



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 17th CONGRESS, FIRST REGULAR SESSION
House of Representatives

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Monday, February 20, 2017

No. 72

CALL TO ORDER

At 4:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Pia S. Cayetano called the session to order.

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

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Everybody is requested to rise for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

PRAYER

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

Everybody remained standing for the silent prayer.

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DEFENSOR. Mme. Speaker, good afternoon. I move that we suspend the session.

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

It was 4:02 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:00 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

ROLL CALL

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

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

The Secretary General will please call the roll of Members.

The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is as follows, per Journal No. 72, dated February 20, 2017:

PRESENT

Abayon	Barzaga
Abellanos	Bataoil
Abu	Batocabe
Abueg	Bautista-Bandigan
Acharon	Belaro
Acop	Belmonte (J.C.)
Acosta	Belmonte (R.)
Agarao	Benitez
Aggabao	Bertiz
Aglipay-Villar	Biazon
Albano	Billones
Alejano	Bolilia
Almonte	Bondoc
Alonte	Bordado
Alvarez (F.)	Bravo (A.)
Alvarez (M.)	Bravo (M.V.)
Alvarez (P.)	Bulut-Begtang
Amatong	Cagas
Andaya	Calderon
Antonio	Calixto-Rubiano
Aragones	Caminero
Arbison	Campos
Arcillas	Canama
Arenas	Cari
Atienza	Casilao
Bag-ao	Castelo
Bagatsing	Castro (F.L.)

Castro (F.H.)	Gorriceta	Rodriguez (I.)	Teves
Cayetano	Gullas	Rodriguez (M.)	Tiangco
Cerafica	Herrera-Dy	Roman	Ting
Cerilles	Hofer	Romualdo	Tinio
Chavez	Kho	Roque (H.)	Tolentino
Chipeco	Khonghun	Roque (R.)	Ty
Co	Labadlabad	Sacdalan	Umali
Collantes	Lacson	Sagarbarria	Ungab
Cortes	Lagman	Sahali	Unico
Cosalan	Lanete	Salceda	Uy (J.)
Crisologo	Limkaichong	Salo	Uybarreta
Cua	Lobregat	Salon	Vargas
Cuaresma	Lopez (B.)	Sambar	Vargas-Alfonso
Cueva	Lopez (C.)	Santos-Recto	Velarde
Dalipe	Lopez (M.L.)	Sarmiento (C.)	Velasco
Dalog	Macapagal-Arroyo	Sarmiento (E.M.)	Velasco-Catera
Daza	Maceda	Savellano	Vergara
De Jesus	Madrona	Sema	Villarica
De Venecia	Manalo	Siao	Villarin
De Vera	Mangaoang	Silverio	Violago
Defensor	Mangudadatu (Z.)	Suansing (E.)	Yap (A.)
Del Mar	Marcoleta	Suansing (H.)	Yap (M.)
Del Rosario	Marcos	Suarez	Yu
Deloso-Montalla	Mariño	Sy-Alvarado	Zamora (M.C.)
Dimaporo (A.)	Marquez	Tambunting	Zarate
Dimaporo (M.K.)	Martinez	Tan (A.)	Zubiri
Dy	Mending	Tejada	
Elago	Mercado		
Enverga	Mirasol		
Erice	Montoro		
Eriguel	Nieto		
Ermita-Buhain	Noel		
Escudero	Nolasco		
Espina	Nuñez-Malanyaon		
Estrella	Oaminal		
Evardone	Olivarez		
Fariñas	Ong (E.)		
Fernando	Ong (H.)		
Ferrer (J.)	Ortega (P.)		
Flores	Ortega (V.N.)		
Fortun	Pacquiao		
Fortuno	Paduano		
Fuentebella	Pancho		
Garbin	Panganiban		
Garcia (G.)	Panotes		
Garcia (J.E.)	Papandayan		
Garcia-Albano	Pichay		
Garin (S.)	Pimentel		
Gasataya	Pineda		
Geron	Plaza		
Go (A.C.)	Quimbo		
Go (M.)	Ramirez-Sato		
Gomez	Ramos		
Gonzales (A.P.)	Roa-Puno		
Gonzales (A.D.)	Robes		
Gonzalez	Rocamora		

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mme. Speaker, the roll call shows that 219 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). With 219 Members responding to the call, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we approve Journal No. 70 and Journal No. 71, dated February 14 and 15, 2017, respectively.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now proceed to the Reference of Business, and request that the Secretary General be directed to read the same.

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

The Secretary General is directed to read the Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 5018, entitled:

“AN ACT ENSURING THE EMPLOYEES' RIGHT TO THEIR WAGES, INCLUDING WAGE-RELATED BENEFITS, AND SOCIAL SECURITY AND WELFARE BENEFITS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Alvarez (P.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 5019, entitled:

“AN ACT EXPANDING THE COVERAGE OF ABSENTEE VOTING TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWD) AND SENIOR CITIZENS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10380, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS AN ACT PROVIDING FOR LOCAL ABSENTEE VOTING FOR MEDIA”

By Representative Alvarez (P.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

House Bill No. 5020, entitled:

“AN ACT ABOLISHING THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE BOARD OF ENERGY AS AN ATTACHED AGENCY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY”

By Representative Alvarez (P.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION AND THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

House Bill No. 5021, entitled:

“AN ACT REGULATING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, PRESCRIBING PENALTIES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Alvarez (P.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

House Bill No. 5022, entitled:

“AN ACT EXEMPTING THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE FROM THE COVERAGE OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6758, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE SALARY STANDARDIZATION LAW, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Garin (S.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 5023, entitled:

“AN ACT TO PLACE SAFETY NETS FOR FILIPINO RICE PRODUCERS BY IMPOSING TARIFFS IN LIEU OF QUANTITATIVE RESTRICTIONS ON RICE IMPORTS, DIRECTING TARIFF COLLECTIONS FROM RICE IMPORTS TO PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS THAT ENHANCE RICE PRODUCTIVITY AND INCREASE FARMERS' INCOMES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Macapagal-Arroyo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

House Bill No. 5024, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL GRASSROOTS SPORTS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM CENTERED IN THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL GAMES”

By Representative Gomez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 5025, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6234, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS, ‘AN ACT CREATING THE METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS AND SEWERAGE SYSTEM AND DISSOLVING THE NATIONAL WATERWORKS AND SEWERAGE AUTHORITY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’”

By Representative Suarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION

House Bill No. 5026, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING THE PCSO LOTTERY ‘PHILIPPINE LOTTO’ AND SMALL TOWN LOTTERY THE SOLELY RECOGNIZED LEGAL NUMBERS GAME”

By Representative Suarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS

House Bill No. 5027, entitled:

“AN ACT PRESCRIBING A MANDATORY

RETIREMENT AGE FOR ALL MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE PHILIPPINES AND THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE”

By Representative Suarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE AND SECURITY AND THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

House Bill No. 5028, entitled:

“AN ACT EXEMPTING THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE FROM THE COVERAGE OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6758, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE SALARY STANDARDIZATION LAW, AS AMENDED, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Abu
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 5029, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9173 OR ‘THE PHILIPPINE NURSING ACT OF 1991’ INCREASING THE SALARY AND PROVIDING ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO NURSES AND PUBLIC HEALTH WORKERS”

By Representatives Maceda and Nieto
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

House Bill No. 5030, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATORS, INC. UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8124 TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representatives Maceda and Nieto
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 5031, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL POLICY ON EASE OF DOING BUSINESS, CREATING FOR THE PURPOSE THE EASE OF DOING BUSINESS COMMISSION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Biron
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House Bill No. 5032, entitled:

“AN ACT DEFINING THE CRIME OF GAME-FIXING AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR”

By Representatives Pineda, Belmonte (R.), Salo, Lopez (B.), Bertiz, Montoro, Belaro, Lacson, Uybarreta, Salon and Lopez (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 776, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE ALLEGED CORRUPTION IN THE ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION”

By Representative Alvarez (P.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 777, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE FAILURE OF VARIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE METHOD OR SYSTEM TO ASCERTAIN THE AUTHENTICITY OF ACCOUNTS REGISTERED WITH THEM, LEADING TO PREVALENCE OF FAKE, MALICIOUS, AND SPURIOUS SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS, WHICH RESULTS TO UNCHECKED AND RAMPANT ACTS OF ONLINE IDENTITY THEFT”

By Representative Alvarez (P.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 778, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE LEGALITY OF, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN, THE ACTIONS OF FORTUNE MEDICARE, INC. (FORTUNE CARE) IN NO LONGER RENEWING THE NON-LIFE INSURANCE CONTRACTS OF EXISTING MEMBERS”

By Representative Herrera-Dy
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 780, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9418, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE VOLUNTEERISM ACT OF 2007, AND ON THE VARIOUS VOLUNTEERISM

EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN BY CONCERNED NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND IN ACCELERATING RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES”

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

House Resolution No. 781, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING THE RECIPIENTS OF THE OUTSTANDING YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN (TOYM) IN THE PHILIPPINES 2016 CONFERRED BY JUNIOR CHAMBER INTERNATIONAL (JCI) PHILIPPINES AND TOYM FOUNDATION INC.”

