon. If the distinguished colleague would consider such a proposal.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, marami na pong liham ang aking ipinaabot sa matataas na official ng Armed Forces, pero, katulad nga po ng aking premise kanina, from their letters, all I got is more questions to my questions. Kung kaya't baka po ako naman ay mapagbintangan ng aking mga constituents na I will be remiss in my duty as their spokesman, kung kaya't naglakas-loob na lang po ako na dito na sa plenaryo sana sagutin ang mga katanungang ito so as it will be reflected in the Journals of this august Chamber na ako ay tumayo para po sa kanilang kapakanan.

The letter was signed by General Ronald N. Albano for the Chief of Staff. Napakasimple po. In the joint technical working group, bakit po ang NCIP at ang Philippine Air Force ang mag-uusap? Bakit hindi kasama ang mga mamamayang direktang maapektuhan sa plano para sa Crow Valley Gunnery Range? And for the information of the distinguished Sponsor, we

are talking of about 6,000 Aetas who will be directly affected by the project.

One thing more, the DepEd has allocated funds for the construction of a school building in Sta. Juliana National High School. Natapos na po ang taon, hanggang ngayon, hindi pa rin po naitatayo iyon dahil po sa pagharang ng Philippine Air Force sa mga materyales na idini-deliver noong contractor. Kung kaya't sa tingin ko, matatapos ang taong ito, hindi rin kayang matapos iyong paaralan para sa mga indigenous people sa Barangay Sta. Juliana.

Ang hindi ko po maintindihan ay kung bakit iyong Barangay Sta. Juliana ay hindi naman po saklaw ng Crow Valley Gunnery Range, kung bakit pati iyong pagtatayo ng paaralan ay pinipigilan sa lugar na iyon?

REP. BIAZON. I have just been informed, Mme. Speaker, that the Secretary of National Defense has already had discussions with the local chief executive concerning that particular area, and we sympathize with the concern of the distinguished Gentleman. I myself would have done the same thing if I were in his shoes. But the frustrations that he had with the previous leadership might better be addressed by the current new leadership of the Armed Forces, especially that we have seen so far a more proactive leadership under the new administration.

So, if the distinguished Gentleman would consider ...

REP. VILLANUEVA. I fully agree with the suggestion of the distinguished Sponsor that we can sit down, talk with the affected residents and the local chief executives of the LGU concerned. Kasi po, it came to our knowledge that the Crow Valley Gunnery Range will be transformed into an international gunnery range. There is a need to relocate residents so as to fully effect the plans to transform this Crow Valley Gunner Range into an international gunnery range. Sa ngayon po, hindi namin alam kung ilang residente ang maapektuhan ng reloksyon. Ano ang tulong na puwedeng ipagkaloob para sa mga IPs na maaapektuhan ng reloksyon? Sana po malaman ko na ngayon ang mga kasagutang ito. And ...

REP. BIAZON. I have just been informed, Mme. Speaker, that in the discussions with the local chief executive, those particular points of relocation and the number of persons are currently part of the ongoing discussions. That is why, at this point, they could not provide a definitive answer to the specific question of the good Gentleman.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, puwede po ba akong maging kasapi noong technical working group dahil ako naman po ay

mayroon namang tunay na malasakit para sa ating bayan at para sa aking mga residenteng sinasakupan? Puwede po ba akong makahingi ng mga datos sa mga bagay na ito nang sa gayon ay pag-uwi ko po sa bayan ko ay aking mailalahad sa kanila kung ano ang plano sa ating bayan ng ating Armed Forces, paano natin sila matulungan at paano naman sila makakatulong sa atin.

Ako naman po ay hindi magiging sagabal sa mga magandang plano ng ating bayan. Tayo po ay nandito para magtulungan para po sa ikakabuti ng mas nakakarami.

REP. BIAZON. Yes. Thank you, distinguished colleague.

I had just confirmed with the leadership of the AFP and they have agreed to the proposal to include the distinguished Gentleman as part of the technical working group. Because, indeed, he has raised very important points and the very nature of his responsibility as Representative of the district gives, not only logic, but real basis for him to be part of the technical working group. His very important input will be valuable to come up with good solution that would satisfy everyone's concerns.

So, as mentioned, we recommend that the distinguished Gentleman, after this session, coordinate with or come to a discussion with the AFP Chief of Staff to finalize that arrangement, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Maraming salamat po, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Isa rin pong bagay na gusto ko ring talakayin sa matataas na opisyal ng ating Armed Forces ay tungkol sa Tarlac-Zambales road project na sinasabi na ito ay tatahak sa Crow Valley Gunnery Range kung kaya't ito po ay nagkakaroon ng delay. Sana ma-include na rin ito sa ating mga talking points, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

My last point po is about Clark Air Base. Ito po ang aking huling katanungan. Alam naman po nating lahat that Republic Act No. 7227 was passed into law to, and I quote:

Accelerate the sound and balanced conversion into alternative productive uses of the Clark and Subic military reservations and their extension x x x, to raise funds by the sale of portions of military bases in Metro Manila, and to apply said funds as provided herein for the development and conversion to productive civilian use of the lands covered under the 1947 Military Bases Agreement.

Nakita po natin, we have seen the transformation of the Subic Naval Base into one with productive civilian use, generating employment for local population, and

business opportunities for local and foreign investors. Ganoon din po sa Clark Air Base. Noong naging Clark Special Economic Zone ang dating Clark Air Base, ito rin po ay nakapagbigay ng napakaraming oportunidad sa trabaho para sa mga residente ng Tarlac, Pampanga at ibang lalawigan na malapit sa Clark Air Base. Pero, gusto ko rin pong ipaabot na sa kasalukuyan, ang Clark Air Base po ay hindi pa totally converted into productive civilian use dahil ang Philippine Air Force, the Philippine Air Force, still occupies a substantial portion of Clark's land area. Siguro po may mahigit pang 400 hektarya ang hawak-hawak ng Philippine Air Force.

Ano po ba talaga ang plano ng Philippine Air Force sa loob ng Clark Air Base? Will they stay permanently at Clark or is there a plan to relocate and convert the area that they occupy into productive use to further spur economic growth in the area?

REP. BIAZON. Distinguished colleague, since the previous administration, the Philippine Air Force has been ready and willing to relocate to another venue or location. But unfortunately, the aspect of replication of their facilities in that relocation site has not yet been determined by the government. So, as far as the Air Force and the Armed Forces are concerned, they are ready and willing but unfortunately, the process of identifying the replication of their facilities has not yet been completed.

REP. VILLANUEVA. Sayang po kasi iyong oportunidad na mahigit 300 hektarya ang hindi nagagamit for economic opportunities sa Central Luzon. If they are talking of replication at the rate of land rental inside Clark Air Base now, which is \$100 per square meter per month, in no time at all, they can replicate the military camp of the Philippines' airport in Clark and relocate this elsewhere, like in Basa Air Base. Ang tingin ko po dito is—ano ba talaga? Parang walang plano kasi po nakikita ko, lalo pang pinagbubuti, inaayos pa lalo iyong mga pasilidad na iniwan ng Amerikano sa loob ng Air Base. Kung may planong mag-relocate, sana huwag na munang maglaan ng pera sa Clark Air Base at ilagay na doon sa proposed relocation site, hindi po ba? Ay hindi po eh, nagtatayo pa sila uli ng mga panibagong gusali doon eh. Would you believe how much will we earn from a 300, more than 300 hectares by just lease-rent alone? In no time at all, billions of pesos are being wasted at nawawalan pa ng oportunidad ang ating mga kababayan sa mga trabaho, sa mga negosyo sa loob ng Clark Air Base. Iyon lamang po, Mme. Speaker. And to the distinguished Sponsor, sana po mapadali ang relocation ng Philippines Air Force. I have nothing against the Philippine Air Force staying in Clark. Ang gusto ko lamang po ay to spur development in the area. Hindi naman po sila kailangang nandoon permanently,

puwede naman silang mag-relocate sa Basa Air Base. I think the area of Base Air Base is more than 3,000 hectares. Kayang-kayang i-develop ang Basa Air Base at napakalapit po ng Basa Air Base sa Clark Air Base. Lalo na nandiyan na ang SCTEX, madali na po ang travel, hindi na sila—iyong strategic importance ng lugar ay hindi naman po ganoon siguro masa-sacrifice kung ire-relocate soon sa Basa Air Base ang Philippine Air Force na ang station ngayon ay nasa Clark Air Base. Sayang ang pagkakataon, sayang ang oportunidad. Iyon lamang po, maraming salamat.

REP. BIAZON. We understand the situation of the good Gentleman, and we thank him for his concern and participation in this process.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Acting Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMERO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader Danilo Suarez of the Third District of Quezon for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.) The honorable Minority Leader Danilo Suarez from Quezon is hereby recognized.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to a minor interpellation?

REP. BIAZON. It would be an honor, distinguished colleague.

REP. SUAREZ. How much is the requested budget of the Defense Department, distinguished Sponsor? How much are they asking for 2017?

REP. BIAZON. For 2017, Mme. Speaker, the proposed budget of the Department of Defense is P134.54 billion which excludes the pension.

REP. SUAREZ. Is the Gentleman saying this is 13 percent or 11 percent higher than the previous year's?

REP. BIAZON. It is 14.28 percent higher than the 2016 allocation, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Are the distinguished officers in the Gentleman's resource group part and parcel of those who crafted this proposed budget for 2017? Did they play a role in this program?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker, the distinguished Gentleman and ladies behind me have confirmed that they were part of the crafting of this proposal.

REP. SUAREZ. Because budget preparation for 2017 starts in February, hindi ho ba?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, is the Chief of Staff, General Visaya, in February of this year—was he the Chief of Staff?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, the distinguished Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces was the Commander of Southern Luzon Command as of February this year.

REP. SUAREZ. So, hindi sila iyong nag-craft, nag-start ng budget for 2017?

REP. BIAZON. He had some limited participation, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Will that go through with the Chief of the Air Force, in the Army, and in the Navy as well?

REP. BIAZON. Similarly, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So pare-pareho ho iyon.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker, they are similarly situated. They occupied key command positions. They have had their limited inputs in the preparation of the budget.

REP. SUAREZ. Distinguished Sponsor, I read in the paper, I watched in the television several series of military exercises with different countries, particularly with the Americans. May we know the inputs, what do we learn from those exercises?

REP. BIAZON. Those exercises are designed to mutually benefit both the Philippines and its partner-country, in this case, the United States. In terms of interoperability, both sides learn from this. As far as the use of newer military technology and doctrines are concerned, the Philippine side benefits from it. As for the partner-country, interoperability with our Armed Forces is something that they learn, as well as locally implementable tactics and strategies. So, these military exercises are considered mutually beneficial. It is not a one-sided affair, and it does help us modernize our military, not just through equipment but even so with the doctrine and personnel capability, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, it is more about giving us a preview or a bird's eye view of what is modern warfare nowadays, something that most of those counterpart-

nations that we are conducting our joint exercise with have, and what they have, we do not have.

REP. BIAZON. In a sense, it is that way, Mme. Speaker. Like, back in the day when night-fighting capability was first introduced to our Armed Forces, they were exposed to that kind of technology through the exercises.

REP. SUAREZ. Okay, let me just intervene, distinguished Sponsor.

When we conduct exercises like that, just for curiosity, do they give some of those equipment to us after the exercise?

REP. BIAZON. There have been instances, Mme. Speaker, where they leave behind certain materials.

REP. SUAREZ. Usable?

REP. BIAZON. Usable but we do understand that they may have limitations as to what kind of equipment they will leave behind, especially those which concerns technology. We would understand if they are not part of the package that they leave behind.

REP. SUAREZ. No, for instance, iyon bang amphibious assault vehicle ay iniwan na ba sa atin iyon o iniuwi nila?

REP. BIAZON. In our experience, Mme. Speaker, they have not left behind or given as token gifts such kind of equipment to us.

REP. SUAREZ. So, we joined them in amphibious assault, we do beachhead up to the, let us say, late hours, and then nakita natin iyong kanilang communication na—hindi ba, iyong nasa Kevlar helmet nila, mayroon silang communication and with night viewing. So parang ipinapakita, kagaya ng sinasabi ko, something they have that we wish we have. Hindi ba ganoon?

REP. BIAZON. Well, yes, it exposes us to such kind of technology, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. And, along that line, distinguished Sponsor, I will just be asking some nitty-gritty before I go to the main point.

I noticed that in this presentation of the Defense Secretary, there is always a question on the subsidy on rice, about timing, about quantity. Of course, the issue of quality is not being raised here but I could assume that baka, kung minsan, may quality issue. So ang tanong ko, bakit bigas lang, walang ulam? Do we not give them provisions for ulam?

REP. BIAZON. Well, sa limited po na resources, iyong pinaka-common siguro po na makikinabang at mapapakinabangan ng ating mga sundalo ang napiling item. Like, syempre po, for example, kung ulam ang pag-uusapan, baka hindi naman lahat kumakain ng karne.

REP. SUAREZ. Can I just be ...

REP. BIAZON. Mas madali kung lahat bigas.