By Representative Villarica
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 782, entitled:

“RESOLUTION TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE ANOMALIES IN THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS CONDUCTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION WITH RESPECT TO THE AWARD OF THE BICOL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PACKAGE 2B PROJECT”

By Representatives Roque (H.), Bertiz and Bravo (A.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 783, entitled:

“RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON COOPERATIVES DEVELOPMENT, TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE DENIAL OF THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL REVENUE (B.I.R.) TO ISSUE TAX EXEMPTION CERTIFICATES TO COOPERATIVES”

By Representative Geron
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

ADDITIONAL COAUTHORS

Rep. Harlin Neil J. Abayon III for House Bills No. 458 and 1889;

Rep. Estrellita B. Suansing for House Bill No. 3200;

Rep. Manuel Jose “Mannix” M. Dalipe for House Bills No. 338, 447, and 589;

Rep. Ma. Lucille L. Nava, M.D. for House Bills No. 349, 1430, 1431, 1432, 1433, 1434, 1435, 1436,

1437, 1438, 1439, 1440, 1441, 1442, 1443, 1444, 1445, 1446, 1447, 1448, 1449, 1450, and 1451, and House Resolutions No. 73, 74, and 75;

Reps. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño, Marlyn B. Alonte, Delphine Gan Lee, Cesar V. Sarmiento, Nancy A. Catamco, Jose Enrique “Joet” S. Garcia III, Rodante D. Marcoleta, Raul V. Del Mar, and Eric L. Olivarez for House Bills No. 2192 and 2193;

Rep. Arnel M. Cerafica for House Bill No. 2192;

Reps. Greg G. Gasataya and Ricardo “RJ” T. Belmonte Jr. for House Bill No. 4526;

Rep. Vini Nola A. Ortega for House Bills No. 40, 534, 1667, 1669, 1677, 2228, 2234, 2450, 2452, 2453, 2713, 2714, 3632, 3820, 3822, 3824, 3827, 3828, and 4689;

Reps. Alfred D. Vargas and Arlene B. Arcillas for House Bill No. 4105;

Rep. Edward Vera Perez Maceda for House Bills No. 1371, 1372, 1373, and 2487;

Reps. Victoria Isabel G. Noel and Reynaldo V. Umali for House Bill No. 4144;

Rep. Deogracias Victor “DV” B. Savellano for House Bill No. 4689;

Reps. Rene L. Relampagos, Makmod D. Mending Jr., Manuel T. Sagarbarria, Greg G. Gasataya, and Randolph S. Ting for House Bill No. 4742;

Reps. Rene L. Relampagos, Reynaldo V. Umali, Jesus “Boying” F. Celeste, Winston “Winnie” Castelo, Ricardo “RJ” T. Belmonte Jr., and Maximo B. Dalog for House Resolution No. 769;

Rep. Manuel F. Zubiri for House Bills No. 334 and 1208;

Rep. Francisco Jose F. Matugas II for House Resolution No. 198;

Rep. Alejandro Y. Mirasol for House Bills No. 458, 3181, 4689, and 4742;

Rep. Munir M. Arbison for House Bill No. 3426;

Reps. Alfred D. Vargas, Scott Davies S. Lanete, M.D., Randolph S. Ting, and Maximo B. Dalog for House Bill No. 4174;

Rep. Rozzano Rufino B. Biazon for House Bills No. 1613, 1858, 1859, 1894, 2318, 2319, 2474, 2758, 2953, 4689, and 4742 and House Resolution No. 769;

Rep. Gwendolyn F. Garcia for House Bills No. 2192, 2193, and 4673;

Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda for House Bills No. 2838, 4106, and 4462;

Reps. Emi G. Calixto-Rubiano and Gerald Anthony “Samsam” V. Gullas Jr. for House Bills No. 4106 and 4462;

Rep. Bernadette “BH” Herrera-Dy for House Bills No. 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 2192, 2193, 3170, 3171, 3609, 4503, and 4578;

Rep. Rosanna “Ria” Vergara for House Bill No. 1862;

Rep. Christopher “Toff” Vera Perez De Venecia for House Resolution No. 716;

Rep. Isagani S. Amatong for House Bills No. 2345 and 3426;

Rep. Jose Antonio “Kuya Jonathan” R. Sy-Alvarado for House Bills No. 2165, 4113, 4339, 4729,

4825, 4949, 4970, 4979, 4983, 4986, 4987, and 4988 and House Resolution No. 769;

Rep. Edgar R. Erice for House Bill No. 447;

Rep. Jose Christopher Y. Belmonte for House Bill No. 180;

Rep. Makmod D. Mending Jr. for House Bill No. 4526;

Rep. Leopoldo N. Bataoil for House Bills No. 2192, 2193, 4689, and 4742 and House Resolution No. 198;

Rep. Michelle M. Antonio for House Bill No. 584;

Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for House Bill No. 3254;

Rep. Eleanor C. Bulut-Begtang for House Bills No. 2192, 2193, 3221, and 3478;

Rep. Mark Aeron H. Sambar for House Bill No. 1204;

Rep. Maria Vida Espinosa Bravo for House Bills No. 1868, 4025, 4258, 4259, 4639, and 4640;

Rep. Divina Grace C. Yu for House Bills No. 515, 516, 517, 1038, 1039, 1378, 1536, 1537, 1836, 1837, 2264, 2263, and 3435;

Rep. Gus S. Tambunting for House Bill No. 2035;

Rep. Victor A. Yap for House Bill No. 3605;

Rep. Jose “Pingping” I. Tejada for House Bills No. 2192 and 2498; and

Rep. Maria Carmen S. Zamora for House Resolution No. 769.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report by the Committee on Constitutional Amendments (Committee Report No. 110), re H.C.R. No. 09, entitled:

“CONCURRENT RESOLUTION TO CONSTITUTE THE CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES AS A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO, OR REVISION OF, THE 1987 CONSTITUTION”

recommending its adoption in substitution of Resolutions of Both Houses No. 01, 02 and 03, House Joint Resolutions No. 01 and 02, House Resolution No. 26, House Bills No. 81, 312 and 486, House Resolution No. 32, House Concurrent Resolution No. 01, Resolution of Both Houses No. 05, House Bill No. 1241, House Resolution No. 52, House Bill No. 1463, Resolution of Both Houses No. 06, House Bill No. 1838, Resolution of Both Houses No. 07, House Joint Resolution No. 05, House

Concurrent Resolutions No. 04 and 05, House Resolution No. 126, House Joint Resolution No. 06, House Resolution No. 129, Resolution of Both Houses No. 08, House Joint Resolution No. 07, Resolution of Both Houses No. 09 and House Bill No. 3026

Sponsors: Representatives Mercado, Fariñas, Garcia (G.), Veloso, Maceda and Castro (F.H.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 111), re H.B. No. 5051, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY HULONG-DAGAT, CITY OF MALABON, TO BE KNOWN AS MALABON CITY NATIONAL SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 1835

Sponsors: Representatives Escudero, Nograles (K.) and Sandoval

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Basic Education and Culture and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 112), re H.B. No. 5052, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY BANAHAO, CITY OF BAYBAY, PROVINCE OF LEYTE TO BE KNOWN AS BANAHAO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 199

Sponsors: Representatives Escudero, Nograles (K.) and Cari

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Revision of Laws (Committee Report No. 113), re H.B. No. 5060, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING MARCH 31 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE WHOLE PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN LEYTE, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE FIRST MASS HELD IN LIMASAWA ISLAND, PROVINCE OF SOUTHERN LEYTE, TO BE KNOWN AS THE ‘FIRST MASS DAY’ ”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 994

Sponsors: Representatives Primicias-Agabas and Mercado
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Revision of Laws (Committee Report No. 114), re H.B. No. 622, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING MARCH 24 OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NON-WORKING HOLIDAY IN THE CITY OF LIGAO, PROVINCE OF ALBAY, IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY”

recommending its approval without amendment

Sponsors: Representatives Primicias-Agabas and Gonzalez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Public Order and Safety (Committee Report No. 115), re H.B. No. 1341, entitled:

“AN ACT RENAMING THE HILLTOP RIZAL PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) COMMAND IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF TAYTAY, PROVINCE OF RIZAL AS CAMP GENERAL LICERIO GERONIMO”

recommending its approval without amendment

Sponsor: Representative Acop
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 116), re H.B. No. 5063, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING THE PANGASINAN GULF WAVES NETWORK CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS THROUGHOUT THE PHILIPPINES”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 1941

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (F.) and Espino
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Legislative Franchises (Committee Report No. 117), re H.B. No. 5064, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO SUBIC BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7511 ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE SUBIC BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO

CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN RADIO BROADCASTING AND TELEVISION STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 4464

Sponsors: Representatives Alvarez (F.) and Hernandez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Public Works and Highways and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 118), re H.B. No. 5069, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE SECOND DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF COMPOSTELA, PROVINCE OF COMPOSTELA VALLEY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 364

Sponsors: Representatives Lobregat and Zamora (M.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Public Works and Highways and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 119), re H.B. No. 5070, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE FIRST DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LABO, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES NORTE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 640

Sponsors: Representatives Lobregat and Unico
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Public Works and Highways and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 120), re H.B. No. 5071, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE THIRD DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF MATALAM, PROVINCE OF NORTH COTABATO, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2104

Sponsors: Representatives Lobregat and Tejada
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Public Works and Highways and the Committee on Appropriations

(Committee Report No. 121), re H.B. No. 5078, entitled:

“AN ACT RECONSTITUTING THE LANAO DEL NORTE DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE PROVINCE OF LANAO DEL NORTE INTO TWO (2) REGULAR DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICES, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 1188

Sponsors: Representatives Lobregat and Dimaporo (M.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report by the Committee on Public Works and Highways and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 122), re H.B. No. 5079, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING A NEW DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE FOURTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF BUKIDNON AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 2552

Sponsors: Representatives Lobregat and Roque (R.)