REP. SUAREZ. Let me intervene, distinguished Sponsor. In the Army contingent in my district, my good Commander in Chief, five-star General Aleta Suarez is here, over there. Kami ho kapag tinatawag namin lagi iyong CO, niyayaya namin sa bahay, acquaintance, and there are times wherein I—we normally send coffee, sometimes cigarettes, sometimes corned beef and sardines doon sa mess hall ho nila. Part and partial na katungkulan ng pamahalaan na pakain po ang ating sundalo ng almusal, tanghalian at hapunan. Am I correct there?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, can I just go to my main concern, which I raised during the budget presentation of the military? I have a letter here signed by the distinguished Secretary Lorenzana, answering some questions that I raised. Well, I will just reiterate some of my questions for the benefit of my colleagues. In terms of our ground forces, the Philippine Army, our mainstay in terms of our hard assets—I am talking about assets in Palar—still the same, wala hong dinagdag, walang pagbabago iyong hard assets natin.

Do we still have some Scorpions that are still running?

REP. BIAZON. Specifically, distinguished colleague, Mme. Speaker, with regard to Scorpions, we have some units still in stock but not necessarily in top running condition.

REP. SUAREZ. So, iyong hard assets po ng Army natin, we have some steel-belt wheeled na tanke pa rin up to now. Those are light tanks, I suppose?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, those are light tanks.

REP. SUAREZ. Do they still use the Cadillac Gage B150?

REP. BIAZON. It is still used, Mme. Speaker, by the Philippine Army.

REP. SUAREZ. So, iyon ho ang ating main asset ...

REP. BIAZON. Yes.

REP. SUAREZ. ... in terms of what we call the hard assets that can be used either in close quarter or urban or sub-urban. Doon ho nagagamit iyong mga asset na iyon.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker. And, incidentally, we have received M113s from Israel.

REP. SUAREZ. The M113 was given to us free by the Americans?

REP. BIAZON. It was purchased by the Philippine Army from Israel, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. From Israel?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, we bought it?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Did we not try asking from the Americans? If you go to their stockyard, they have, maybe, tens of thousands of M113s that are being mothballed already.

REP. BIAZON. Well, we have not really set aside the option of getting from the Americans, Mme. Speaker. In fact, we received about 114 units of M113s from the United States. That is aside from the 28 coming from Israel.

REP. SUAREZ. Do we still have FMS?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, we do, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Do we still have FMS with the Americans?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Is JUSMAG in existence?

REP. BIAZON. The Defense Department is still working with the JUSMAG, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, in terms of our assets with the Army, distinguished Sponsor, you, being the son of the distinguished General Biazon, we can say that there has really not been much improvements. As what we have in the last 15 years, we can say that we have not really achieved the ideal modernization.

REP. SUAREZ. Because I will go back to that issue and raise the question to the chief of the army on whether he had seen that movie “13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi”, and I have a very detailed reply from the Secretary, maybe—did you—can you ask Secretary ...

REP. BIAZON. The General has ...

REP. SUAREZ. ... if he did watch the movie “13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi”?

REP. BIAZON. The CGPA has watched, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. SUAREZ. Napanood ninyo?

REP. BIAZON. ... but the Secretary of Defense has, unfortunately, not watched it.

REP. SUAREZ. So, you watched that grim scenario of modern warfare wherein I cite an example that a military contingent in Basilan, being approached—wherein there might be some—tinatawag, ginagapang sila ng mga Muklo. Iyan po ang term na ginagamit ng militar.

Doon sa GPS na iyon, doon sa control sa Zamboanga, makikita nila kung mayroong nag-e-encroach doon sa perimeter ng base, at doon sa loob ng base mayroon silang monitor, nakikita nila kung sino ang lumalapit because of the warm body reflection in the GPS.

Ngayon, doon naman po sa defense side ng base, iyong kanilang mga assault rifles o submachine guns ay naka-zero sa nakikita ng GPS. You need not to be a sharp shooter, patay ho ng patay basta masentro ka doon sa laser. And this is an ideal setup of how to fight a war.

REP. BIAZON. Those are really impressive military hardware, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, and we do not know that the ...

REP. SUAREZ. I have the figures here. According to Secretary Lorenzana, this reconnaissance system might be costing, maybe, P600 million.

REP. BIAZON. Indeed, the technology gives them a high price, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, and perhaps if ever that we are to consider it ...

REP. SUAREZ. You talk of human lives, this is chicken feed, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, if we talk of the safety of our men.

REP. BIAZON. Perhaps we can start that with our special or elite forces, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker,

given the assignments that would be given to them in their operations.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I do not have an iota of doubt on the determination and loyalty of our men in uniform. These officers at your back, I would be proud to say in this distinguished forum that they are ready to give their life for their country. But, according to General Patton, you do not win a war by dying for your country; you win war by killing those bastards who want to die for their country. And you need modern warfare like this to win battle.

REP. BIAZON. We agree, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. In fact, under the Revised AFP Modernization Program, the Philippine Army has an ongoing procurement of thermal imaging cameras which is part of the overall program for thermal imaging system.

REP. SUAREZ. Are we now coordinated with the three services—Army, Navy, Air Force? Because I remember my good days in the early '70s, ito hong tatlong service command natin, kapag nagkakaroon ng encounter sa Mindanao in the early '70s like '73, '74, they do not have communication coordination.

Are we now somewhat comfortable that, at any one time, the Army can coordinate with the Air Force, the Air Force can coordinate with the Navy and the Marines, and during a simultaneous operation, there will be no mistaken encounter or misfire between each other? Hindi naman mangyayari iyon.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, communication is essential, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, and right now, we are assured that the branches are interoperable in terms of communication.

REP. SUAREZ. I think the good General, during those years, was still in his high school days. So, may mga panahon na ho, General, that there are what we call casualties from friendly fire. Kung minsan ho tayo ang nagkakatamaan.

So, that fear can be allayed. It is not existing or not happening anymore.

REP. BIAZON. There is a guarantee of interoperability now, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. On the side of the Philippine Navy, I did ask the question on whether the Peacock-class is still floating and they said that they are right now under repair. The three bottoms are under repair, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the Peacock-class vessels or the Jacinto-class, they are being deployed right now. They can be deployed and they can stay at sea for about 15 days, although they are undergoing major repairs and marine engineering upgrade.

REP. SUAREZ. Are the repair facilities government or private entity?

REP. BIAZON. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, we have been informed that the ship repair facilities are private.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, that is good. I mean, in other countries, distinguished Sponsor, maintenance is being undertaken by the private sector already, so maybe it is a good sign that we are making some efforts in progress in making military subcontractors grow and maybe we can even do that and participate in other countries in terms of doing business. So, this Representation is quite satisfied that there might be some more indication to support facilities like that in terms of maintaining assets of the armed forces.

So, in terms of our, I did raise the question on how many of your bottoms are blue water navy and what was stated here is that the two weather high-endurance cutters are from the US government. These were given to us free. Are these given to us free?

REP. BIAZON. We spent, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, for the transfer of the ships.

REP. SUAREZ. No, but, in effect, it is more of just for the, what we call incidental expenses. But, in effect, the bottoms are free.

REP. BIAZON. Correct, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. We spent for the transfer only.

REP. SUAREZ. Do they include ordinance?

REP. BIAZON. It included ordinance, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. May we know what ordinance was included in those cutters?

REP. BIAZON. Ammunition for 76 millimeter cannons, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, was included in the transfer.

REP. SUAREZ. 7.62.

REP. BIAZON. It is the 76 millimeter cannon, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. 76 millimeter is just the same with the Oto Melara.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Sir.

REP. SUAREZ. So, will the Chief of the Navy be comfortable to say that we are in a better position 10 or 15 years ago in terms of capability?

REP. BIAZON. It would appear, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, that we are better off than 15 years ago.

REP. SUAREZ. You have air asset as well, am I correct there?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. There is even an anti-submarine warfare helicopter.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

Now, we go to the Philippine Air Force. I understand here that you are buying three weather-tracking radars from the government of Israel. Is this a government to government transaction, Mme. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. It is, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. It is a government to government transaction, negotiation.

REP. SUAREZ. And what technology is this? Is this American, copied by the Israeli? Is this an entirely Israeli design, British or, may we know?

REP. BIAZON. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, at this point, the terms of reference has a non-disclosure provision, so discussing it in plenary might compromise the position of the Armed Forces.

REP. SUAREZ. In this modern warfare and this wi-fi and Internet, nothing is confidential, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. I am just curious as to why is the Air Force is buying a fixed radar? Why not mobile?

REP. BIAZON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, I was just informed that it is actually a combination of fixed and mobile, and just going back to the earlier point, the contract provided. That is why even if there is access to information over the Internet, they just have to comply with the requirements of the contract.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, it is the duty of the men in uniform to give comfort to this august Body, that were providing taxpayers' money for, and say that the PADIZ are amply protected, our air identification. So, if I am going to

ask you, where are you going to deploy, which of these sites? You will tell me it is classified.

REP. BIAZON. Deployment, the first three, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, will be in Palawan, in Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte ...

REP. SUAREZ. And?

REP. BIAZON. ... and Mindoro, the first three sites.

REP. SUAREZ. So, Mindoro is for the South China Sea, Palawan, maybe up to corridor of Mindanao, up to Borneo?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. SUAREZ. Where in Palawan, in the tip, in the southern tip or where?

REP. BIAZON. In the middle of Palawan, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the one located in Palawan. Although ...

REP. SUAREZ. There is a ...

REP. BIAZON. ... the three radars mostly will cover the West Philippine Sea, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, do you agree with me that in terms of cost-cutting, ATO, I do not know the—I think the CAAP now is the—do they have surveillance radar as well? Do we have civilian radars as well?

REP. BIAZON. Recalling the budget briefing of the Department of Transportation, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, they did mention that they are in the process of acquiring air surveillance radar.

REP. SUAREZ. I hope the distinguished Sponsor can read my mind. When it is peacetime like this, you have a radar that looks at the birds, not the planes, does not distinguish whether it is military or commercial. But I would say 90 percent of the flying planes in our aerial territorial zone are civilian. And you are buying a program may be worth about 300 million looking at 10 percent of what is flying in our sky. So, is there a possibility of working arrangement that during peacetime, maybe a civilian officer of the Air Transportation Office can shift together with a radar operator of the air force and look at the civilian asset.

Kasi, makikita ho ninyo kung magkakaroon ng aksidente, kung covered po iyan ng en route radar mo, malalaman mo kung saan nag-crash, hindi ho ba?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. SUAREZ. So, maybe to our leadership between you as the distinguished Sponsor, people in uniform can sit down with the proper agency. I think now it is with the Secretary of Transportation that we should work handily in this area, maximize our asset because the purpose is the same. So, maybe I can ask the leadership especially the distinguished Sponsor to look at the possibility of a joint use by the civilian and the military of this very high-value asset.

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague. We are indeed in a better position to really look at the bigger picture considering that the Department of Transportation is just of course focused on its own mandate and the Defense Department focused on its own. Although, the Armed Forces has advised me just now that they really do have to work with the civilian counterparts. So, I guess it would not be off tangent if we do try to work things out. The two will have combined operations, Your Honor.

REP. SUAREZ. My last question is that, we acquired during the last administration Korean planes, the F50.

REP. BIAZON. FA-50, Your Honor. FA-50, Your Honor, from South Korea.

REP. SUAREZ. This is a scenario that I do not want to happen, but assuming there will be a hostile situation with a neighboring country, do you consider your FA-50 a capable interceptor? Or is it not designed to be an interceptor?

REP. BIAZON. Your Honor, if it is a fighter attack aircraft; it can function as an interceptor. Although, if...

REP SUAREZ. But as I have said, the ...

REP. BIAZON. ... it also depends on the capabilities...

REP SUAREZ. ... you will categorize ...

REP. BIAZON. ... of the counterpart, Your Honor.

REP SUAREZ. If you will look at the capability of the FA-50 which, say an upgraded, modern trainer, you want to equip that just like what we have done—arming the 260, arming the Tora-Tora, fine. We are using that as substitute. But I think the good General of the Air Force will agree with me that if I were a pilot of this

FA-50, I will not engage with a MiG-31 coming from the highland. Am I correct there?

REP. BIAZON. Definitely, Your Honor, because the...

REP SUAREZ. So, kulang pa po tayo...

REP BIAZON. ... capabilities are quite different

REP. SUAREZ. ... ng capability, to give a decent capability to say that when we take off and engage an intruder who is in our country we have a level chance or a level playing field that we can shoot them down as they can shoot us down. Napakahirap po naman na they can shoot us down, but we cannot shoot them down, di ba ganoon ho?

REP. BIAZON. Yes, Your Honor. You have to give them ...

REP SUAREZ. So. As I have said, the ...

REP BIAZON. ... confidence in engaging the enemy.

REP SUAREZ. If the agency that the distinguished Sponsor is supporting, Mme. Speaker, is comfortable that for the next 2017, their budget will be compatible enough, I would say, I would like to suggest that maybe this administration will come up with a holistic approach in making sure that improvements can be given to our men in uniform.

With that, Mme. Speaker, the Minority does not have any more questions as regards the proposed budget of the Department of National Defense. I move for the termination and, at the end of the day, an approval of their proposed budget.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

REP BIAZON. Thank you, your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship and termination of the debate on the budget—I am sorry.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized. I am sorry.

REP. ROMERO. On behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in the motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of National Defense including its attached agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of National Defense is hereby terminated.

(Applause)

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is suspended.

It was 5:38 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:42 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is resumed.