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of some guests in the gallery.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Please proceed.

REP. TY. We would like to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Manuel T. Sagarbarria from the Second District of Negros Oriental. They are the Association of Barangay Officials from the province of Negros Oriental, led by the Barangay Chairman Maria Rosario Oca. (*Applause*)

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The presence of our guests is hereby acknowledged. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, they are also the guests of Rep. Arnolfo “Arnie” A. Teves Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Noted.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, we would also like to

acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Jose Antonio “Kuya Jonathan” R. Sy-Alvarado from the First District of Bulacan. They are Dr. Ramon Ricardo Roque and—I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The presence of our guests is hereby acknowledged. Please stand so that the Members of the House can welcome you and acknowledge your presence. (*Applause*) They are on the left, the students from San Beda–Alabang, San Beda–Mendiola, I mentioned Alabang because I am a Bedan from Alabang. Welcome. (*Applause*)

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Ramon V.A. “Rav” Rocamora from the Lone District of Siquijor. They are Vice Governor Mei Ling M. Quezon and Mr. Ric Marcus Gahob.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The presence of the guests of the Hon. Rocamora is hereby acknowledged. Welcome. (*Applause*)

REP. TY. Lastly, Mme. Speaker, we would like to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Orestes T. Salon of AGRI Party-List. They are Susana Reyes, President of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association; Edwin Magnawa, Secretary General of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Association; Mr. John Paulo Bautista, Region IV Coordinator of AGRI Party-List; and the Members of Christians for Human Life and Dignity.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The presence of our guests is hereby acknowledged. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

RECONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 4946 ON SECOND READING

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, with leave of the House, I move that we reconsider the approval on Second Reading of House Bill No. 4946, to introduce some perfecting amendments thereto.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none;

the motion is approved, and we open the period of amendments.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS

REP. TY, Mme. Speaker, I move that we amend the measure as follows:

First, on Section 1, line 7, delete the words “Panglao Island” and insert after the word “Road” the words in parenthesis (DAUIS-PANGLAO).

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. Second, I move that we amend the title of the measure to read as follows: “AN ACT RENAMING PANGLAO ISLAND CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD TRAVERSING BARANGAYS TANGNAN, BILISAN, LOOC, POBLACION, DANAOS, TAWALA, BOLOD AND LIBAONG IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF PANGLAO AND BARANGAYS TOTOLAN, SONGCULAN, TABALONG, BINGAG, DAO, SAN ISIDRO, BIKING 1, BIKING 2, CATARMAN, MAYACABAC, POBLACION AND UNION IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DAUIS AS ANOS FONACIER CIRCUMFERENTIAL ROAD (DAUIS-PANGLAO).”

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we close the period of amendments.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of amendments is closed.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we approve on Second Reading House Bill No. 4946, as amended.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 4946, as amended, on Second Reading.

As many as are in favor, please say *aye*.

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). As many as are against, please say *nay*. (*Silence*)

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 4946, AS AMENDED, ON SECOND READING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The *ayes* have it; the motion is approved.

House Bill No. 4946, as amended, is hereby approved on Second Reading.

PRIVILEGE HOUR

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, today being a Monday, and pursuant to our rules, I move that we proceed to the Privilege Hour.

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

The Chair declares a Privilege Hour.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize the Lady from Party-List KABATAAN, Rep. Sarah Jane I. Elago, to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Representative Elago of Party-List KABATAAN is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. ELAGO

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, colleagues, good afternoon.

Since President Duterte’s declaration of “all-out war,” numerous violations and attacks have already been committed by military and police agents against activists, urban leaders and civilians across various provinces and regions. We are aghast at this ongoing military crackdown on activists and members of legal, democratic and progressive organizations.

On February 12, Ferdinand Castillo, Bayan Metro Manila campaign officer, was illegally arrested at Caloocan City by combined elements of the police and the military. He was brought to the PNP-CIDG office at Camp Crame, Quezon City, where an arrest warrant for trumped-up charges of murder and attempted murder was shown to him.

Mme. Speaker, two women development workers were also illegally arrested on fabricated criminal offenses. Rogina Quilop, administration and finance officer of the Center for People’s Resources and Services, was arrested on February 2 in Bacolod City by PNP-CIDG elements for murder charges. She is currently detained at the Handumanan Female Dormitory. On February 9, Sarah Abellon-Alikes, a member of the board of directors of the Regional Development Center-Kattinulong dagiti Umili ti Amianan, was accosted by elements of the AFP while

on her way to downtown Baguio City. She was detained for two days without charges before she was turned over to the PNP on February 11 for trumped-up charges of arson and robbery. She is now temporarily released on bail. Alikes, a Kankanaey-Igorot, is a pioneer of the Cordillera People's Alliance.

Among others who were illegally detained and arrested in the past week were also NGO workers: Promencio Cortez and Marciano Sagun in Itogon, Benguet; and Jacinto Faroden in La Trinidad, Benguet; and also, GABRIELA member Edison Villanueva in Sta. Cruz, Mindoro Occidental.

Furthermore, on February 13, we were appalled when we heard of the bomb attack launched by the 73rd Infantry Battalion in Barangay Datal Anggas in Alabel, Sarangani Province, which has forced more than a hundred Lumad families to evacuate their homes since yesterday.

According to reports, the 73rd IB has enforced a food blockade in the said barangay, making the evacuees and residents' situation worse. Further, four civilians were illegally arrested and tortured to serve as local guides in the conduct of these military operations.

On the same day, in Cagayan Valley, Danggayan reported that 50 residents of rural communities in Maddela, Quirino have been harassed and forced to evacuate due to military operations of the 86th Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army. The operations were allegedly carried out by the said battalions to hunt down NPA guerillas in the area.

Civilians bear the brunt of the government's all-out war. Even worse, the past three weeks alone heartlessly saw the killings of peasant and mining leaders. From February 3 to February 19, nine farmers and indigenous people fighting for their land were killed in separate incidents by suspected state agents.

The latest victim was Willerme Agorde who died from gunshot wounds late last night, February 19, at the Antipas Medical Hospital in North Cotabato. He was gunned down at 6:00 p.m. by motorcycle-riding men in Ilustre Village, President Roxas town. Agorde is a peasant leader of Mailuminado Farmers Association Inc. that has been fighting for ownership of 5,000-hectares of land inside the University of Southern Mindanao or USM and the Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology or CFCST. Eight other political killings this month were recorded by human rights alliance KARAPATAN, bringing to a total of 32 activists killed since Duterte assumed the Presidency.

Just recently, KABATAAN Party-List has been the target of several surveillance operations on the party and its officers. National officers of KABATAAN and other mass organizations were being followed by a blue Toyota Wigo vehicle during the Rise for Education assembly in Diliman, Quezon City on February 14.

Mme. Speaker, ang mga participants po ng ating asembliya na ito ng Rise for Education ay mga estudyante, mga student councils mula sa iba't ibang pampubliko at pampribado na higher education institutions na nag-uusap lamang hinggil sa kanilang plano sa pagtutulak ng kanilang karapatan sa edukasyon, pagtigil ng taun-taon na tuition and other school fee increases, ngunit sila ay nakaranas din ng mga ganitong threat and intimidation.

Later that day, a car with a PNP plate was parked for around 15 minutes in front of the KABATAAN Party-List Quezon City headquarters.

We strongly condemn the increasing threats and human rights violations to our leaders and the people. These attacks only show how the President's declaration of an all-out war has led to heightened militarization and swelling rights abuses, especially in legal organizations not covered by the armed insurgency.

This is how AFP's new program Oplan Kapayapaan, a mere rehash of their previous counterinsurgency program Oplan Bayanihan, had only caused people more harm and discord than peace and development. Further, the move to reinstitute mandatory ROTC in schools and the proposal to revive the Philippine Constabulary are manifestations of President Duterte's increasing penchant for perpetuating state fascism. These moves are tantamount to endorsing gross human rights abuses, grave disregard of civil liberties, and propagating state terrorism. Thus, we call on President Duterte, our colleagues, to help and support, to immediately rein in the state forces, stop the harassment of activists, and stop the all-out war and the crackdowns on our people and communities.

Ang panawagan ng KABATAAN ay all-out peace at hindi all-out war.

Likewise, we urge the President to order the resumption of peace negotiations and follow through on its significant advances, particularly in the substantive agenda for socio-economic reforms. Those are pivotal to addressing the roots of armed conflicts.

Ang kabataan ang pinakaapektado kung hindi matutuloy ang usapang pangkapayapaan. Ang sabi ng ating Pangulo, peace may not come in this generation, pero, ang mga kabataan ay hindi na po gusto na mamana pa ang mga problemang ito at kaya kailangan nang mapag-usapan ngayon. Kung hindi ngayon, kailan pa natin pag-uusapan ang mga ugat ng armadong pakikibaka?

Decisively, we enjoin the Filipino people and the youth to launch mass actions against state-perpetuated violence and fascism on February 23, our National Day of Action for Education, Human Rights, and Peace.

Iyon lamang, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat at magandang araw sa inyong lahat.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech of Honorable Elago to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize Rep. Mark O. Go from the Lone District of Baguio for his privilege speech.

REP. GO (M.). Thank you, thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Representative Go is recognized. Please proceed.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. GO (M.)

REP. GO (M.). Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, my countrymen. I thought of making today a day to remember. I want to talk about love—yes, love, you heard it right. I must think such subject has never been talked about here, or probably seldom, because it seems not appropriate to be an object of debate, or a piece of law. The debunkers of love may say what power it has to feed an empty stomach. But I refute it with a question—what is a full stomach without love? In fact, we have heard—love is the greatest, or love is the most powerful, or love can move mountains, or love changes everything. Like the poets who sing it, and the writers who praise it, I believe in love. My belief in its power is strong, unshakeable like a planted rock, firm and enduring, and I think there is no better place to talk about love but within these halls of Congress. This is the sanctuary of the voice of God and the voice of the people, and my address of love is a mandate of both. For what is public service, then, but to serve God and to serve the people.

Service to God and service to the people are one, they are the pinnacle of love in action. When we serve God, we acknowledge Him to be the Author of all that is good and beautiful. Our life is one good and beautiful gift, a parcel of divinity, an imprint of God. When we serve people, we acknowledge the completeness of our being. The “otherness” of people we serve invites us to be selfless, and to unite with them in a communal joy of being human.

Our strength as leaders is found in God, in people, and in prayer. We must pray that God will guide us in our actions in meeting the daily demands of our work. We must pray that we will all act with justice, truth, and love in serving our people. Interestingly, George

Washington wrote a Prayer for Guidance, and George Bush had A Prayer to Help Others. Bush prayed:

For we are given power not to advance our own interest, nor to make a great show in the world, nor a name. There is but one just use of power, and it is to serve people. Help us to remember it, Lord.

Unquestionably, the mandate of our office is service, and it is the only legitimate and moral justification of our leadership. Being a servant does not mean being a slave. A servant knows what his master needs, a slave does not. A servant offers his service to his master, a slave waits for the command of his master. Our master is the people we serve. Our master is the people who sometimes do not know how to write, but who know what is right. Our master is the people who sometimes do not know how to read, but who know how to give all the bread in their keeping. Our master is the people who are homeless, hungry, lonely, downtrodden, victims of injustice, and even those who are in jail. They are the people who can never pay us back. They are the people who are willing to sacrifice everything and know no instance of comfort in life.

Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, my countrymen, our great commission to serve comes with no guarantee of absolute success, no assurance of comfort along the way, sometimes no sign of light at the end of the tunnel.

Are we willing to wash the feet of our constituents? Are we willing to walk the extra mile with them? Are we willing to drown ourselves into the depths of their suffering? Are we willing to share with their laughter? Are we willing to eat with them in their humble abode? Are we willing to find glorious lift from dirtying our hands tilling with them in their fields of corn?

As of this hour, more than 26 million Filipinos are poor and nearly 12 million are in extreme poverty. If we just take a walk along the footbridges, we can find the hungry along their sides. As of this hour, many are still outside the streets looking for jobs. The number of unemployed Filipinos is at 2.4 million. As of this hour, many are crying for fairness and equity. As of this hour, many are sick and are dying. As of this hour, many fail in life.

Sadly, this is an unwelcome reality to us. Why, we wonder, we have already exhausted all solutions. Today, however, is no time for us to blame other people. Neither is it a time for regrets, nor a time for indifference. As leaders, I know how much we think of making a change. As we wake up every morning, we always hope for further possibilities that we as a people can reach. We still dream for our people and their bright future.

We are known to love God and to love the people

we serve. But how about our love for our country and the love of our people for her? I think all of us would agree that this is the very moment to rekindle our love and understanding for our country. At the outset, we love our country not because she is great; we love her because she is simply ours. And we must make her great because we love her.

As leaders, we must take the lead in initiating a cultural revolution that takes pride in our country. We are at the best position since our reach is both local and national. Our people need us. Our people need good people to follow, and we set ourselves as examples. This is not a new idea, everyone knows, but what we need to do is to increase the degree of patriotic love for each Filipino.

We are a pool of 292 of the best minds in the country. More than the number of legislation we pursue for regulation and order of our people, we need to step up and converge our efforts to campaign for more love for our country. It is time to wake up. It is time to reflect on our great possibility. And it all starts today.

In the larger picture of our communities and of our nation, all of us are enjoined to be good and active citizens. Let us rewire ourselves to the past and to reflect what excellent gift of democracy has been bestowed on us today and for our future. The freedom to talk, to move around, to pray, to marry, and many others—all these are blessings that we should never take for granted.

Like the people we serve, we have duties and responsibilities to perform to give back to our country. It is our civic duty to obey the laws of our country and to pay our taxes, among others. We are often reminded about these civic duties, but we seem not to take them by heart. Our civic duties are nothing but our way of saying our gratitude to the government for affording us protection, security, and opportunities to make a living and be happy.

On the other hand, we give to this country in the best way we can: we work. Yes, with passion for what we do, nationalism can be one big honeymoon. Doing our best in our respective fields is probably the best we can do for this everyday kind of love, in satisfying the demands of our people who hold us accountable for our work, that make our work a part of a bigger love story.

Avenues of volunteerism are wide—from helping advocacies in communities to initiating campaigns in fighting against injustice, in the protection of our rights, in pursuit of truth. This “reaching out” is love and it empowers because it asks for nothing. It empowers through service. Love is not love without help, and help is not help without love. This is evident through volunteerism. Volunteerism is the building block of a nation as it elicits contribution that has no price or exchange rate, only an opportunity to give other

opportunities, share experiences, knowledge, and expertise.

Let me conclude my message this afternoon by sharing with you the story of a small orphaned boy who lived with his grandmother. One night, their house caught fire. While trying to rescue the little boy who was sleeping upstairs, the grandmother died in the smoke and flames. A crowd gathered around the burning house, where the boy’s cries for help could be heard above the blaze. No one knew what to do.

Suddenly, a man rushed from the crowd and circled to the back where he spotted an iron pipe that reached an upstairs window. He disappeared for a minute then reappeared with the boy in his arms. Amid the cheers of the crowd, he climbed down the hot pipe as the boy held back to his neck.

Weeks after, a public hearing was held in the town hall to determine in whose custody the boy would be placed. Since no relative was left to take care of the boy, city legislation required that the boy be given for adoption only to highly qualified persons. Each person interested in adopting the boy was allowed to speak briefly.

One man said, “I have a big farm. Everybody needs the outdoors.” Another boasted of his work: “I am a teacher. I have a large library. He could get a good education.” The richest man in the community spoke last and topped it all with, “I could give the boy everything mentioned tonight—the farm, education and more, including money and travel. I would like him in my home.”

When the Chairman asked if anyone else wanted to say anything before he closed the session, a stranger rose from the back. As he walked toward the front, deep suffering showed on his face. Once in front, he stood directly in front of the little boy. Slowly, the stranger removed his hands from his pockets. The crowd gasped, when he looked up, so did the little boy.

The man’s hands were terribly scarred. Suddenly, the boy gave out a cry of recognition—this was the man who had saved his life. His hands were scarred from climbing up and down the hot pipe. The boy leaped up, threw himself around the stranger, and held on for life. The farmer rose and left, so did the teacher, then the rich man. The stranger had won the boy without a word. His hands spoke more effectively than any words could have.

Indeed, this is a story of what love is and what service is all about. Like the stranger, we are the only people our country will recognize as the rightful claimants of her. The custody of our country is in our hands who serve her. Her life is in our hands. She is ours. The Philippines is for Filipinos.

Love is a sacrifice, and we are a wounded lover for our country. Our hands may be scarred but they are

the only hands that will bring our country back again to life.

The feast of St. Valentine last week has come like an audible step at the threshold of a door. For the greatest mandate of love, let us make the Philippines our Valentine this afternoon, and for the rest of her life.

Thank you very much Mme. Speaker, and thank you my dear colleagues.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Yes, the Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. I move that we refer the speech of Rep. Mark Go to the Committee on Rules for appropriate action. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of the Party-List BAYAN MUNA to avail of the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The Honorable Zarate from the Party-List Bayan Muna is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. ZARATE

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker. Mme. Speaker, ako ay tumitindig ngayong hapon at nagtatalumpati sa gitna ng ligalig sa hanay ng mga aktibista, manggagawang pangkarapatan, mga katutubo, at iba pang mamamayan na ngayo'y parang nasa tudla ng panunupil ng mga puwersa ng Estado.

Tila бага, Mme. Speaker, mayroon nang go signal para sa mga sabik sa giyerang AFP na kating-kati na ang mga palad sa paghahasik ng karahasan sa mamamayan.

Ang pagkansela ng usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng gobyerno ng Republika ng Pilipinas at ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines ang patunay nito, Mme. Speaker. Mula lamang nitong ikatlo ng Pebrero, araw ng pagpahayag ni Presidente Rodrigo Duterte na kinakansela na niya ang usapang pangkapayapaan, umabot na sa 19 ang ilegal na inaresto at hinuli. Kasama na rito ang mga kababaihang development workers na sina Rogina Quilop, isang administrative officer ng Center for People's Resources and Services or CPRS sa Bacolod, at si Sarah Abellon-Alikes, isa sa mga nagtatag ng Cordillera People's Alliance at ngayon nga ay isang board member ng Board of Directors ng Kaduami, isang development institution ng Cordillera.

Samantala, pinirangan naman bago idinitine sa Camp Crame si Ferdinand Castillo, isang campaign officer ng Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-National Capital Region or Bayan-NCR. Kasama rin sa bilang na ito ang consultant ng National Democratic Front of the Philippines sa Southern Mindanao Region na si Ariel Arbitrario na dinakip ilang oras lamang matapos magdeklara ng all-out war laban sa CPP-NPA-NDF si Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana.