REP. ROMERO. Mme. Speaker, before we begin the consideration of the next budget, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the guests of the honorable Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn F. Garcia, Representative, Third District of Cebu. They are the Municipal Mayor of Barili, Cebu, Mayor Marlon F. Garcia; ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Please rise to be recognized. Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

REP. ROMERO. Municipal Councilors Ramon Ewican Jr., Nelson Gingoyon, Luisito Ponsica, Jeremias Aguilar, and Julieto Flores; Municipal Administrator Hector Celis; and Municipal Treasurer Gamaliel Riconalla. They are the guests of Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn F. Garcia, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)* Thank you for your visit.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

COMMISSION ON THE FILIPINO LANGUAGE

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the Commission on the Filipino Language.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The budget of the Commission on the Filipino Language is now on the floor. The Sponsor is hereby recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the First District of Compostela Valley, Representative Maria Carmen S. Zamora, to

sponsor and answer the questions, if any, on the budget of the Commission on the Filipino Language.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Maria Carmen S. Zamora from Compostela Valley is hereby recognized for her sponsorship speech.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. ZAMORA (M.)

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts or the NCCA is the overall policy-making body, coordinating and grant-giving agency for the preservation, development, and promotion of Philippine arts and culture through the National Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts or the NEFCA.

It has six attached cultural agencies, namely: the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the National Museum of the Philippines, the National Archives of the Philippines, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, the National Library of the Philippines, and the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino or the Commission on the Filipino Language.

For Fiscal Year 2017, the NCCA has a proposed budget of P454,398,000; the National Historical Commission of the Philippines will be allotted P644,035,000; the National Library of the Philippines will have a share of P196,712,000; the National Archives of the Philippines will have a budget of P128,387,000; while the Commission on the Filipino Language will be allocated a total of P61,821,000. The collective work of these agencies, meager their budget allocations maybe, as compared to the mammoth shares of the line agencies, greatly redound to the benefit of our nation. Without them, our nation will be an aimless wanderer, devoid of its sense of history and without a heart and soul.

Mme. Speaker, I am now ready to defend the budget of the NCCA and the other attached cultural agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, we would like to recognize the honorable Lady from ALONA Party-List, Hon. Anna Marie Villaraza-Suarez. Mme. Speaker, if I may just make that clarification, this is for the Commission on the Filipino Language.

REP. VILLARAZA-SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, there being no other members from the Minority who wish to ask questions, I move to terminate the period of interpellation on the budget of the Commission on the Filipino Language.

REP. DE VENECIA. On behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Commission on the Filipino Language.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Commission on the Filipino Language is hereby terminated.

REP. VILLARAZA-SUAREZ. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Gentleman from BUHAY Party-List, the Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr. from BUHAY Party-List is hereby recognized for his interpellation.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, honorable Sponsor. We would like to help develop a stronger cultural endeavor in our present and future generation. Nais ko lang pong magtanong ng mga ilang pagpapaliwanag para po naman maintindihan namin ang kagustuhan ng ating administrasyon. But before I do that, let me just read for the record what the President has stated in his 10-point agenda. He specifically said in the eighth point of his agenda that this government intends to promote science, technology, and the creative arts to enhance innovation and creative capacity towards self-sustaining inclusive development. Ang pagkakaintindi po natin doon ay palalakasin ng ating gobyerno ang pagbibigay-paraan sa kagalingan ng Pilipino sa ating sariling kakayahan sa ating pagkakalikha. Tama po ba iyong aking understanding?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Mme. Speaker. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. Opo. Then I will ask a very relevant question, Mr. Speaker. It bothers us to see in the budget that the National Commission for Culture and the Arts

budget had been reduced from the 2016 P188 million, e ibinababa po to P31 million lang. Ano po ba ang kadahilanan doon? Iyon po ba ay pagsasawalang-bahala sa trabaho ng National Commission for Culture and the Arts? Iyon po ba ay hindi pagbibigay-halaga sa kanilang trabaho? Wala po ba silang nagawa sa nakaraan kaya nais na sigurong burahin sa ating pamahalaan? Or what could be the explanation for this, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, for the record of this Congress, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts has requested for a P162-million proposal from the GAA for 2017 Budget. However, the Department of Budget and Management has only allotted P31 million for this year for the reason that is beyond also the understanding of the people from the NCAA. While we understand—alam po natin na alam po ng NCAA na naging importante po ang naging role ng NCAA sa pagpapalaganap ng kultura ng ating bansa, at dahil nga dito, humingi ng mas malaking kaukulang pondo ang NCAA. At sa ngayon ho, ang naka-reflect lang po sa ating NEP ay maliit na halaga po lamang ang na-approve ng Department of Budget and Management.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, the Lady Sponsor is not in consonance with what we see in the budget now. You are echoing what the President said. He wants to give importance to the creativity and the talents of the Filipino. But in the budget today, obviously, they will not be able to do much. We, at BUHAY Party-List, value culture and the arts. We know that this is one of the main pillars of our foundation as a people. Kung ang ating kultura, sining at kalinangan ay hindi po natin bibigyan ng pahalaga, siguro hindi dapat ipinangako ng ating Pangulo na bibigyan niya ng diin ang pangangailangan ng pagbibigay-daan sa ating kagalingan. E, wala po naman akong alam na departamento na nagbibigay ng ganyang klaseng uri ng pagkakataon kung hindi itong National Commission on Culture and the Arts.

So, slashing it by 83 percent, Mr. Speaker, sa tingin ko po ay isa po sa pinakamalaking bawas ito sa pondo noong 2016, and towards 2017. Wala akong alam na departamentong binawasan nang ganitong uri, ganitong kalaking halaga ang ating Department of Budget and Management na pinupuna natin ngayon.

Naniniwala po kami na ang ating sining at kalinangan ang siyang nagdala sa atin kung saan tayo naroroon ngayon. At ito ay magdadala sa atin sa tagumpay kung bibigyan natin ng diin ang kagalingan ng Pilipino sa yaman na taglay natin at ng ating pagkatao. You do not promote culture and the arts, then, we are like a ship in the middle of the ocean with no map for our trip and destination. Para tayong eroplano na wala pong flight map. Para po tayong kotse na pumunta sa isang biyahe na hindi alam kung saan

pupunta. Without culture and the arts, we will be lost in the globalization of the people's mindset. Lalaki po ang mga bata na walang alam kung hindi iyong Internet connection na sila po ay nagbabasa lamang at natututo ng pag-uugaling banyaga. Kaya nakagugulat po ito. Ako po ay isa sa mga nagtataka kung papaano mangyayari na ang programa ng ating Pangulo ay magtatagumpay sa pagpapatatag sa ating pagkatao bilang Pilipino. And we know that he is doing everything to establish the Filipino character to the world, to the point of being criticized, pero iyong kagalingan ng Pilipino, hindi po mabibigyan ng diin dito sa ating administrasyong ito. Ay, kawawa po naman iyong magagaling na Pilipino na nagdaan na at hindi rin nabigyan ng pagkakataon gaano. I would like to mention some of them. We have noted artists. We have noted playwrights and theatre directors. To name a few, we had Jonas Sebastian. We had Behn Cervantes. We had Tony Espejo. And, I would like to mention the father of one of our Members here, Rolando Tinio. Iyan pong mga iyan, magagaling iyan. Hindi lamang nabigyan ng tamang paraan upang sila ay itanghal sa pandaigdigang pagkilala. Nabalitaan na po ba ninyo si Levi Celerio, for instance, iyong mayakda ng mga kantang Pilipino na hanggang ngayon ay atin pang kinakanta at ginagamit? The only man who can play music, different music, pieces of music with just a leaf on his lips. Pablo Gartuso, the genius in the guitar—even my neighbor, Miñong Villegas, in Manila is good and plays the guitar with one hand, and so many of them have already passed away and are lost forever in the memories of our children.

Ngayon, makikita natin na ang NCCA ay hindi po binigyan ng pondo. Eh, saan po tayo pupunta nito, Mr. Speaker? Ngayong nakikita natin ang kagalingan ng ating mga gumagalaw sa sining, pati na sa paggawa ng sine with the likes of Brillante Mendoza, the winner Lav Diaz. Eh, saan pupunta ito kung hindi mabibigyan ng paraan ng sangay ng gobyerno na hindi makapagbibigay ng tamang suporta sa ating kultura? Ito po ba ay maipapaliwanag ninyo at mabibigyan ninyo kami ng paraan papaano kami makapagbibigay-dahilan dito sa ating frustration and anxiety na ito sapagkat hindi ko po nakikita ang susunod na taon para sa ating sining at kalinangan without any budget for the NCCA?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I fully agree with every word that has been said by his Honor, Honorable Atienza, and that I also share the same frustration and anxiety upon knowing the meager budget being given to the NCCA.

For the information also of this august Chamber, the NCCA has also exhausted several means to lobby for an increase in their 2017 budget and that their only hope is that this Chamber, this Congress, and any move, any move from this honorable Body for a possible increase would be

greatly appreciated by this Sponsor and by the NCCA itself, having recognized, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that the budget being allocated to them by the Department of Budget and Management would be very lacking in order to preserve and to pursue whatever programs and projects they have that are in line for 2017.

REP. ATIENZA. Sa totoo lang, Mme. Speaker, dapat sana ay huwag nating pag-usapan ito. Aprubahan na natin ito at huwag na nating gambalain pa ang Kagalang-galang na Kongresistang Sponsor, subalit hindi po natin maiwasan na punahin, sapagkat kapagka hindi natin binigyang diin ang ating kultura at iyong ating pagka-Filipino, iyong ating pagkatao ang ating isinasawalang-bahala diyan. Mawawalan po tayo ng direksyon, iyong paggalang natin sa ating bansa, at pagmamahal natin sa ating bandila.

Incidentally, let me point out to you. Pumunta kayo sa EDSA, doon sa dambana ng EDSA, makikita po ninyo roon how we treat our own flag. Ang bandila ng Filipino na ngayon ay puro nanggigitata, wala po namang gumagalaw, siguro walang pondo. Iyong bandila roon sa gitna, sa kalagitnaan ng People Power Monument ay gutay-gutay na, wala ring pumapansin, siguro wala kayong pondo.

The point that I am trying to raise, Mr. Speaker, is that, all of these things that we are doing in Congress, all of the other departments will come to naught. They will not be able to make any dent in our future unless we give full meaning and substance to our culture and the arts. Para sa akin, mas importante po iyan sa maraming paraan, isa rito sa ating mga pinagtatalunan dito.

Ang akin po ay pagpuna sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor. Sana ay mahiya kayo sa inyong pagtatanggol nitong badyet na ito sapagkat nakakahiya po ito. Alam ninyo, kung nabubuhay po ang dakilang komedyante, si Mang Naning Contreras, otherwise known as Pugo, tatawagin niya ang badyet na ito na “dasalasa nonsense,” sapagkat walang pupuntahan ito. How do we develop a Cecile Licad? How do we develop a pianist? How do we develop the young Filipino artists now who are just waiting for an opportunity to go to this world stage of entertainment? They cannot and they will not develop. We have not had a serious cultural program in the Philippines for the past 30 years. I am going to say it over and over again, the last cultural program we heard about was the program of the former First Lady Imelda Romualdez Marcos. After that, five Presidents came and went, they did not mind the cultural needs of the Filipinos.

Nakalulungkot po sapagkat kung titingnan natin ang yaman at kulay ng ating kultura ay maaari po namang, sa palagay ko, ay pakinabangan ng lahat ng industriya ito, kagaya ng industriya ng paggawa ng sine, which we already once dominated. Ngayon, kung hindi rin lang

kayo kasama sa sindikato, hindi po kayo makapapasok sa paggawa ng pelikula.

Ang mga pagsasanay na ibinigay ng ating dating Unang Ginang, na ngayon ay pinakikinabangan ng ating bansa, hindi na po mauulit iyan sapagkat wala pong nangangalaga ng ating mga magagaling na manganganta, mananayaw at mga artista na puwede po naman sigurong pakinabangan ng ating ekonomiya kung talagang mabibigyan ng pagkakataon.

Kung mayroon ditong pamilya ang National Commission for Culture and the Arts, I am calling their attention, do not just enjoy your employment. Mag-worry kayo, mag-alala kayo, baka malaki ang pagkakasala nating lahat kung hindi natin papansinin ito.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, I thank the honorable colleague, Honorable Atienza, for raising several very important points, and I, being the Sponsor of the NCCA, also fully acknowledge all the points that he has emphasized and raised. Being the Sponsor, yes, I also agree, medyo nakakahiya nga pong mag-defend ng hindi masyado kalakihang budget, lalo na po sa budget ng NCCA, ang opisina ng ine-expect ho nating tutulong at magpapalago ng ating kultura.

Thank you very much, Honorable Atienza, for raising those points, and we will take note of that. Again, this Representation would appreciate it if there are measures that will be proposed by this honorable Body for an increase in the budget of the NCCA.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, uulitin ko po ang mensahe. Bilang Kongreso ng Pilipinas, pinupuna ko ang pondong ito na hinihingi ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor. Ito po ay malaking insulto sa ating kagalingan. This is an insult on the capacity of the Filipino to develop his own culture and the arts, because if we just do not even mind what is now being discussed, we might as well forget about the other departments because the culture and the arts, the foundation of our society as a people, ito po ang pinuhunan ng ating mga ninuno. Ang ating taglay na pag-uugali ngayon ay galing po sa sining at kalinangan. Kung hindi po natin bibigyan ng halaga, isara na natin lahat ng opisina ng kultura. Palagay ko ay hindi na kailangang pag-usapan pa, at tayong lahat ay kumuha na lang ng tablet at sumunod tayo sa banyagang pag-iisip, sumunod na lang tayo sa kultura ng mga lahing naligaw na ng landas.