Higit na nakakabahala, Mme. Speaker, ang pag-igting ng pampulitikang pamamaslang. Sa loob lamang ng tatlong linggo ng Pebrero, siyam na manggagawa, magsasaka at katutubo ang pinatay. Ang isa sa mga pinaslang na ito ay si Glenn Ramos, 39 na taong gulang, isang construction worker at dating coordinator ng aming partido, BAYAN MUNA, sa Davao City. Pinasok umano ng mga miyembro ng CIDG ang kanilang tahanan at wala siyang awang pinagbabaril nang apat na beses sa harap ng kanyang kapatid. Tatlong bala sa dibdib, at dahil sa siya ay buhay pa, isang tama na naman ang nangyari at siya naman ay binaril sa kanyang tiyan. Mariing kinokondena namin, Mme. Speaker, ang pagpatay kay Glenn Ramos at kami ay nananawagan ng kagyat na katarungan sa kanyang pagkapaslang.

Samantala, dalawang manggagawa pa ang pinaslang ngayong buwan. Dalawang small-scale miners, sina Pepito Tiambong at Jerson Bito, ang namatay pagkatapos pagbabarilin ng mga miyembro ng 73rd Infantry Battalion ang isang mining tunnel sa Santiago, Agusan del Sur, sa paniniwalang may mga miyembro ng NPA sa loob nito. Apat pang minero ang nasugatan sa insidenteng iyon.

Karahasan din, Mme. Speaker, ang inabot ng ating mga magbubukid. Kagabi lamang, February 19, ay walang awang pinaslang si Willerme Agorde, isang lider na magsasaka ng Mailuminado Farmer's Association Incorporated na matagal nang nakikipaglaban para sa lupang sakahan sa bayan ng Roxas, North Cotabato. Ayon mismo sa ulat ng kapulisan, nakaupo lamang si Agorde sa harap ng kanyang tindahan nang ito ay lapitan ng dalawang katao at pinagbabaril gamit ang kalibre .45. Sinaksak pa siya sa iba't ibang parte ng kanyang katawan pagkatapos barilin.

Sa Roxas, Capiz naman, nakapiket ang mga magsasaka sa labas ng Tan Estate sa paggigiit ng mga magsasaka ng kanilang karapatan sa lupa, lalo na nang nagbigay ang Department of Agrarian Reform ng Certificates of Land Ownership Awards o CLOA, subalit noong February 11 ay pinaulanan ng bala ang kampuhan ng mga magsasaka ng mga armadong guwardiya na umano ay guwardiya ng Tan Estate. Namatay sa insidenteng ito si Orlando Eslana at nasugatan ang lima pa.

Patuloy din ang pagpaslang ng ating mga kapatid na mga Lumad, Mme. Speaker. Apat pang katutubong Lumad ang pinatay mula lamang noong ikatlo ng Pebrero. Parang hayop na pinagbabaril sa magkahiwalay

na insidente ang mga Lumad na sina Edweno Catog, Lorendo Pocuan, Renato Anglao, at Emilito Rotimas sa kanilang mga tahanan at komunidad ng grupong paramilitar at mga miyembro umano ng AFP.

Ganito po, Mme. Speaker, ang mukha ng karahasan ngayon sa ating kanayunan. Dapat lamang na maringi kondenahin nating mga mambabatas at mamamayan ang pasistang atake na ito sa ating mga Kalumaran at ating mamamayan.

Mme. Speaker, ang idineklarang all-out war ng National Defense ay malinaw na all-out war sa ating mamamayan. Tulad ng Martial Law noong mga nakaraang panahon at ang samu't saring all-out war pa ng mga nakaraang administrasyon, mahuhulog ito hindi sa pagpuksa sa mga rebelde, kung hindi sa pagpatay ng mga sibilyan, paglabag sa karapatan ng ating mga mamamayan at pampulitikang panunupil.

Muli tayong pinaaalalahanan ng katotohanang ito, Mme. Speaker.

Pinatutunayan na ng mahabang kasaysayan na ang pagresolba ng rebelyon sa ating bayan ay hindi nadadala sa bala at dahas, sapagkat sa kabila ng bilyun-bilyong pera, dugo at libu-libong armas, imbis na malupig ay nagpatuloy, lumalakas, at naging mas malaganap ang halos kalahating siglong rebolusyon na sa ating kanayunan.

Ang marahas na Estado kasama na ang mga malalalim na in hustisyang panlipunan ang numero unong rekruter ng mga gerilyang mandirigma. Kaya't kami sa BAYAN MUNA, Mme. Speaker, ay naniniwala na mas malaki ang tiyansa ng administrasyong Duterte na maresolba ang ugat ng armadong paglaban kapag bumalik ang GRP sa negotiating table at pag-usapan ang socio-economic reforms na siyang buod ng digmaang sibil. Nananatiling bukas, ayon pa sa kanila, ang NDFP sa pakikipag-usap, at kamakailan lamang ay nagpahayag ang CPP na handa silang makipagsundo sa isang bilateral ceasefire agreement, kalakip ng pagpapalaya ng mga bilanggong pulitikal at gayon rin ang pagpapalaya ng mga tinaguriang "prisoners of war" na nasa kanilang pangangalaga. Kaya't hinihimok natin ang gobyernong Duterte na ito ay tumbasan, ang pahayag na ito, at ipanumbalik ang usapang pangkapayapaan para sa kagalingan ng sambayanan at para sa matagalan at tunay na kapayapaan sa ating bayan.

Dapat nitong rendahan ang walang habas na karahasan ng mga paramilitar at ng miyembro ng AFP, at iba pang puwersa ng Estado na pumapatay, nagkukulung at nandarahas sa ating mga mamamayan.

Kaya't ang aming panawagan, Mme. Speaker:

Katarungan para kay Glenn Ramos!

Katarungan para kay Emilito Rotimas!

Katarungan para kay Renato Anglao!

Katarungan para kay Matanem Lorendo Pocuan!

Katarungan para kay Orlando Eslana!

Katarungan para kay Jason Bito!

Katarungan para kay Pepito Tiambong!

Katarungan para kay Edweno Catog!

Katarungan para kay Willerme Agorde!

Katarungan para sa siyam na kababayan natin, itong napaslang nitong nakaraang mga linggo.

Ituloy ang usapang pangkapayapaan. Itigil ang all-out war laban sa ating mga mamamayan.

Magandang hapon at maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker,

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, may I know if ...

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I would like to recognize the Gentleman from SAGIP to interpellate.

REP. MARCOLETA. I would like to know, Mme. Speaker, if ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The Gentleman is recognized.

REP. MARCOLETA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Will the honorable Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA, Mme. Speaker, yield to a few questions?

REP. ZARATE. Gladly, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Salamat po.

Mme. Speaker, mga ilang paglilinaw lamang po. Iyon pong mga binanggit ninyo na mga pagpaslang, talaga po namang nakalulungkot na mga pangyayari iyan. Wala po sigurong isa man sa atin ang matutuwa o mapapangiti kapag nakita natin ang pagpaslang sa ating mga kapwa Pilipino. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ZARATE. Tama po, Mme. Speaker, lalu't lalo na kung walang hustisya ang kanilang pagkamatay.

REP. MARCOLETA. Ganoon din po sa panig ng ating pamahalaan, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Marahil po naman ay hindi rin lingid sa inyong kaalaman na marami rin tayong kasundaluhan at marami ring sibilyan ang napaslang dahil sa alitan sa pagitan ng CPP-NPA-NDF at ng ating mga kasundaluhan. Tama rin po ba iyon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ZARATE. Tama po iyan, Mme. Speaker.

Kaya nga po tayo ay nananawagan dahil talagang dito sa nagpapatuloy na digmaang sibil o itong armadong tunggalian sa ating bayan ay tuluy-tuloy na nagkakaroon ng mga casualties. Kaya tayo ay nananawagan na isang oportunidad na maresolba ito sa pamamagitan ng usapang pangkapayapaan, na nitong nakaraang anim na buwan, sa loob lamang ng tatlong round of talks ay napakahaba na ng inabante nito lalung-lalo na doon sa substantive agenda na socio-economic reforms na sa tingin ng karamihan ay ito ang magiging sagot sa tinatawag nating ugat ng armadong tunggalian sa ating bayan, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. Samakatuwid, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, alin mang panig ng napaslang ang buhay, nagbuwis ng buhay, lahat po tayo ay malulungkot, lahat po ay talo, sapagkat huwag na nating bilangin kung ang napaslang ay sa panig ng CPP-NPA o sa panig ng pamahalaan. Ang ibig pong sabihin nito, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, talaga pong dapat ang dalawang panig ay mag-usap kaysa mag-usap sa pamamagitan ng bala. Hindi po ba, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ZARATE. Tama po iyan, at isang napakaideyal na sitwasyon na sana ang tunggaliang ito nga ay maresolba sa pamamagitan ng peace talks.

Kaya, again, Mme. Speaker, iyon po ang ating ipananawagan ngayon, dahil kung atin namang susundan itong mga nakaraang limang buwan, for the first time, mula noong 1992 nang bumalik o nabuksan ang usapang pangkapayapaan sa pagitan ng GRP o Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front, for the first time ay nagkaroon tayo ng isang mahabang interim ceasefire, although ito ay mga unilateral ceasefires na idineklara ng gobyerno at ng NPA. Subalit dahil nga ito ay mga unilateral ceasefires, nagkaroon ng maraming complaints on the ground. At ito ay isang usapin nga nitong nakaraang third round of talks doon sa Roma, Italya kung saan, kung mabanggit ko lang, Mme. Speaker, at sa ating kaibigan, isa sa napagkasunduan sana doon ay ang operationalization ng Joint Monitoring Committee o JMC na siyang magpapatupad sa mga napagkasunduan na na probisyon ng Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law or ang batas ng giyera na kung saan ito ay pinagtibay ng GRP at ng NDFP mula pa noong August of 1988.