Hindi maliligaw ang Pilipino, Mr. Speaker, kung palagi natin iisipin na tayo ay Pilipino, mayroon tayong sariling kagalingan, sariling kasaysayan, at sariling kabayanihan na ating maaaring ipagmalaki sa lahat ng yugto ng sining at kalinangan. Kung iyan ay musika, kung iyan ay pelikula, kung iyan ay entablado, kayangkaya pong isadula ng ating magagaling na manunulat, scriptwriters, songwriters, playwrights, theater directors,

film directors, name it and we have what it is to give the world a quality picture of what the Filipino is all about.

Sana, punahin din ang bandila natin na nakakahiyang iwinawagayway na gutay-gutay at nanggigitata. Hindi po ganyan ang pagtingin at paggalang sa bandila ng sinumang bansa. If we cannot respect and honor our own flag, wala tayong kabuluhan sa ating pagganap ng ating tungkulin dito. Kailangan po nating bigyan ng pahalaga ito. Bahagi ito ng ating pagpapahalaga sa ating kasaysayan sa pamamagitan ng sining at kalinangan.

We take note of this as we continue to encourage those in the commission today to demand for a bigger budget and we will be behind them. If we can only propose a bigger budget, but we are not allowed to do so, we will propose maybe five times more, pero hindi pa rin kasya iyan, maybe 10 times more para naman po makagalaw kayo nang tama. Otherwise, mag-resign na lang kayong lahat sa trabaho ninyo dahil wala naman kayong magagawang tama dito sa darating na taon.

We urge all of you to fight for what you stand for. You are the guardians of culture and the arts, then you must fulfill your mandate. Defend the Filipino culture and the arts. Wala pong tanggapan ang mangangalaga nito, hindi ang social welfare, hindi po ang military na katatapos lamang natin, kundi ang National Commission on Culture and the Arts. If we do not know the full meaning and substance of this responsibility, then we, indeed, have a problem. But wait, who knows the importance of what we stand for and what we are trying to accomplish for our people, a better future sa ating sariling kagalingan at pagsusumikap ay magagawa po natin ang lahat ng ating adhikain kung tayo ay tatayo para sa tama. Why give so much money to other departments if we are not giving enough for our culture and arts in our system.

With that reminder, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Lady, kung tatanungin ko kayo, ano ang maaari pa nating maidagdag in the immediate future, as we will write a piece of communication to the Department of Budget and Management baka sila gumising at maibigay pa sa atin? With 34 employees, can you deliver the mandate of the office? Sabi nga po ni Pugo, “dasalasa nonsense” kung saan 34 na tao ang magde-deliver ng inyong mandato. Impossible at hindi po magagawa iyan. Suwelduhan na lang natin sila, pero wala silang magagawa para sa kagalingan ng ating mga kabataan na ngayon ay hindi alam kung bakit sila Pilipino. Hindi alam ang himig Pilipino. Hindi alam ang kundiman. Hindi alam ang rondalla. Hindi alam ang maraming bahagi ng ating kasaysayan. Kaawa-awa po naman kapag tinanong kayo ng inyong mga anak at mga apo, ano iyang naririnig natin; what is that we are hearing? They are hearing a masterpiece of rondallas, rondalla maestros of the past. Why? Because we have not been promoting our own culture. We are

insisting that we take note of this. Kasinghalaga po ito ng Department of National Defense, kasinghalaga po ito ng ating pinapamahaging salapi sa mahihirap. Dahil kung hindi natin sila bibigyan ng direksyon at inspirasyon, wala rin po silang pupuntahan sa kanilang hinaharap.

The culture and the arts of a people are the foundations and strength of a nation. Kaya kung hindi po natin papansinin ay kasalanan ng mga empleyado ngayon at ng namumuno sa National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Kayo po ang dapat lumalaban at handa kaming tumulong sa inyo. With that, Mr. Speaker, we hope we have taken note of our big discrepancy in this national budget that we are discussing. Kasama pa naman ito sa 10-Point Program ng ating Pangulo pero hindi naman binigyan ng pera. Kaya po sa kanilang galaw, tayo naman ay magtulong-tulong. Humingi kayo ng badyet at kung gusto at kailangan ninyo ng sponsor, the Minority in Congress together with the Majority will support your demand, hindi po request—demand for a bigger fund and budget so that you can deliver your mandate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Thank you very much.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, this Representation takes note of all the comments.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, on that note, as a member of the Minority, I would discourage anyone interpellating on the budget of National Archives of the Philippines, the National Commission on the Libraries and Information Science, and the other cultural offices. Aprubahan na po natin lahat ito para hindi tayo nakakahiya sa sarili natin.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, there are actually several interpellators also in line. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Rene L. Relampagos from the First District of Bohol for his interpellation of the NCCA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable Rene Relampagos from Bohol is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Dep. Majority Leader.

I come from a province where we give priority to the preservation and development of culture and the arts. In fact, if I may share with you the vision of our province, the province of Bohol, our vision is, we want Bohol to become the prime eco-cultural tourism destination in the country. Our emphasis is not just

developing Bohol to become a prime eco-tourism site with a balanced agro-industrialization, with high regard for the care of the environment, but also develop Bohol into becoming an eco-cultural tourism destination. In order for the province to realize this vision, we sought to it that we could put in place the necessary mechanism by which we could achieve, push on to this vision, and thus under the set-up of the local government unit of the province of Bohol, we have under the provincial government an office which is called the Center for Culture and the Arts.

With that as my introduction, I would like to follow through the interpellation made by the distinguished Representative from the Party-List BUHAY, the Honorable Atienza, that there is a need on our part to support the National Commission for Culture and the Arts insofar as attaining its mandate. But how can they when they are not given the right support? We just had the budget hearing of the Department of National Defense. How could they, the NCCA, be able to fulfill its role, its mandate before the Filipino nation when they are not given sufficient ammunition and armaments to be able to do as they are tasked to do.

Why do I say so, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor? It is because of the fact that I see in the proposed budget of the NCCA for calendar year 2017 a very significant and substantial cut. For the year 2016, under the General Appropriations Act of 2016, the NCCA was given by the Congress of the Philippines, and as approved by the President, P188 million more or less, to support its programs, activities and operation. But here we are, discussing its proposed budget for 2017, and from P188 million, it is now P31 million. What is the explanation for this? I would like to ask, Mme. Speaker, why the big cut? While our proposed budget for the year 2017 has increased by 11.6 percent, we have here a government agency which is given a very important role and its budget is being decreased by no less than 83 percent. I repeat, 83 percent. Why is this so, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, as the Sponsor of the NCCA, I can only quote the answer of the DBM to the NCCA when they made representation also of their budget. What has been said to them was that the cut is due to the fact that local fund sourcing shall instead be taken from the NEFCA. The NCCA has two sources of funds: the GAA, which is the one we are discussing now; and the NEFCA, which is the National Endowment Fund for Culture and Arts. For 2016, the allocation of P188 million has been reduced, now, for 2017, to only P31 million for the reason that other sources shall be taken now from the NEFCA. Unfortunately, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the allocation from the NEFCA has also been reduced.

Whatever further reason for that, even the NCCA and this Representation could still not find the right answer, except that the DBM wants the source to be taken from the NEFCA, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Mme. Speaker, the distinguished Sponsor is right insofar as funds to support the conduct of the different programs and activities, as well as the maintenance and operation of the NCCA does not solely come from the GAA but also from another source which is the National Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts. This is where money is sourced for the NCCA's share from the proceeds of the travel tax, if I am not mistaken. But then again, Mme. Speaker, as the distinguished Sponsor said, even the corresponding proposed budget that will come from the NEFCA is also substantially reduced by P254 million. Even if we say so that the DBM is very optimistic, that despite the 83 percent cut in the NCCA's proposed budget under the GAB for the year 2017, the NCCA could still manage, considering that they have another source, as the Sponsor said.

Then again, my question is, how will they be able to manage when the source of the other fund that you are talking about is also substantially decreased. How would you reconcile this?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this Representation has the same question. I have the same question that the Gentleman from Bohol is raising and which question, even during the budget briefing, has been raised. Again, as I manifested earlier, as I expressed earlier, this Representation would be very appreciative if there will be measures, there will be initiatives that would be raised by the Members of this Congress in order to address the said concern.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, earlier I heard from the Honorable Atienza that insofar as the NCCA is concerned, they only have 32 personnel with plantilla positions. Is that correct?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is true, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. So, we are only talking here of 34 warm bodies that will serve the entire country insofar as the NCCA being able to realize and accomplish whatever mandate that had been given them under the law that created them?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is true, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. May I know, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, based on the cut of 83 percent from

P188 million, which is now P31 million, what specific programs and activities were prejudiced?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, with the reduction of their budget, one of the programs that will be affected would be the cultural mapping, and the capacity also of NCCA to address other concerns, other requests of other provinces that would like to avail of the services of the NCCA, and that probably would include the province of Bohol which is a recipient of several NCCA projects, Your Honor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Well, I could see that based on the 2016 budget of NCCA, they have allotted P163 million for MOOE and more or less that amount was and is being used by the NCCA to support the different activities and programs under the different sub-commissions under it. Am I right?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. In other words, the deduction from the MOOE of the NCCA, the 83 percent deduction is then very material to the heart and soul of that agency. So, how can we in conscience accept this and not just do anything about this?

Firstly, what is very apparent and clear, as already mentioned by the Honorable Atienza, we lack in providing adequate, substantial support to NCCA. For one, they only have 34 personnel. There is a need, I believe, for NCCA to add more regular positions. We can create and approve thousands of new items in the Department of Education which used to have that mandate, culture, because the Department of Education used to be DECS before and so, culture was then part of it. If we are increasing, by how many thousands the number of policemen, Armed Forces personnel, why cannot we increase the personnel complement of the NCCA when it is very clear that it is a necessity, knowing that they only have 34 to serve the entire country?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, just for the record, while there are 34 plantilla personnel working under the NCCA, there are 98 contractual workers who form part of the manpower of the NCCA working in the entire nation.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Well, I am very happy to take note of that other than the 34 regular employees under the NCCA, there is an additional—94, you said?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). yes, 98, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. There are 98 who are employed either as contractual employees or job order employees. May I know, Mme. Speaker, and Mme. Sponsor, in the case of the 98 hired JOs and contracts of service, how long have these people been in service? A month, a year, 5 years, 10 years?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, per records of the NCCA, some of them have worked 20 years in the NCCA, some for 15 years, and some for at least 10 years.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Wow. Some have worked for 20 years, some have worked for 15, 10 years, and the rest, less than 10 years. My question, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, these 98 employees, upon reaching the age of retirement, if ever their services will be retained until their age of retirement, will they be receiving any privilege or any benefit like those who are in the career service wherein they could have payment for their terminal leave, for the monetization of whatever leave that they have, and then retirement and pension, things like that? Would they enjoy these?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, sad to say, they will not be able to receive any and, in fact, even at this point, while they are working, they do not receive any benefits from the government, being contractuels.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. My God, they will not be receiving anything after spending 20 years of their fruitful and productive life serving the Filipino people. What will happen to them when they are already 65 and they would be needing medicines, for example, in their old age? There will be nothing, not even PhilHealth coverage?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the observation is correct, they will receive no benefits.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. In that case, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, I really find the urgency and the necessity for us to look into the situation of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, especially so if we are to talk about people who are involved in the service of the Filipino nation. May I know further, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, under the proposed budget for 2017, did the NCCA make any proposal to the effect that they would like to have more regular items created for the agency?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, for several years, the NCCA had been proposing this for so many times, the increase in the personnel services

of the NCCA, but unfortunately, only the 34 plantilla personnel were given the funding and their proposal for the increase forms part of the cut that has been reflected for the 2017 budget.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. So I see, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. So, the creation of additional items for the NCCA became victim to the gargantuan cut made from their present 2016 budget to the proposed 2017 budget. If I may ask further, to be more specific, how many positions were proposed to be created supposedly to increase the present 34 personnel complement by the year 2017 supposedly?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the NCCA has proposed additional 31 key positions, at least 31 and that number is for the NCCA to be able to work efficiently.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. It is only 31, and we are even depriving them that 31.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is true, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. Talking about other specific programs or activities of the NCCA that are being funded in their current budget for 2016, as a result of the cut, what specific activities, programs or projects will be prejudiced in the year 2017?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the following programs would be affected by the cut: first is the program on Escuela Taller, the program of NCCA for the out-of-school youth. There is also this program for scholarship for the arts; this program on Centro Rizal, the funding for schools for living traditions; and the cultural and heritage mapping projects, and the Filipino heritage festivals, Mme. Speaker.

REP. RELAMPAGOS. In other words, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, there are quite a lot of programs that are going to be prejudiced as a result of this budgetary cut that we would be doing. I would like to make this appeal to the honorable Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, to my colleagues here in the Seventeenth Congress, let us not allow this to happen. Can we not make an exception by way of standing behind the NCCA?

You know, whenever people would come to my province of Bohol, whenever they would ask me the question: Mr. Congressman, what do you think would be the best attraction of your province—Is it the Chocolate Hills? Is it the Loboc River Cruise? Is it the manmade forest? Is it the different adventure activities that one can engage into? Would it be the

dolphin watching, tarsier watching, going to the white beaches, the heritage sites and the like? I always tell them that I do not consider these different destinations or tourism products as Bohol's best attraction. I still consider the Boholano people or our people as our best attraction, and considering that culture defines us as a people, culture defines our identity, our sense of nationhood.

I believe that we should give the NCCA sufficient support for them to be able to accomplish its mandate. So, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, I would like to propose, for the leadership's kind consideration, that at the very least, let us support the NCCA where they could have at least the 31 permanent key positions that they are requesting in order for them to be able to do what they have been tasked to do. In order also not to prejudice at least a third of the 98 other employees and officials serving in the NCCA under job orders or contracts of service, where at the end of the day when they have reached retirement age, they will no longer be receiving anything, not even a single centavo, for the service that they did, if it can be made possible that we create the 98 positions, then well and good. Considering budgetary consideration, probably, there is justice that at the very least, we can start by creating and approving the 31 permanent positions that they have asked for.

Secondly, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, I would like to appeal to this august Body, to the leadership, to the Committee on Appropriations that we find the means by which we can also substantially restore the cut made in their proposed budget under the General Appropriations Bill for 2017, that instead of making an 83 percent cut from P188 million to P31 million, at the very least, we could restore what is needed in order for the NCCA to be able to sustain and continue with their present programs and activities which you have mentioned like Escuela Taller, the program for Centro Rizal, the cultural and heritage mapping and other activities where they are presently engaged in in the current year. For these, I wish to appeal to you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, to make the necessary representations with the DBM and the Committee on Appropriations as a whole so that we will be able to give justice to this great injustice as I see it.

With that, I close my interpellation and I thank the honorable Sponsor for favorably listening and answering me on the points that I just raised.

Thank you and good afternoon to one and all.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, I thank the honorable colleague for his manifestation and support for the NCCA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Edcel C. Lagman from the First District of Albay for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Edcel C. Lagman from the First District of Albay is hereby recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some questions?

REP. ZAMORA (M.) Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Let me preface my questions with a statement that culture is the embodiment of a country's or peoples' heritage. Its primacy in a country's development should never be underestimated. A country's development cannot be fully measured by the extent of its colonial conquest or by the impressiveness of its national domestic product or its gross domestic product. To a great extent, a nation's progress is shaped by the advancement of its culture and the arts.

It is for this reason that the Philippines, like other countries, truly endeavors to preserve and enhance its cultural heritage through cultural agencies like the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. Mme. Speaker, would the distinguished Sponsor agree to these statements?

REP. ZAMORA (M.) This Representation fully agrees.

REP. LAGMAN. When I was Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations several years ago, I made it a point to augment the proposed appropriations for all the cultural agencies, including the National Library, the National Museum, the National Archives of the Philippines, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, and other allied cultural agencies. So, I feel that we may be committing treason, so to speak, if we do not give the appropriate budget for the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the other cultural agencies.

Let me go to specific budgetary items. For 2016, the budget of the NCCA from the General Appropriations Act was P188.378 million. Is that correct?

REP. ZAMORA (M.) That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Its budgetary outlay from the National Endowment Fund for Culture and Arts was P677.828 million. Is that correct?

REP. ZAMORA (M.) That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Or a combined budget of P868.206 million for the current calendar or fiscal year of 2016. Is that correct?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Now, we go to the proposed 2017 Budget. From the GAB, its proposed budget has been radically reduced to P31.208 million. Is that correct, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. From the NEFCA, it has been reduced to P423.190 million, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Is that correct?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. The total combined reduction, both from the GAB and from the NEFCA, is P454.398 million. Is that correct?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. It is correct. How do we expect this agency to truly discharge its mandate with such a meager appropriation? So, we have a problem, we have a big problem, and we must have a big solution. Is that correct, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. The big solution to this big problem is not only to restore the 2016 level of appropriations for this agency, but to even augment such appropriation for next calendar year. Is that correct, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). I welcome that suggestion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, I belong to the Minority and at the end of the day, it will be the super majority, to which the distinguished Sponsor belong, that would have to decide this augmentation. But definitely, we would cooperate; we would join the super majority in making this remedial measure for an erratic appropriation, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. It is not correct, after bemoaning the meager appropriation for the NCCA, to ask that the budget of this agency and its other cultural agencies

be approved. No way should we approve it. At the proper time, we should not only restore their 2016 level but even augment it. Is that a correct position, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. If that is so, then let us ask the agency to submit to the Committee on Appropriations, through the distinguished Sponsor, the budget they would need to truly discharge their mandate, and make the proposition that culture is the embodiment of our people's heritage, and that culture and the arts play a very prominent role in the development and progress of our country.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, this Representation will get back to the NCCA and ask them to revisit their proposal, and submit immediately to this Representation and to the Committee on Appropriations their revised proposal.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, this will not only involve restoration to the 2016 level, but even a reasonable augmentation. I know there are a lot of funds in the proposed national budget, and we will be able to source out the requisite funds in order to make the necessary appropriation. No less than the Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations committed that he is going to protect the plenary power of the House in the appropriation of funds, and that Members of this House, individually or collectively, can modify, amend, augment the National Expenditure Program proposed by the President as embodied in toto in the General Appropriations Bill. Is that correct, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, and we will consider that, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. We do not just appropriate funds because the power of Congress to appropriate will also include the power of oversight.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. So, just in case we grant this augmentation to the NCCA, I would request the leadership of the House to exercise its oversight function so that we will know how well and effectively the funds are utilized by the agency. Is that correct, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you so much for allowing this Representation to make this interpellation, and thank you so much, distinguished Sponsor, for allying yourself with the protection of our cultural agencies. Maraming salamat.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, this Representation also thanks the Hon. Edcel Lagman for the pointers raised earlier and for the suggestion, being a former Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations in the past Congress. This Representation will take note of all those suggestions. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Rosenda Ann Ocampo from the Sixth District of Manila for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable Ocampo from Manila is hereby recognized.

REP. OCAMPO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. My question is regarding the money earmarked for the NCCA that they have not received from—is it the Travel Fund or from PAGCOR, what is it?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, is the Lady referring to the NEFCA or the National Endowment Fund for Culture and the Arts?

REP. OCAMPO. Yes.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). The source of NEFCA, Mme. Speaker, comes from the TIEZA; it is 10 percent of the travel tax.

REP. OCAMPO. May I know how much is the fund that has accumulated and that has not been remitted to the NCCA, and for what period of time?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, per record of the NCCA, as of today, the accumulated NEFCA fund is P1.6 billion, but P600 million of this is seed capital and cannot be used by the NCCA.

REP. OCAMPO. It is P1.6 billion, but P600 million of which cannot be touched and is being used as the seed capital of the NCCA?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. OCAMPO. So, what does the Committee on Appropriations intend to do for the release of these funds? The answer to questions propounded by those who came before me will be answered if the funds were already deposited or released to the NCCA. Ibig sabihin, Mme. Speaker, there is P1 billion that should be remitted to the NCCA for the promulgation, for the enhancement of the appreciation of culture and the arts. This has been going on for how many years, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, since the NCCA was established 26 years ago, the agency already had the NEFCA. As I said earlier, as of today, we have P1 billion in the treasury under the NEFCA, and the P423.190 million proposed fund for 2017 shall be sourced out from the P1.6 billion fund in the Treasury under NEFCA.

REP. OCAMPO. Yesterday, we were astounded when we discovered the fact that the country is awash with funds, that we do not even have to borrow money because there is enough money, that we have a lot of dollar reserves. Yet here we are withholding the release of a billion pesos for the promotion and preservation of culture and the arts of our country. Is there any kind of definitive action from this Congress on the budget for the past several years? Will we repeat the same situation for 2017 when, in fact, the soul of the country, the soul of the Filipino is heavily dependent on how we portray him, on how we give importance to culture and the arts?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, the suggestions earlier raised by the Members of this Congress may be the best way for us to be able to source out funds because it was the DBM which approved the amount of P423,190,000 for 2017. I believe, as the Sponsor of this agency, if there are interventions, if there are actions to be taken just like what has been suggested earlier by the Members of Congress, then I believe this question might be answered.

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker, it has nothing to do with the budget being approved by the DBM. These are funds that are earmarked for the preservation and conservation of culture and the arts of the Philippines. These are earmarked funds from the TIEZA and therefore, actually if you take a look at it, there is no need for the DBM to approve the GAA to include this amount in the budget of the NCCA. This amount belongs to the NCCA and is not generated from income or resources that are traditional funding sources of the GAA.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, this funding forms part of the money in the Treasury and therefore, it is still the DBM which approves the allocation. This is taken from the income from the travel tax and this

goes to the National Treasury and therefore, its release is subject to the DBM for approval, Mme. Speaker.

REP. OCAMPO. Does the Sponsor think that it is about time that we release this fund to the NCCA after all these years that it has been impounded? In fact, a law crafted and approved by this very Congress sets aside that amount precisely for the conservation and preservation of culture and the arts.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, with appropriate policy from here, we can improve the manner of implementation of these funds.

REP. OCAMPO. I regret that the answer of the distinguished Sponsor is not satisfactory, Mme. Speaker, because I would like to see the very Chairman of this agency of government to be the one who will push, initiate and persevere in securing the additional budget necessary for the implementation of the mandate of the NCCA.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I think the agency is restricted from using immediately, directly, the money because of the One-Fund policy of the government where all income shall go back to the National Treasury and be subject to ...

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker, coming in on the heels of the information divulged yesterday that we are awash with cash, that there is good liquidity in the financial system, we find no reason for impounding this fund that can be put to very good use so that the Filipino youth can be very clear about the beautiful attributes of our culture, of our identity through the promotion of programs, that have everything to do with culture and the arts.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, I submit to the observation of Her Honor, the observation is valid. However, let me reiterate that because of the One-Fund policy, we are restricted and so, this honorable Chamber may be able to recommend the improvement of this policy and to check and amend this policy so that we will be able to improve the implementation of this program.

REP. OCAMPO. Mme. Speaker, I hope that the distinguished Sponsor will join me in a resolution to be signed by many of our colleagues, including yourself, if you will agree and join us that impounded funds especially for the NCCA be released, so that we can come up with real, credible programs that can be felt and we can improve the many programs of the NCCA.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for your reply.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Rep. Anna Marie Villaraza-Suarez of ALONA Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable Villaraza-Suarez is hereby recognized.

REP. VILLARAZA-SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, there being no other Members from the Minority who wish to ask questions, I move to terminate the period of interpellation on the budget of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

REP. DE VENECIA. On behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation on the budget of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The termination of the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts is hereby approved.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Anna Marie Villaraza-Suarez for interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable Villaraza-Suarez is hereby recognized.

REP. VILLARAZA-SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, there being no other Members from the Minority who wish to ask questions, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budgets of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, National Library of the Philippines and National Archives of the Philippines.

REP. DE VENECIA. On behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budgets of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, National Library of the Philippines and National Archives of the Philippines.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The termination of the period of interpellation and debate on the budgets of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, National Library of the Philippines and National Archives of the Philippines is hereby approved.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

REP. MERCADO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of the budget for a few minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The consideration of House Bill No. 3408 is hereby suspended.

REP. FARIÑAS. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Majority Leader is recognized.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES

REP. FARIÑAS. May I move for the election of the following Members to various Committees:

The Majority Leader, Rep. Rodolfo C. Fariñas, read the names of the House Members elected to the various Committees, per Journal No. 27, dated September 27, 2016.

COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

As members:

Rep. Makmod D. Mending Jr.
Rep. Emmeline Aglipay-Villar
Rep. Michael L. Romero, PhD

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Mariano Michael M. Velarde Jr.

As member:

Rep. Sarah Jane I. Elago

COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SERVICES

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Sabiniano S. Canama

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Jesulito A. Manalo

As members:

Rep. Rodel M. Batocabe
Rep. Rico B. Geron
Rep. Jose T. Panganiban Jr., CPA, LLB
Rep. Estrellita B. Suansing

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

As member:

Rep. Marlyn L. Primicias-Agabas

COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTS

As members:

Rep. Michelle M. Antonio vice Rep. Antonio L. Tinio
Rep. Tricia Nicole Q. Velasco-Catera
Rep. Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy
Rep. Makmod D. Mending Jr.

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

As members:

Rep. Arlene D. Brosas
Rep. Sabiniano S. Canama
Rep. Virgilio S. Lacson
Rep. Ron P. Salo
Rep. Shernee Abubakar Tan
Rep. Carlos Roman L. Uybarreta
Rep. Mark O. Go

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

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Rep. Divina Grace C. Yu vice Rep. Carlito S. Marquez

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Members named by the Majority Leader are elected to their respective committees.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REP. GONZALES (A. D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the proposed budget of the Department of Education.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

REP. GONZALES (A.D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from AKBAYAN Party-List, Rep. Tomasito “Tom” S. Villarín.

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Gentleman is recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, may I ask for a one-minute suspension. I still would like to request the DepEd family to be on the floor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is suspended.

It was 7:11 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:15 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Maria Carmen “Maricar” S. Zamora of the First District of Compostela Valley for her sponsorship of the proposed budget.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Maricar Zamora of Compostela Valley is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. ZAMORA (M.)

REP. ZAMORA (M.). The honorable Speaker, colleagues, fellow workers in the government:

Good evening. The Department of Education and its attached agencies adopted a theme for their proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget—quality, accessible, relevant and liberating basic education for all.

For next year, the DepEd and its attached agencies aim to utilize a total amount of P567,561,234,000, over P567 billion, representing the single biggest allocation among the social service agencies of the government as mandated by the Constitution of the Republic. It is broken down as follows: Office of the Secretary, with an allocation of P566,238,678,000; the National Book Development Board, with P37,574,000; the National Council for Children’s Television, with P14,276,000; the National Museum, with P657,770,000; the Philippine High School for the Arts, with P132,569,000; and the Early Childhood Care and Development Council, with a proposed budget of P480,367,000. This early, the DepEd recognizes the challenges of the major reforms in basic education, particularly the new K to 12 curriculum which is still grappling with transition predicaments. The Department and its attached agencies, however, are firm in their commitment that they will be achieved by the educational system during the term of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte.