REP. MARCOLETA. Puntahan po natin iyong tinuran ninyo, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, na nag-uusap po iyong dalawang panig. Ang katotohanan po nito, lahat po tayo ay nagbigay ng napakalaking pag-asa na sana ito ay simula na ng malawakan at pangmatagalang kapayapaan sa ating bansa.

Lahat po ay umasa sapagkat sa pamamagitan siguro ng isang seryoso na pag-uusap kagaya ng ginawa ng

dalawang panig sa maraming pagkakataon—tatlo po yatang beses—ay pinilit ng pamahalaan na talagang tingnan ang lahat ng mga posibilidad para magkaroon tayo ng kapayapaan.

Ang tanong po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, habang hinahanap po natin, habang ang pamahalaan ay nagsisikap na hanapin ang napakailap na solusyon ng pangkapayapaan, sapagkat hindi naman po natin masasabi na ito po ay masyadong madali, komplikado na po ito, malalim na po ang pinag-ugatan nito, sino po ba, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ang nanguna para iyong unilateral ceasefire ay bawiin, ang pamahalaan po ba o ang CPP-NPA-NDF?

REP. ZARATE. Nito pong—kung atin pong matatandaan, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Hindi po. Sino po iyong nauna na bumawi ng unilateral ceasefire?

REP. ZARATE. Iyon po ang aking gustong puntuhin, Mme. Speaker. Kung matatandaan po natin, nitong February 1 ay nag-anunsiyo ang New People's Army na iyong kanilang unilateral ceasefire ay babawiin na nila effective February 10.

REP. MARCOLETA. Iyon nga po.

REP. ZARATE. Sumunod noon ay nag-announce din si Pangulong Duterte.

REP. MARCOLETA. Hindi po. Ang aking itinatanong po ay sino po ba ang unang nagdeklara na bawiin ang unilateral ceasefire?

REP. ZARATE. Iyon nga po ang aking kasagutan doon. Noong February 1 ay nag-anunsiyo na ang NPA na babawiin nila at mayroon silang mga sinabing kadahilanan. Pagkatapos nito, in response, binawi na rin ng gobyerno ang kanilang idineklarang unilateral ceasefire.

REP. MARCOLETA. Hindi po ba makatwiran lamang sapagkat habang nag-uusap ang dalawang panig, talaga pong seryoso, ako po naniniwala na seryoso ito, kagaya po ng sinabi natin na bawat isang mamamayang Pilipino ay naghahangad at umaasa na sana, ito na iyong simula ng isang malawakan at pangmatagalang kapayapaan sa ating bansa na sa mahabang panahon ay pinaghati tayo ng sigalot na ito, lahat po iyong pag-asang iyon. Bakit hindi po nagtiyaga ang isang panig na, “Teka muna, mag-usap muna tayo.” Bakit po kailangang ideklara kaagad na “Ayaw na namin”? Kapagka ganoon po ba, inaasahan po ba natin na maghahalukip ng kamay lamang ang pamahalaan? Hindi po ba makatwiran din na komo

nauna na iyong isang panig, hindi po ba tama na gagawin rin naman ng aksiyon ang pamahalaan, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ZARATE. Mme. Speaker, kung matatandaan po natin, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Hindi po. Ang tanong po, hindi ba pangkaraniwan lang na dapat nating asahan na gayong ang nagdeklara naman ay iyong kabilang panig, hindi ba inaasahan na gagawa din naman ng kaukulang aksiyon iyong pamahalaan?

REP. ZARATE. Kaya nga po, Mme. Speaker, ang naging response noon ay ang pag-withdraw rin ng pamahalaan. Ito ay mga unilateral ceasefires at nitong mga nakaraang buwan, at kahit noong nasa Roma, Italya, at mababasa ito sa joint statement na inilabas ng GRP at NDFP, nagpaabot ang NDFP ng kanilang reklamo sa mga tuluy-tuloy na troop deployment at paglabag ng sariling ceasefire ng GRP. Ang GRP rin ay may same counter-complaints, kaya nga kung hahayaan sanang kahit na nag-withdraw ng kani-kanilang mga unilateral ceasefires, kung nabigyan ng pagkakataon ngayong February 22 hanggang 27, iyong ceasefire committees ng GRP at ng NDFP ay nakatakdang magkita sa Netherlands para pag-usapan ang posibilidad na magkaroon ng isang bilateral ceasefire agreement na kung saan, ang mga modalities at protocol nito ay binding sa dalawang naglalabang grupo, ang GRP at ang NDFP.

REP. MARCOLETA. Ganon pala, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Ganon pala. Alam naman pala noong panig na iyon na mayroon pa palang pag-uusap, bakit naman hindi nagpasensiya muna? Bakit hindi muna pinag-isipang mabuti? Siguro makapupong ulit, sabi nga nila, sapagkat ang hinahanap po natin ay pangkapayapaan na bawat mamamayang Pilipino ang makikinabang. Bakit hindi po natin pinagtiyagaan? Ilang pasensiya po ba ang kakailanganin, kung kinakailangang magbilang tayo ng isa hanggang isang milyon para pag-isipan ang isang pagdedesiyon na may kinalaman tayong lahat? Bakit po ganon?

REP. ZARATE. Kung bakit po...

REP. MARCOLETA. Mayroon palang pag-uusap, bakit naman biglaan na mayroon lang magdedeklara ng “Ayaw ko na”? Hindi po ba mas maganda na siguro isinangguni muna, “Mga kaibigan, aayaw na ba tayo? Hindi ba mayroon pa tayong pag-uusap na nakatalaga? Mayroon pa tayong isang pag-uusap, ...”

REP. ZARATE. Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARCOLETA. “...baka naman puwede na

nating tingnan muna. Huwag muna tayong mag-declare kaagad.” Hindi po ganon ang nangyari e.

Ngayon po, ang Pangulo ng Pilipinas ay Commander-in-Chief ng Armed Forces of the Philippines. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ZARATE. Tama po.

REP. MARCOLETA. Ngayon po, kapagka nagsalita po ang Commander-in-Chief at sinabi niya, “O, nauna na sila e, wala na akong magagawa. O sige, maghanda na rin tayo.” Hindi po ba dapat asahan na iyong sundalo, dahil sundalo po iyan, susunod po siya sa Commander-in-Chief? Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ZARATE. Tama po iyan ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Ngayon, alam naman po natin iyon, kailangan, hindi ba, nag-ingat tayo? Dapat pinag-aralan nating mabuti. Kagaya po ng ipinipilit ng Kinatawang ito, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ang usaping pangkapayapaan ay hindi lamang po sa kabilang panig. Hindi lamang sa panig ng pamahalaan, hindi sa panig ng CPP-NPA. Ito po ay sa panig ng pangkalahatang Pilipino. Wala pong isang grupo ang magtatakdang kung ano ang mabuti sa ating bansa. Bakit po? Iyong pangkaraniwang mamamayan, wala ba silang magandang kapalarang inaasahan sa kanila at sa kinabukasan ng kanilang mga anak?

Ang ibig ko pong sabihin, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, isang usapin ito na masyadong malalim, na pinaghiwa-hiwalay na tayo ng maraming panahon, gayong nagkausap na po, para sa amin, napakalaki pong pagkakataon ito, sapagkat sa dalawang taong nagsusuntukan, hindi na po ako naniniwalang puwede. Puwede po bang nag-uusap kayo and at the same time ay nagsusuntukan kayo? Suntukan lamang po iyon.

REP. ZARATE. Mme. Speaker,

REP. MARCOLETA. Hindi po ba mas maganda na hanapin natin ang makabubuti sa ating bansa? At kung ang maganda po ay mag-usap tayo, huwag tayong gagawa nang mabilis na pagpapasya sapagkat ito ay pagsisisihan nating lahat, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Tama po iyan, Mme. Speaker. Sa katunayan po, sabi ko nga kanina, kung mabibigyan ng—ngayon po, nasa punto po tayo na nananawagang bumalik sa usapang pangkapayapaan ang dalawang partido. Ang usapin naman po ng kung bakit, ano ang dahilan at nag-withdraw sila sa kanilang kanyakanyang unilateral ceasefire, ay naipahayag na ng NPA at naipahayag na rin ni Pangulong Duterte. Ngayon po, nasa punto tayo na nananawagan tayo, mayroong mga—kahit na si Pangulong Duterte, ang sinasabi niya,

if there is a compelling reason na puwedeng bumalik sa usapang pangkapayapaan ay babalik ang gobyerno. Nitong nakaraang araw, nag-anunsyo na rin ang Communist Party of the Philippines na sila ay bukas pa rin na magkaroon ng bilateral ceasefire agreement.

REP. MARCOLETA. Salamat po.

REP. ZARATE. Ang mahalaga ngayon, Mme. Speaker, sa aking pananaw ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ako po ay isa sa pumirma ...

REP. ZARATE. Puwede hong patapusin tayo ng ating ...

REP. MARCOLETA. ... doon sa resolusyon na gusto kong mag-usap muli ang bawat panig, ...

REP. ZARATE. Maganda po iyon.

REP. MARCOLETA. ... sapagkat ito po ay mabuti, sapagkat ito ay maganda at ikabubuti nating lahat.

Ngayon po, dahil isa po ako sa pumirma na nagnanais na magkaroon tayo ng kapayapaan sa ating bansa, puwede po bang magbigay ng suhestiyon lang, kahit na po ito ay hindi naman sino-solicit ng bawat panig?