Your Honor, this Representation is now ready to answer questions on the proposed Fiscal Year 2017 budget of the Department of Education and its agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, following our procedure, we would like to recognize the Congresswoman from the ACT TEACHERS Party-List, France L. Castro, to make her interpellation ahead of AKBAYAN Party-List Rep. Tom S. Villarín.

I so move, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Hon. France L. Castro from ACT TEACHERS is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader. So, would the Sponsor yield to some questions?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). These are just follow-up questions. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. First of all, I would like to thank the Undersecretary of Finance—the DepEd family through the Undersecretary of Finance—for the immediate action to my query last pre-plenary as regards the utilization of or the status report on the implementation of the grant of the step increments to the teachers with specialization in science and mathematics. Alam po natin, mula doon sa recent news galing sa Department of Education, that the Department of Education is scarce of mathematics and science teachers. Kaya ito pong memorandum granting three steps higher doon sa kanilang suweldo ay magbibigay ng greater motivation for our mathematics and science teachers to stay in the service. According to the report, we have 2,214 teacher-qualifiers who will benefit from the three-step increments by 2214. And, there are still requests from the DBM, for the amount, to pay the remaining number of teachers, the salary differentials that are not paid yet.

So, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, may I ask what is our data in terms of the number of teachers in Mathematics and Science, both in elementary and secondary. Because, I think 2,214 is too small a number for the Science and Mathematics teachers to be qualified.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, may I request for a one-minute suspension as I still have to get the exact data from the DepEd?

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The session is suspended.

It was 7:21 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:23 p.m. the session was resumed with Rep. Juan Pablo “Rimpy” P. Bondoc presiding.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc.). The session is resumed.
The honorable Sponsor may reply.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). With the indulgence of her Honor, may we be allowed to just skip to another question and then we can go back to that question later; meanwhile we are still getting the data from the DepEd’s planning division.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, certainly, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

So the second question is that—this is just a follow-up question as regards the memorandum that I asked regarding the Daily Lesson Log. Dr. Dina said that they are still reviewing and validating the presentation I had during the presentation or briefing on the budget for the Department of Education. So she said that they are just reviewing the policy on the DLL. So that was last August 12. However, may I present some of the comments from our teachers that we have gathered in our survey as regards the DLL so that this may be helpful to them in deciding on simplifying the DLL. So ang ilan po sa mga comments ng mga teachers natin ay babasahin ko po:

Okay po ang dating DLL. Ang parusa ay iyong bagong DLL po.

Time consuming—basta na lang ipinagagawa nang walang seminar at kung paano ito gagawin.

At this juncture, Representative Bondoc relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Mercedes K. Alvarez.

Five years required ang mga new teachers to make the DLL. Makatutulong din sa kanila iyan pero, katulad namin na more than 20 years of teaching, memorized na iyong paikot-ikot sa pagtuturo lalo na sa mga books.

Sana pagtuunan ng pansin kasi po marami sa mga guro natin ang nahihirapan at paano po matatawag na paperless kung maya-maya ay pinagagawa ng reports.

Ilan pa po sa mga comments ng mga teachers na nakita natin ay ang mga ito, nakalagay po:

Tama po kayong lahat ang oras na nagagamit natin sa paggagawa ng lesson plan ay igawad na lang natin sa paggawa ng mga learning materials or para sa mga remedial lesson, reinforcement, enrichment, etc. Dagdag budget nga kasi wala namang ibinibigay na materials.

Let us pray for the changes.

Let us pray for the abolition of this DLL.

So, Mme. Sponsor, may I know kung mayroon na pong final answer ang ating Department of Education regarding sa policy or changes sa policy dito sa DLL.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department is presently studying the use of the DLL and since it has to be a comprehensive study, hanggang ngayon po ay pinag-aaralan pa. And, being the Vice Chairperson of the Department, may I respectfully request her Honor to also furnish this Representation a copy of all those comments so that we could include that in the study being conducted by DepEd so that it will form part of the observations and comments on the program.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Certainly, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

Aside pa po doon sa paggawa ng lesson plan ng ating mga teachers, may mga ipinasáng trabaho sa mga guro ang iba't ibang ahensya ng ating gobyerno. Halimbawa po: sa DOH – iyong deworming, feeding, and vaccination; sa DOST – iyong radar and anti-dengue campaign; sa DSWD – 4Ps, IPs, CPP implementation; sa NDRRMS – hazard mapping, radar report, earthquake, and fire drill report; sa PNP – anti-drug and bullying campaign; sa COMELEC – BEI in national and local election; sa NSO – magbabahay-bahay at magbibilang ng population; sa DENR – tree planting, caring and growing, climate change; sa NCCA – festival of arts and talents, theater arts, etc; sa PST – sports at palarong pambansa benchmarking; sa DA – gulayan; sa CHR – report child abuse, etc.; at sa AFP – mediator between rebels and minorities. Baka naman po sa DPWH ay, sa susunod, gagawa na ang mga teachers ng mga tulay sa susunod na hinaharap.

So, ano po ba iyong hakbang, Mme. Sponsor, ng ating Department of Education para mabawasan itong non-teaching related na ginagawa po ng ating mga guro at saka iyong mga clerical work na ipinapasa dahil sa kakulangan ng mga personnel na mag-aasikaso po dito.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, sa kasalukuyan, ang Department of Education ay nag-create na po ng mga non-teaching positions sa respective divisions and districts para matugunan iyong mga concerns na sinabi ng ating kagalang-galang na kasamahan. These non-teaching items will form part of the support items that will be in charge of those programs being mentioned so as not to load, or to give heavy tasks for extracurricular activities for teaching personnel.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maaasahan ko ba, Mme. Sponsor, maaasahan ba ng Representasyong ito na mag-i-issue ng guidelines or memorandum ang ating Department of Education para ma-ease out na itong mga non-teaching related, at makapag-concentrate ang ating mga guro doon sa kanilang mandato or sa kanilang trabaho talaga, at siyempre maibigay, at mai-deliver nila iyong kalidad na edukasyon?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the guidelines will come after all the items have been filled up; they will be created and these items will form part of the budget that is being proposed for 2017.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you for your answer, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

My next item, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, is on the items for substitute teachers.

Currently, there are no rules requiring school principals to hire a substitute teacher in place of a teacher who is on maternity leave. It is a prevalent practice for school administrators to either give extra load to the other teacher or to dissolve classes and distribute the students to other sections whenever one teacher goes on maternity leave. Some teachers even go to work during their maternity leave in order to answer the needs of their students. This current situation undermines the welfare of our teachers and the students. This setup results in the detriment of the quality of education in general as it deprives students of a good learning environment.

So, mayroon po bang—parang hindi ko yata gaanong napansin iyong items or amount na in-allocate ng Department of Education as regards the substitute teachers doon sa magma-maternity leave. Puwede po bang malaman kung magkano iyong amount na ito?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, there is a budget for the payment of substitute teachers, and this is lodged under the elementary school and secondary education schools. In fact, in the 2015 budget allocation, we have a total of P2.1 billion allocation intended for the payment of substitute teachers. For 2017, we have—the Department of Education has proposed an appropriation of P2.4 billion intended for the substitution of teachers.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you for the answer, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

So, may I know the utilization of those funds from 2015 up to 2016.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, as of today, there is—in the record of DepEd, it is reflected that there is a 65-percent recorded utilization out of the total budget allocated in the 2015 Budget.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Sixty-five percent, pero alam ninyo po, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, nahihirapan po iyong mga teachers natin, at lalung-lalo na po iyong ating mga—siyempre iyong magma-maternity leave na hindi nagagamit ito doon sa purpose. Thirty-five percent is an amount. So, may I know the reasons bakit ito hindi nayu-utilize.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor,

as to the utilization of this fund, it varies from one region to another. Nagkakaiba-iba po, depende sa pangangailangan ng bawat region. And itong 65 percent na naka-reflect po sa ating record ng Department of Education, it reflects that some regions have different needs than the other regions. Hindi ho pare-pareho ang paggamit nila, and until now, kaya po hanggang ngayon ay may naiwan pang pondo, and I am referring to the 2015 Budget allocation which is still valid as of today.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, nag-aalala po ang Representasyong ito, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, doon sa hindi natin paggamit doon sa in-allocate naman natin na pondo para sa substitute teachers.

So, marami po kaming natatanggap na reklamo ng mga teachers tungkol dito sa pagsa-substitute na ito. At siyempre, worried po tayo. Ang Representasyong ito ay worried po na nag-a-allocate tayo taun-taon pero hindi naman pala nagagamit ng Department of Education.

So, puwede po bang ma-provide, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang Representasyong ito ng data noong mga 18 regions ng utilization nito, at para makagawa po kami ng imbestigasyon dito sa mga schools or mga institusyon na hindi nag-a-avail, kung talaga bang walang mga nagma-maternity leave na mga teachers dito sa mga schools na ito, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I have here with me a copy of the data being asked by my honorable colleague, so I will just furnish her a copy, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

Mr. Speaker, this is just a follow-up for the memorandum of agreement or the memo I asked during the pre-plenary discussion with our Department of Education as regards the memo on the agency fee of the ACT-NCR. So, mayroon na po ba tayong memo o guidelines as regards the agency fee on deduction code noong ating agency fee ng NCR?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department is finalizing the memorandum, and according to the undersecretary in charge of that memorandum, it will soon be released.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, matagal na pong kahilingan ito ng ating union sa NCR. In fact, 2015 pa iyong kanilang collective negotiation na na-approve. Parang napaka-injustice na sa ating mga union, sa ating mga organisasyon sa NCR na ma-delay pa iyong ganitong kadalang aksyon na hinihiling ng ating mga guro. Kailan po ba, Mme.

Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang definite time na magagawa itong memorandum na ito?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I have word from the Secretary that this will be released on Friday.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

So, another issue that I raised also during the pre-plenary is regarding the inconsistency of Department Memorandum No. 59, series of 2012, which was released on June 15, 2012, with COA Circular No. 2012-003. So, there is inconsistency between DepEd Memorandum No. 59 and the contract. So, ito po iyong kontrata na nakapaloob doon sa DepEd Memorandum No. 59, na kung saan bibigyan po ng honorarium, transportation allowance ang ating mga mobile teachers, pero ang nangyari po, nagkaroon ng COA Audit Observation Memorandum and required supporting documents, support stipend and expenses which run contrary to DepEd Memorandum No. 59. The discrepancy puts the mobile teachers in a dire situation as they do not have the capacity to return the amount anymore. So, mayroon na po bang aksyon na nagawa ang Department of Education dito, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I was informed by the Undersecretary for Legal that the stakeholders concerned with regard to that issue are set to have a meeting tomorrow at the Department of Education's office.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, isa pa pong isyu na, although ito po ay may kinalaman doon sa ating mga guro sa Pasig, pero gusto ko rin i-raise ito dahil ito po ay 2013 pa. Na-deprive ang ating mga teachers doon ng kanilang unpaid salaries. May 131 teachers po tayo sa division of Pasig na nagtrabaho noong May 2013, at ang nabayaran lang po dito sa mga teachers na ito ay kalahating buwan. So, ano po iyong aksyon ng ating Departamento dito, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I still have to check with the officials of DepEd since the matter involves the 2013 record.

In the meantime, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, may I go back to answer the first question earlier raised as to the number of Math and Science teachers for Grade V and Grade VI. We have the total of 79,434 Math teachers and a total of 78,790 Science teachers. For junior high school, we have a total of 49,549 Math teachers and 77,362 for Science teachers. For Grade V, Grade VI and junior high school, we have a total of 128,983 teachers for Math and 156,152 Science teachers.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kagaya nga po ng observation natin kanina, napakaliit ng 2,000 plus na number of teachers na nag-benepisyong dito sa step increment na ito. Just the same, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, magko-conduct po ang Representasyon na ito ng imbestigasyon kaugnay ng hindi pag-avail ng ating teachers ng mga benepisyong ito despite na meron namang legal basis.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, with regard to the question earlier raised on the unpaid salaries of the teachers, per record, the DepEd central office has raised this issue also to the principal. I was informed just now that the payment is now being processed.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor for that information.

Ang huli po tungkol sa ARMM. May teachers din tayo na nagreklamo sa payment ng PI, chalk allowance at ang PBB. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I will raise the ARMM by tomorrow.

Iyon lang po, Mme. Speaker. Marami pong salamat sa tiyaga ng ating Sponsor.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PUNO. Mme. Speaker, before we go on, we would like to officially acknowledge and welcome the presence of our guests from the Department of Education. They are the honorable Sec. Leonor Magtolis Briones, Usec. Atty. Alberto T. Muyot, Usec. Dina S. Ocampo, Usec. Alain Del B. Pascua, Usec. Analyn M. Sevilla, Usec. Jesus Lorenzo R. Mateo, Usec. Ma. Victoria M. Catibog, Asst. Sec. Tonisito Umali, Asst. Sec. Atty. Revsee A. Escobedo, Asst. Sec. Atty. Nepomuceno A. Malaluan, Asst. Sec. G.H.S. Ambat, Asst. Sec. Atty. Josephine G. Maribojoc and all the regional directors.

May we also acknowledge and welcome the presence of the members of the attached agencies, namely: Mr. Jeremy Barns, Dir. III of the National Museum; Mr. Rizalino Rosales, OIC-Exec. Dir. of the National Council for Children's Television; Atty. Anna Katerina Rodriguez, Dep. Exec. Dir. of the National Book Development Board; Mr. Victor Emmanuel Carmelo Nadera Jr., Dir. IV of the Philippine High School for the Arts; and Dr. Teresita Inciong, Exec. Dir. for Finance and Administration, Early Childhood Care and Development Council.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Welcome to the House of Representatives. *(Applause)*

REP. FARIÑAS. Mme. Speaker, may I make a brief announcement to the members of the Majority. Upon the direction of the Speaker, there will be a caucus of the Majority at 9:30 a.m., tomorrow, Wednesday, at the appropriate venue to be announced by the Secretary General.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The announcement of the Majority Leader is hereby noted.

REP. PUNO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Tomasito "Tom" S. Villarín from AKBAYAN Party-List for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable Villarín is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. VILLARIN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. To our colleagues, the DepEd family, our distinguished Sponsor, good evening.

I have no major issues to raise on the DepEd, but I would just like to propound some questions with regard to certain policies. First, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I would like to commend the new DepEd leadership for continuing the K to 12 Program because it is one of the major educational reforms or major governance reforms that have been instituted in our country. For that, I would commend the new leadership in the DepEd for supporting and continuing that program. We are facing challenges, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, with regard to this program, but this is part of the birthing pains, especially in pursuing reforms, like the Enhanced Basic Education or the K to 12 Program.

This is now part now of the relearning process of our teachers where there would be a de-emphasis on the textbook type of learning approaches, and focus instead on using varied learning resources. Would that be the approach that the DepEd is thinking, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is the approach, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. I think this Representation would fully support that system of education. As I mentioned earlier, it would look at the multiple intelligence test of our children, rather than to hone just one strand of intelligence. I think that is a good and progressive approach to education that this Representation would fully support.

Now, on a second principle, the DepEd is supporting the SPED Program, or the education of our special children. There are studies that show that it would not

be proper, that it would be good for our special children to be integrated into the mainstream rather than have a separate learning environment done with the regular children. So, is the DepEd looking into that approach or does it still think that an education separate for special children with the regular school children could still be the track that it is pursuing?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, in the formulation of policy, when it comes to the SPED Program, the DepEd is also considering other options. Just like in the K to 12 Program, it also considers the diversity of the learners in its development, and the Department believes in the inclusive education for those who have special needs. Integrating them with the regular class may be one of the options for those who can integrate, but there is a special program intended for the SPED learners who may not be able to catch up with the requirements of a regular class.

REP. VILLARIN. I think that would be a good policy and I am also supportive of that approach. I am glad to hear that the DepEd is shifting to that approach. Although I also would support the idea that special children, in some instances, also need special support and attention.

Another matter, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, is on the issue of classrooms, because attendant to our increasing population or attendant to our population explosion would be the challenge of building more schools, and that challenge is being faced in urban centers like Metro Manila. Does the Sponsor think that there are available lands in Metro Manila that the DepEd can still use to build classrooms?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this is actually one of the predicaments of the Department. While there is a provision for the budget in the construction of buildings, one of the major problems the Department is facing is the availability of lots. There are no buildable spaces anymore, especially in urban areas, where the Department can probably build the proposed school buildings.

REP. VILLARIN. Regarding that, we are looking at local government units which should provide these lands. But even LGUs are facing challenges with regard to this scarce resource or land, and we are also competing with the needs of our informal settlers where they can also build in-city resettlement. Together with in-city resettlement, of course, we need to provide school buildings. The challenge here really is to build schools pataas—high-rise schools. But we also need to look at the learning environment. Kasi we also need open spaces for our children to frolic in or to just play around rather than be cramped in condominium types

or multiple-rise buildings that have less spaces. Is the DepEd looking into those types of concerns for building schools?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this is the reason, especially in the urban areas, that only vertical constructions are built considering that we have limited spaces. As to the matter of acquiring land, the Department of Education has actually a meager amount of P60 million, which it proposed for 2017 for the procurement of lands. This remains to be a big challenge and concern especially in schools located in the urban areas.

REP. VILLARIN. So P60 million is the budget for land acquisition.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VILLARIN. But if we look at the market price of land, maybe the P60 million can just purchase less than a hectare of land?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That is true, and that is why I said, this remains to be a great challenge on the part of the Department of Education on how to coordinate with other stakeholders as to the provision of lots for schools especially in urban areas.

REP. VILLARIN. I think, Mme. Speaker, as I said, LGUs are key to providing that resource. The challenge now is for our local government units, our city governments, to release their inventory of lands. I know many of these LGUs are keeping an inventory of lands although they are prioritizing the commercial use of these lands. Perhaps a law or a policy should be pushed and the DepEd should support that policy that LGUs should be forced to release their inventory of lands, especially as we are facing a crisis in terms of where to build our classrooms. Will that policy be a good policy that the DepEd will push or support?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). That would be a very sound policy, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. In fact, the Department of Education has already conducted several coordinative meetings with other agencies and stakeholders to help them in the acquisition of land. But the one being proposed by the Gentleman would be a very sound policy, and I will advise the Department of Education to take note of that.

REP. VILLARIN. On another note, Mme. Speaker, the last administration had this Public-Private Partnership school building, the PPPs in school building. May this Representation know the update with regard to the PPP because I think and I suppose that the PPP was meant

to address the backlog in school buildings, especially in Region IV-A, Region III, and I think the NCR.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, per record of the Department of Education, the first phase of the PPP has already been completed and Phase 2 is still ongoing.

REP. VILLARIN. Will the PPP address this shortage in classrooms in urban centers like Metro Manila?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, there is no PPP project anywhere in the National Capital Region. It is only in Regions I, II, III, CAR, Region X and the Caraga. But with regard to the question of his Honor whether or not the problem of shortage in classrooms in the NCR will be solved, this 2017 proposal intends to construct the needed classrooms, school buildings, and that includes the NCR, only if there are available lots.

REP. VILLARIN. So, again, that question about land availability will be the dilemma that we will be facing. Again, as I have said, this needs a multi-stakeholder approach. We need to coordinate with our LGUs, and perhaps, even with the DILG, our HLURB and other agencies that are involved in—even the LRA, Land Registration Authority, with regard ...

REP. ZAMORA (M.). We will take note of that comment.

REP. VILLARIN. ... to the availability of lands.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). We will take that comment, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. Now, on a last note, going to areas where functional literacy is lowest, and I am saying that in Mindanao, especially in the ARMM, of which the function of the DepEd has been devolved since the enactment of the Organic Act of 1989, has there been studies done by the DepEd? Of course, there is the issue of conflict, but has there been studies done by the DepEd-national to look into that persistent low functional literacy in the ARMM or are we taking a hands-off approach with regard to DepEd-ARMM?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department of Education is using the data from the Literacy Coordinating Council and they have already produced their data as of July 2016.

REP. VILLARIN. Now, on the issue, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, because the DepEd-ARMM has been devolved, and it has been given powers over the hiring

of teachers and the building of classrooms, what I am pointing at, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, is that there is some sort of coordination between the DepEd-ARMM and the DepEd-national with regard to addressing the persistent low literacy, functional literacy in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, in every ManCom meeting of the Department of Education, the Regional Secretary of the DepEd-ARMM is part of the ManCom; and in every discussion in terms of policy, the Regional Secretary of the DepEd-ARMM is also involved, and the regional DepEd adopts the curriculum standards set by the Department of Education-Central Office.

REP. VILLARIN. So, would you say or can you say that with devolution in the ARMM, especially of DepEd, the problems on literacy and basic education have made greater strides or have improved ever since we devolved DepEd in the autonomous region? Has there been a big improvement—are the numbers, are the statistics improving—or are we saying that it has remained constant or even has decreased over the years?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, per data provided by the Department of Education, there is a significant improvement on the functional literacy rate of the students from the ARMM.

REP. VILLARIN. So, there is an improvement, a significant improvement.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. Meaning, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, with more children in the ARMM especially in Sulu, in Tawi-Tawi, in Basilan going to schools, we will be expecting less children taking up arms and getting involved in extremist organizations.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, in the data of the DepEd, just for the information of his Honor, for the functional literacy rate of the household population, meaning, those children aged 10 to 64 years old in the ARMM, it reflects that the ARMM has 72.1 literacy rate in 2013, which is an increase from the previous year. So, this is an indication that for the past years, there has been an improvement in the literacy rate of this population.

REP. VILLARIN. Seventy-two percent as compared to the national average of what?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). National average of 90 percent, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. So, there is still a big job, a difference between the national average ...

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. ... and the ARMM.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Yes, Your Honor.

REP. VILLARIN. So, there are still ...

REP. ZAMORA (M.). There are still challenges, of course.

REP. VILLARIN. ... challenges.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). There are still major challenges, in fact, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, but DepEd is still hopeful especially with the new administration, the new officials, new secretary. Focusing on the ARMM is one of its priorities where the ARMM personnel, the ARMM officials form part in the formulation of new policies.

REP. VILLARIN. I am raising this concern, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, because I think fighting terrorism, fighting extremism would really be the key component, critical component in providing education, functional education to the children. Of course, if children are not in schools because of conflict, the tendency would really be for conflict to persist, so again, while laudable improvements have been made, but the 72 percent as against the national average is still a big challenge. I hope the policy of the DepEd-national is really to assist, to help the DepEd-ARMM, to continuously assist the DepEd-ARMM rather than leaving it on its own. As I have said, the devolution of the DepEd-ARMM is just one-step, but the key there is really, again, a multi-stakeholder approach in resolving conflict and, at the same time, resolving the low literacy rate in a very impoverished and conflict-affected region. So, I think, with that, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, I have no more questions or issues to propound. Again, we fully support the initiatives of the DepEd and we also support any budgetary improvement that the DepEd needs, especially that our Constitution mandates that education has received the highest priority in our budget.

So, thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of the KABATAAN Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago from the KABATAAN Party-List is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. ELAGO. Good evening, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

During the budget briefing of the DepEd on September 2, the Department gave its commitment to review its memorandum of agreement with the Ayala Foundation Inc., Live It Global Services Management Institute Inc., and Pearson BOP Investments Limited on the provision or the establishment of the APEC schools or the Affordable Private Education Center Inc. schools. Can the distinguished Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, share the findings of this review on the establishment of the APEC schools?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, according to the Department of Education Undersecretary, per record, there are 24 schools, APEC schools with permits up to now, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, so 24 schools na ito ang katulad ng naibahagi ng ilan sa mga nagtanong noong budget briefing ninyo na mayroon tayong mga APEC schools na hindi sumusunod doon sa ating manual for operation ng mga private schools. Ito po ba ay natingnan na natin, na-inspect natin, na-check? At kung ito ay nagawa na, ano ang aksyon na gagawin ng DepEd hinggil dito?

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, lahat po ng ito ay na-evaluate, na-check ng Department of Education, and this is the reason they were given permits.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ...

REP. ZAMORA (M.). And, if I may add, Mme. Speaker...

REP. ELAGO. Yes.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Your Honor, according to the Secretary of the Department, all policies with regard to APEC schools are now under review and the Secretary is looking closely into it in order to improve the policy for the APEC schools.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, manghihingi ang Representasyong ito ng listahan ng mga na-evaluate na, itong 24 APEC

schools. At, hinggil dito, kaugnay niyan, nais din nating manghingi tungkol doon sa Memorandum of Agreement dated October 25, 2013, kung saan sinasabi na isa sa responsibilidad ng ating mga APEC schools ay ang paghahanda ng isang ulat hinggil sa learning outcomes, affordability at access sa school na ito, economic sustainability ng model, ng EP model ng APEC school; at plano hinggil sa replekasyon at pagpapalawig ng offering nito sa iba-iba pang mga lugar sa ating bansa.

Sinasabi sa Memorandum na iyan na confidential ang magiging resulta ng report na iyan. Ang katanungan ng Kinatawan na ito, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor ay bakit kailangang confidential ang report na iyan ng APEC schools? Kung hindi naman kailangan na confidential talaga ay maaari siguro, para makatulong rin sa paghahapag ng improvements at development sa ating sistema ng education, ay mabahaginan ang mga Miyembro ng Kongreso.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, for the information of Her Honor, the policy on confidentiality has long been superseded. In fact, there is an updated and more complete report that the Department made furnish to Her Honor for her perusal.

REP. ELAGO. Thank you for that assurance and information, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

My next concern is about the enrollment of our senior high school students which stands at from the report given by the good Secretary from the DepEd. There are a total of 821,805 enrollees in public senior high schools, 686,307 in private senior high schools, and 41,000 in SUCs. So, sa public—at SUCs natin and LUCs, maryoon tayong 56 percent ng enrollment at halos 44 percent sa private. Ngayon, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, magkano ang average na gastos ng mga estudyante ng mga pribadong senior high school natin? Ito po ay mula sa mga tuition fee hanggang sa baon, pamasaha, mga kinakailangan para sa tools, equipment, module.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, are you referring to the expenses incurred by every student, every senior high school student enrolled in the private school or the expenses of the government given to the student?