Ganito po sana, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ang isyu po ng pangkapayapaan, masalimuot po ito at malalim. Napakahirap po. Kailangan nating pag-ingatan. Puwede po ba na iyon pong mga demands, huwag muna iyong masyadong malalaki na hindi natin kayang abutin? Kumbaga po sa isang tao na pumipitas ng prutas mula sa isang punong-kahoy, puwede bang unahin muna natin iyong mga mabababang mga bunga na pupuwede nating kunin at kainin nating kapwa? Mula doon, papataas nang papataas, hanggang sa makuha natin ang pinakahuling bunga, iyong pinakamahirap na kunin, puwede po ba iyong ganoon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor? Huwag na po iyong masyadong mag-uumpisa tayo sa mataas at matayog na bunga, at kakailanganin natin ang isang malakas at matatag na hagdanan para lamang kunin iyong bunga na iyon. Pupuwede naman tayong kumuha ng bunga, iyong nasa baba lamang, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Puwede po ba?

REP. ZARATE. Sa palagay ko naman po ay talagang pupuwede iyan. Kung ako ay hahayaan ng ating kaibigan na magpahayag, kung titingnan natin nga po ang nangyari noong nakaraang limang buwan, napakataas na ang iniusad ng usapang pangkapayapaan. Doon ho sa usapin ng ano ba ang dapat pag-usapan, sabi ko nga po, nasa substantive agenda na sila ng socio-economic reforms, ano? Ang hindi ho nangyari sa nakaraang 15 taon ay nangyari ho nitong last three rounds of talks.

Mayroon na po silang in principle ay pinagkasunduan lalung-lalo na sa usapin ng socio-economic reforms. Ang hindi ho siguro alam ng karamihan, isa hong magandang nangyari sa usapang pangkapayapaan ngayon ay ang pag-accelerate ng agenda ng usapang pangkapayapaan. Habang nag-uusap ho ang dalawang panel sa regular agenda na socio-economic reforms ay nag-uusap na rin ang kanilang kanya-kanyang reciprocal working groups para pag-usapan ang political and constitutional reforms na kabahagi ng agenda na itinakda nila noon pang 1992.

REP. MARCOLETA. Maraming salamat po.

REP. ZARATE. Doon naman po sa usapang ceasefire, totoo po na mas mainam na atmosphere na magkaroon ng ceasefire habang nag-uusap. Pero, kung natatandaan po natin, nitong mga nakaraang dekada rin, noong panahong 1992, 1998, wala hong ceasefire na nangyari. Pero ito iyong period sa panahon ni Presidente Fidel Ramos, ito iyong period na maraming dokumento at kasunduan ang nalagdaan kahit na walang formal ceasefire. Kabilang na rito ang The Hague Joint Declaration na nagtakda ng agenda ng usapang pangkapayapaan; ang 1995 Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees; at ang unang major agreement na nasa substantive agenda na nakumpleto noong March of 1998, ang Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

REP. MARCOLETA. Maraming salamat po.

REP. ZARATE. Ang ibig po nating puntuhin dito, Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. MARCOLETA. Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. ... kung mabibigyan ng pagkakataon na bumalik uli ang both panels sa negotiating table, tayo po ay maniniwala, kasama ang ating kaibigan rito na nananawagan ng just and lasting peace, na aabante pa ang usapang pangkapayapaan sa pamamagitan ng dalawang nagtutunggaliang puwersa ng GRP at NDFP.

REP. MARCOLETA. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker, sa panahong ibinigay ninyo sa akin, at maraming salamat sa Kinatawan ng BAYAN MUNA. Inaasahan po ng ating mga kababayan na sana po ay makamit na natin ang kapayapaan, pagtiyagaan po ng dalawang panig.

Salamat po.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat din po. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. I move to refer the speech of the Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate and its interpellation to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize Rep. Ron P. Salo of Party-List KABAYAN to avail of this Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The Hon. Ron P. Salo of Party-List KABAYAN is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. SALO

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

Mme. Speaker, my esteemed colleagues, guests, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant day to all of you.

Today, I rise for and on behalf of our fellow Filipinos in Sabah whose situation is a cause of grave concern.

For the past years, we have heard alarming reports of abuse and human rights violations being suffered by Filipino migrants in Sabah, both documented and undocumented. As of today, there are thousands languishing in overcrowded jails and deportation facilities under subhuman conditions and exposed to the threats of abuse and police brutality.

Mme. Speaker, the situation of these Filipino migrants in Sabah is a long-standing humanitarian crisis of ominous proportion. Although there is difficulty in accurately assessing the number of Filipinos in Sabah, the government estimate of Filipinos in Sabah was pegged at 800,000, while the NGO estimate was pegged at 1.4 million, based on 2013 reports.

We are aware and we are happy to note that late last year, President Rodrigo Duterte and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak agreed to the gradual repatriation of undocumented Filipinos in Sabah, and that the President has assured that while the gradual repatriation is proceeding, he intends to provide assistance in the form of hospitals and schools.

Just this January, Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary Judy Taguiwalo declared that more than 7,000 Filipinos in Sabah, who have

been arrested by Malaysian authorities for their undocumented migrant status, will be deported beginning February. Our government will respond to this, said Secretary Taguiwalo, stressing that the deportees will be provided assistance to make sure their immediate economic needs are met. These recent efforts of the government are encouraging and will offer much-needed relief and support to many of the thousands of Filipinos detained in jails and deportation facilities in Sabah. However, there is still an urgent need for a coherent policy and definitive action from the concerned government agencies to halt the continuing abuses against Filipino migrants. While repatriation is ongoing, there is a need to fully investigate and squarely address the issues of abuses and human rights violations, and come up with policies and programs including addressing the issue directly with Malaysia and, perhaps, coming up with bilateral agreements that will tackle the situation once and for all.

Mme. Speaker, we have witnessed how, in recent years, the Malaysian government has instituted crackdowns on illegal immigrants, which were reportedly accompanied by police brutality and severe human rights violations. In 2001, the Malaysian government's deportation process on illegal immigrants in Sabah was reportedly accompanied by human rights violations. In 2002, a crackdown against immigrants caused physical, emotional and psychological suffering to Filipinos who were apprehended. This was described by then GABRIELA Representative Luzviminda Ilagan in a speech to the International Assembly of Migrants and Refugees in 2008, as follows:

Tens of thousands of Filipinos, half of them women and children, were caught and cramped in appalling detention cells. They were detained for weeks before they were deported back to their countries of origin. Sabah newspapers confirmed the Malaysian authorities' cruelties—beatings and manhandling of men, children and even pregnant women. Dozens of women had been raped by police or jail guards; one of them, a 13-year old girl. Just like in the previous crackdowns, countless people, especially children, fell physically, emotionally and psychologically ill, and at least 12 babies and children died while in detention due to dehydration, starvation and disease.

In February 2013, the Royal Security Forces of the Sultanate of Sulu and North Borneo, claiming to be under the leadership of Jamalul Kiram III, an heir and claimant to the Sultanate of Sulu, arrived in Sabah to assert the Philippines' territorial claim. This sparked a military standoff with Malaysian forces, which resulted in the death of 52 Filipinos and eight

Malaysian policemen, and the evacuation of over 6,000 Filipinos from Sabah. As a result, undocumented Filipino migrants were reportedly subjected to physical abuse and harassment by the Malaysian police force. According to reports, the Malaysian forces were non-discriminating whether the migrants carried a red identity or permanent residence card, or social work and resettlement pass. They heedlessly beat and shot individuals who were suspected of being a Tausug or a Suluk, and supporters of the royal army were branded as terrorists.

Again, in January 2014, reports of abuses against Filipinos in Sabah again circulated, prompting Malacañang to summon Philippine Ambassador to Malaysia Jose Eduardo Malaya to probe the incidents. Reports included the alleged roundup of documented and undocumented OFWs who were thrown into overcrowded processing centers and jails, and forced to admit they were illegal workers. Some of the female migrant workers were also reportedly sexually abused.

Florito Rosales, an architect and a project manager of a Malaysian construction company in Kota Kinabalu, posted in his Facebook account his experiences while he and his fellow Filipinos were jailed. They were physically and emotionally abused, made to sleep on the floor of an overcrowded and pest-infested hall, and treated as criminals, even if he was fully documented with a working visa. He stressed that Malaysian authorities were obviously targeting Filipinos. He also complained of the alleged inaction of the Philippine Embassy in Malaysia over the mistreatment of the Filipinos.

Mme. Speaker, colleagues, guests, we know that previous administrations have exerted various efforts to address the situation. However, fact-finding missions revealed that these actions failed to provide adequate and coordinated assistance for the migrant workers. Overall, it has been observed that the abuses suffered by Filipinos in Sabah were seldom given national attention, and that efforts that have been implemented so far offered only temporary solutions such as providing assistance to deportees, and not permanent solutions to the persisting issue on the Filipino migrants in Sabah. Limited or insufficient State intervention aggravated the abuses that Filipino migrants suffer.

Our countrymen do not deserve this maltreatment. By virtue of being a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, our State is duty-bound to ensure that every Filipino who wishes to work or is currently working overseas is protected from all forms of human rights violations, regardless of whether or not his or her country of destination and work is a signatory to the same international treaty that binds us. And all the more should we be on the lookout or on a more heightened alert for such violations in

countries such as Malaysia that are non-parties to the aforementioned human rights convention.

Mme. Speaker, and colleagues in this Chamber, there is an urgent need to investigate the current situation of our countrymen in Sabah. The government needs to come up with solutions that treat the security and welfare of the Filipinos as a priority. While there is an existing territorial issue between the Philippines and Malaysia, the protection of the interest of Filipinos should be given paramount consideration, even separate from other issues involving other aspects of the Philippine relations with Malaysia.