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am referring to the average cost for a student—including the cost of tuition and all other school fees, the cost going to school, including food, transportation, the payment for modules, tools and equipment.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, as of today, the DepEd has not conducted a study yet

on how much it will cost for every senior high school student studying in a private school since we are still on our first year of implementation of Grade XI of senior high school.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Nais maibahagi ng Kinatawang ito na sa isang pag-aaral ng Partido ng KABATAAN, in particular, sa ating high school student, sa ating private senior high school student, tinatayang nasa P100,000 hanggang P200,000 ang kabuuang gastos sa dalawang taon, sa dagdag na dalawang taon sa ating senior high school program. Iyan po ay malayo kung sa tuition fee lamang, kung tatanggalin natin ang panggastos sa food, transportation, module, tools and equipment, iyan ay nasa P20,000 hanggang P70,000. Malayung-malayo doon sa maximum amount ng voucher natin for the NCR alone, iyan ay nasa P22,500, na talagang nagko-cover lamang ng portion, ng tuition fee ng ating mga private senior high school students.

Kaya nga naman katuwang ninyo kami doon sa pagre-research din kung anu-ano ba iyong mga top-up fees, ang nagsasabi ang ating mga estudyante na mayroong mga top-up fees, mga dagdag bayarin sa ating mga eskwelahan kaya bagama't sila ay covered ng ating voucher program ay naglalabas pa rin ng pera o kaya naman ay hindi na nakakapagpagtuloy ng kanilang pag-aaral dahil sa mga top-up fees na ito.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, per record of the Department of Education, there are only few big private schools with senior high schools that have costly charges for students. Most of our private senior high schools are small schools located in small municipalities—these are Catholic schools, privately-owned schools, church-based schools that only charge students minimally. As you question whether or not the voucher system would suffice for top-up fees charged by the school, again, this is the reason the Department of Education is strengthening the public school senior high school system so that the public school itself will be able to cater to our graduating junior high school students who intend to study in senior high school. Again, going to a private senior high school is a choice of the parents who are willing to pay for the top-up fees.

REP. ELAGO. This Representation will not be fistfighting for the youth's right to education. Ang edukasyon ay karapatan at sa pagpapatuloy sa paninindigan natin sa pagpapatupad ng mga radikal na reporma, mga progresibo na reporma sa ating education, ito ay dapat nakabatay para sa interes ng mamamayan, sa interes ng ating bayan at hindi sa interes para sa pagkakakitaan sa negosyo at para sa dayuhan. Iyon lamang, maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Acting Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Joel Mayo Z. Almario of the Second District of Davao Oriental for his interpellation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Honorable Almario is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. ALMARIO. Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

At the outset, Mme. Speaker, I would like to state that this manifestation is being made after an attempt to alter the set-up of division offices in the province of Davao Oriental was made during the Committee budget hearings on the Department of Education. Because of that, the DepEd made a study in the form of an errata which, as of now, is not yet official. However, that document was made in order to determine how much is involved in the attempted alteration of set-ups of the division offices in the province of Davao Oriental.

Mme. Speaker, the problem arose from the operation of the City Division Office of Mati and the Davao Oriental Division Office. Mme. Speaker, the City Division Office of Mati was created after the approval of and in accordance with Republic Act No. 9408, which is the Charter of Mati City.

In May 14, 2012, the Department of Education, through then-Secretary Bro. Armin A. Luistro, issued a memorandum placing the schools of the municipalities from the Second Congressional District of Davao Oriental, which I represent, namely: Banaybanay, Lupon, San Isidro and Governor Generoso, under the administrative and supervisory jurisdiction of the city division of Mati.

The memo of the then Secretary, Mme. Speaker, is in my possession and the salient points are, as written in this memorandum:

Consistent with the mandate of the Department of Education to ensure the access to and improve the quality of basic education, the proposal to include the schools offering basic education in the municipalities of Banaybanay, Lupon, San Isidro and Governor Generoso belonging to the Second Congressional District of Davao Oriental under the administrative and supervisory jurisdiction of the city schools division superintendent of the city of Mati is hereby approved.

This will effectively equalize the jurisdiction of the schools divisions of Davao Oriental and city of Mati in terms of number of schools, students and teachers to create a more or less equitable number of personnel/teachers and schools, to strengthen coordination and ensure a more effective and efficient administration and supervision by the superintendents of the mother division of Davao Oriental and the city schools division of the city of Mati.

Let it be emphasized that this directive does not make the four municipalities part of the city government of Mati but only of the city schools division of the city of Mati as this shall cover only the administration and supervision of the schools and all the DepEd personnel therein.

The issuance of said memorandum, Mme. Speaker, was in accordance with the provision of Republic Act No. 9155, also known as the "Governance of Basic Education Act of 2001," specifically Section 7 thereof, which grants to the Secretary of Education thereof, among others, the formulation of national educational policies.

Section 7 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9155, reads as follows:

Section 7.1. Organizational structure and Staffing Pattern. The existing organizational structure or set-up of the Department of Education for programs promotion and support, planning, administrative, fiscal, legal ancillary and other support services shall be maintained at the national, regional, division and school level. However, in order to ensure their consistency with the mandate of the Department of Education pursuant to this act, the national education policies, plan and standards, the Secretary of Education shall direct the conduct of review and evaluation of the present organizational structure and staffing pattern at all levels. The result of the evaluation and findings may be the basis of the Secretary of Education to recommend changes and modifications x x x.

Further, Mme. Speaker, in Section 7.2., it says here:

For an efficient and effective management of the school in the region, the secretary shall task the Regional Director to:

A) Review and rationalize the existing organizational structure and staffing pattern of the different organizational units in the regional office, division office, district office and school for recommendation on their possible

modification or change to the secretary of Education and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) x-x-x.

Mme. Speaker, the said memorandum of Secretary Luistro was issued after due deliberation, discussion, study and several consultations made with the officials of Mati City Division, Davao Oriental Division, Provincial Government of Davao Oriental, the local chief executives of Mati City and the municipalities of Banaybanay, Lupon, San Isidro, and Governor Generoso. During the consultations, invitations were sent to the Office of the Governor but no one came to attend.

Prior to the issuance of the said memorandum, the budget of the Mati City Division was more than sufficient for its needs as a new division. On the other hand, Davao Oriental Division was regularly beset and hampered by limited financial and manpower resources in its delivery of educational services and programs to the municipalities under it then.

Based on the data, Mme. Speaker, it will show that the schools that were administered and supervised by the division of Davao Oriental were substantially reduced after the issuance of the memorandum by half from the original while those of the Mati City Division were doubled. Mati City Division did not complain as it is willing to share some of its financial resources to help out the Davao Oriental Division. Davao Oriental Division, on the other hand, Mme. Speaker, did not lose, instead, it gained in terms of financial and manpower resources.

After four years of implementation of the said memorandum and rationalized scheme—again, Mme. Speaker, after four years, because the memorandum was issued in 2012 and such was the set up from 2012 up to this year, year in, year out—a move has now been made to disturb the status quo in the divisions of Davao Oriental and City Division's Office. A move is being made to revert to the old set up and return the four subject municipalities under the administrative and supervisory jurisdiction of the Davao Oriental Division.

There is no valid reason for the reversion, Mme. Speaker. First, the issuance of the memorandum of Bro. Luistro, as discussed earlier, has the presumption of regularity. It is based on Republic Act No. 9155. Second, due process, through consultations with stakeholders, was observed before the implementation of the memorandum. Third, the implementation of the scheme resulted to rationalized use of limited financial and manpower resources. Fourth, the benefits were received by the schools, teachers, pupils and students under the divisions of Davao Oriental and the city division office.

Based on the above, Mme. Speaker, there can be no other reason or motivation for the reversion but politics.

Precisely, Mme. Speaker, I brought that up in the Plenary because, again, as I said earlier, it was discussed and officially raised and officially recorded in the committee level. If after the plenary debates there is nothing on record which will show objection to that attempt, then such attempt might find its day in the General Appropriations Act.

Again, Mme. Speaker, I already mentioned earlier that, in fact, because of that manifestation in the committee level, the Department has already made a draft errata sheet that would show what is included in the NEP 2017, that would show what will be included in the GAB 2017, and in the GAB, Mme. Speaker, the schools under the subject "Municipalities" now have zero allocations. But, again, I would like to emphasize that this is a draft errata sheet, and I would like to emphasize again that I put this on record because I am vehemently objecting to the attempt to alter the status quo of the division offices in the province of Davao Oriental.

If, Mme. Speaker, the issue raised by the proponent trying to alter the status quo is legal, I would strongly suggest, Mr. Speaker, and I will agree that the proponent raise that particular issue in court, not in the House of Representatives. Let the court decide whether it is, indeed, *ultra vires* or not. Let the court tell us how the laws should be interpreted.

With that, Mme. Speaker, I would like to get the attention of our Sponsor, the Hon. Maricar Zamora, and the attention of our Secretary, the Honorable Briones, and the DepEd family whom I have already discussed this matter with lengthily last week and in many other occasions: the status quo should be respected, the status quo should be observed, and the status quo, as reflected in the National Expenditure Program of 2017, should find its way to the General Appropriations Bill of 2017, and eventually in the General Appropriations Act of 2017.

May I hear the comment of the Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, this Representation takes note of the manifestation of His Honor, Honorable Almario, and the Secretary here is taking note of the manifestation.

REP. ALMARIO. Thank you very much, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Acting Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Corazon T. Nuñez-Malanyaon of the First District of Davao Oriental for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Lady from Davao Oriental is hereby recognized to interpellate the Sponsor.

REP. NUÑEZ-MALANYAON. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

I will just make my manifestation very, very short, as promised.

This Representation finds it compelling to make this manifestation on the grounds of adherence to law and public policy, to correct a wrong inflicted on the stakeholders, particularly the education stakeholders in the province of Davao Oriental.

Then I would like also to manifest that this Representation is supported by all mayors, board members, vice mayors in the whole province. This is a case of a substantive law being superseded by an unnumbered memorandum order.

I strongly object to the items in the 2017 Budget being put forward by the DepEd effectively expanding the jurisdiction of the Schools Division of the City of Mati to include four (4) municipalities under the Provincial Schools Division of Davao Oriental, contrary to Section 50, Paragraph (a) of Republic Act No. 9408, otherwise known as the Charter of the City of Mati, which states:

The DepEd shall establish and maintain a city schools division of the City of Mati whose area of jurisdiction will cover all the school districts within the City.

Clearly, from that provision, the territorial jurisdiction of the city schools division of Mati City excludes schools already under the Provincial Schools Division of Davao Oriental under the principle of *expressio unius est exclusio alterius*.

So, I would like to present a chronology of events that have led to this illegal action.

On May 14, 2012, then Education Secretary, Bro. Armin Luistro, signed an unnumbered memorandum “approving the proposal to include under the administrative and supervisory jurisdiction of the Schools Division of Mati City, the elementary and secondary schools in the municipalities of Banaybanay, Lupon, San Isidro, and Governor Generoso, all belonging to the Second District of Davao Oriental.”

On September 25, 2013, this Representation, as then Governor of the Province of Davao Oriental, wrote to the former Education Secretary, Brother Luistro, seeking appropriate action on the Joint Resolution of the League of Municipalities of Davao Oriental, signed by all the mayors of the province, and the Vice Mayors League of Davao Oriental, requesting the DepEd “to confine the administrative and supervisory control of the Schools Division of the City of Mati to all the schools

in the City of Mati and to revert back all schools” in the municipalities of Banaybanay, Lupon, San Isidro, and Governor Generoso to the Provincial Schools Division of Davao Oriental.

Incidentally, let me mention that this Representation was not even accorded the courtesy of a reply by the former Education Secretary, Brother Luistro.

At the DepEd budget briefing held last September 2, our very distinguished and esteemed Education Secretary Briones acknowledged that a mere department memorandum or a department order cannot amend the provisions of a substantive law, such as the charter creating the City of Mati or Republic Act No. 9408.

On September 20, we got hold of a copy of the amendment or errata sheet on the Department’s proposed budget for 2017, realigning/returning the four (4) municipalities in issue to the Provincial Schools Division of Davao Oriental.

So, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, in view of the narration of facts that I just did, this Representation would like to enlighten the Department of Education on the need to adhere to law in defining the restrictive jurisdiction of all schools not only in my province, but in the whole country. There is also a need to state that the issuance of an unnumbered order of then Secretary Armin Luistro superseding the substantive law is an illegal act. Because it is contrary to Section 50, paragraph (a) of Republic Act No. 9408, any illegal action cannot be compromised.

The General Appropriations Act, although it is a law intended to fund the various offices, functions, projects and services so that the government can function more effectively, must only contain items that are based on substantive law. So, what is illegal cannot just be held legal.

So, thank you, Mme. Speaker. It is my hope that our good DepEd Secretary will be enlightened with my manifestation.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this Representation takes note of the manifestation of Your Honor, Congresswoman Malanyaon, and the Secretary also is taking note of the manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize the Hon. Arlene B. Arcillas of the First District of Laguna, who wishes to speak on behalf of the Minority.

I so move, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ARCILLAS. Mme. Speaker, there being no other Member from the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I

move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Education. *(Applause)*

REP. ROA-PUNO. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Education.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Education is hereby terminated.

REP. ZAMORA (M.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 3408. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). There is a motion to suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 3408.

Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The consideration of House Bill No. 3408 is hereby suspended.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, with leave of the House, I move that we reconsider the referral of House Bill No. 3071 to the Committee on Revision of Laws.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer House Bill No. 3071 to the Committee on Transportation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is hereby approved.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until tomorrow, September 28, Wednesday, at 10:00 a.m.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Alvarez, M.). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the session is hereby adjourned until ten o'clock tomorrow morning.

It was 8:43 p.m.