In this connection, I am filing a resolution seeking to conduct an inquiry in aid of legislation to come up with a coherent policy and legal framework in addressing the situation of Filipino migrants in Sabah. This will include defining a much clearer and effective government policy on Filipino migration to Sabah that will render safer the living and working conditions of all Filipino migrants in that area, an assessment of the effectiveness of our legal protection mechanisms for our migrants in distress, and a veritable review of our foreign relations policy with Malaysia insofar as the Sabah issue is concerned.

I then appeal to this august Hall for its collective wisdom and support in adopting this resolution. As champions of the rights and welfare of our people, let us work together to find lasting and sustainable solutions to finally end the suffering of our people in Sabah and their families back home.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. I move to recognize the Gentleman from Party-List ACTS-OFW for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The Gentleman is recognized.

REP. BERTIZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Dep. Majority Leader.

Will the distinguished Gentleman yield to some questions, Mme. Speaker?

REP. SALO. Gladly, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BERTIZ. Mme. Speaker, first, I really appreciate the honorable Representative of KABAYAN Party-List for bringing up the situation of our Filipinos in Sabah. May I ask, Mme. Speaker, how many Filipinos, in total, that will be deported by the Malaysian government?

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, according to Secretary

Taguiwalo in her statement in January, there are more than 7,000 Filipinos in Sabah, who will be deported beginning this February.

REP. BERTIZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mayroon na po bang ginagawa ang Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs pagdating dito sa problema natin sa mga Pilipinong pauwiin galing ng Sabah?

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, in that particular regard, I am not really aware. That is the reason I am filing this particular resolution to investigate the extent of the efforts being undertaken by the Philippine government.

REP. BERTIZ. Okay. How about the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, or the ARMM, are they doing some preparations in coordination with the DSWD in regard to the 7,000 Filipinos that will be deported from Malaysia?

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, still, on that matter, I have no personal knowledge of.

REP. BERTIZ. So, ibig sabihin po ba, Mme. Speaker, ang mga departamento na dapat nangangalaga sa ating mga Pilipino sa ibang bansa ay walang ginagawa at mga inutil pagdating dito sa mga problemang kakaharapin ng mahigit sa 7,000 Pilipino na galing ng Malaysia?

REP. SALO. In that regard, this is perhaps the reason we are calling for this particular investigation in aid of legislation for us to be properly briefed and apprised of the efforts being undertaken by the Philippine government, particularly agencies in charge of the protection of our Filipino migrants.

REP. BERTIZ. Mme. Speaker, may we humbly ask the honorable Rep. Ron P. Salo kung kailan pa po ba natin nalaman or do we have any reports coming from Malaysian government or embassy that they are going to deport 7,000 plus overseas Filipinos from Sabah?

REP. SALO. I have no personal knowledge of that as well except what was in the news last January that Secretary Taguiwalo declared that more than 7,000 Filipinos in Sabah, who have been arrested by Malaysian authorities for their undocumented migrant status, will be deported beginning February. Nonetheless, we respectfully note, Your Honor, that since 2001, this particular issue on migrants in distress in Sabah has been reported in the news and has reached officially the offices of Department of Foreign Affairs.

REP. BERTIZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Honorable Salo.

The same thing as what we are having a problem with Jakatia Pawa, who was executed at wala man lang pong kaalam-alam ang ating Department of Foreign Affairs, lalung-lalo na iyong Office of Migrant Workers' Affairs, regarding dito sa mga ganitong kalungkut-lungkot na nangyayari sa ating mga overseas Filipinos.

Ganoon na rin po, supposedly, if the Malaysian government orders, and it came out in the news that these 7,000 Filipinos will be deported, dapat po ang unang gumagawa ng aksyon ay hindi ang DSWD, kundi ang DFA. Is there any recommendation or action that you would like to pursue, Mme. Speaker, in regard to the incompetence of our government representative, especially in the Migrant Workers' Affairs Office under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mme. Speaker?

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, this precisely calls for a particular investigation and we trust that this House leadership will immediately act on our request to immediately hear from the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as the other agencies involved in the affairs of our migrant workers for us to be able to be apprised and briefed on the concrete plans that they are doing, as well as to come up with a national policy on how to address this lingering issue on Filipino migrant workers in Sabah whose number, as reported, ranges between 800,000 to 1.2 million Filipinos.

REP. BERTIZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

It is not only the 7,000 plus Filipinos from Sabah, we might as well look into the 300,000 that will be deported coming from the United States as the pronouncement of the newly elected President Trump, as well as the 15,000 stranded workers from Saudi Arabia for whom, until now, our DFA, especially the Office of the Migrant Workers' Affairs, is not doing anything according to what they promised last June when we visited Saudi Arabia. Karamihan po sa kanila na napauwi na mahigit sa 6,000 ay nagbabalik na ulit sa Saudi Arabia dahil nga hindi makamtan ang mga ipinangako ng ating Department of Foreign Affairs na maibalik ang kanilang mga end-of-service benefits as well as their unpaid salaries.

Thank you so much and I really commend and thank Hon. Ron Salo for bringing up these issues. We might as well bring the issue of the 15,000 stranded workers from Saudi Arabia as well as what are the preparations of the DFA, the DOLE and the DSWD regarding the 300,000 plus that will be deported from the United States of America.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Dep. Majority Leader.

REP. SALO. Thank you very much as well, Congressman Aniceto "John" D. Bertiz III, for your support to our Filipino migrants.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. I would like to recognize the next interpellator, the Gentleman from the First District of Zamboanga, Rep. Celso L. Lobregat.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The Hon. Celso Lobregat is hereby recognized.

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

Mme. Speaker, may I know if the Honorable Salo will be willing to answer a few questions from this Representation.

REP. SALO. Gladly, Your Honor.

REP. LOBREGAT. Okay. Mme. Speaker, I am interpellating because almost all of the undocumented Filipinos from Sabah end up in Zamboanga City. Even when I was a Mayor, many times, practically there were deportations almost every week, the only difference was the number. If there was a crackdown by the Malaysian authorities, then the deportees would be running to the hundreds and even thousands, but on a weekly basis, there were about 40, 20, 30.

I would like to thank the Honorable Salo for bringing this up because, more or less, the conditions in the detention cells in Malaysia, in Sabah were really deplorable to the point that since we cannot put a consulate in Sabah because we have a claim, we even sent our city health officer to Sabah to look at the detention cells. As of now, what is the number of undocumented Filipinos that you would estimate in Sabah?

REP. SALO. According to government estimates, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, Filipinos in Sabah, both documented and undocumented, were pegged at 800,000. However, NGO estimates them at 1.4 million based on 2013 reports. You are right, Mme. Speaker, that the condition of Filipinos that are placed in jails is really deplorable. They are placed in subhuman conditions and these are fellow Filipinos.

REP. LOBREGAT. Yes, but in reality, there is a need in Sabah for a large labor force. It is just when, more or less, the Malaysians start complaining about the employment that the Malaysian government has a crackdown.

Now, the government has even tried to establish a one-stop shop in Zamboanga to help the documentation of the Filipinos wanting to work in Sabah; but unfortunately, still, most of the undocumented Filipinos,

even though they have been deported, try to go back and use the backdoor, and the interagency—you have the DSWD, you have the DOLE, you have the OWWA—all of them, try to put their resources together to facilitate. But still, most of the undocumented Filipinos end up again as undocumented Filipinos going through the backdoor. Do you have any recommendation or suggestion to this?

REP. SALO. Mme. Speaker, that is precisely the reason we are calling for this particular investigation, for us to be able to craft a national policy on how we are going to address these humanitarian crises that are plaguing our Filipinos in Sabah. Indeed, it is multifaceted, it is not just a one dimension where we can look at this particular problem besetting our people. Of course, there are security issues, there are territorial issues and claims, there is poverty, a lot of issues come into play, and this is where the collective wisdom of this august Chamber is needed in order for us to be able to craft that sustainable and lasting national policy.

REP. LOBREGAT. Yes. In fact, many of the children of these undocumented Filipinos have been born in Sabah and they do not speak Tagalog nor do they speak Tausug. In fact, they speak the Malaysian dialect. So, when they are deported back to the Philippines, including their children, there is also the problem of education because they cannot even speak any of the languages or dialects of the Philippines. I hope you take that into account when ...

REP. SALO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, we respectfully note that particular concern and, indeed, there are also issues on, perhaps, statelessness of some of these people while, of course, by blood, they are Filipinos.

REP. LOBREGAT. Yes. So, anyway, I just wanted to bring to your attention the other problems that are being encountered, especially when these undocumented Filipinos arrive in Zamboanga, then we also have a problem because many of them, only about 10 percent, maybe, of the undocumented Filipinos actually come from Zamboanga City; most of them come from Tawi-Tawi and Sulu. We also requested that as soon as they arrive, they are processed and are brought back to their places of origin, or else we will also have a bigger social problem in the city of Zamboanga.

So, again, thank you very much, Congressman Salo, for bringing this up.

REP. SALO. Thank you very much as well, Mme. Speaker.

Thank you very much for the support, and we hope that when we discuss this particular measure or request

for investigation, you will also be there for us to craft that particular policy.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Please proceed. The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. I move that we refer the speech and the interpellation of the Gentleman, Ron P. Salo, to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize Rep. Alfred D. Vargas of the Fifth District of Quezon City to avail of the Privilege Hour.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Representative Vargas is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

REP. VARGAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF REP. VARGAS

REP. VARGAS. Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, today is a sad day for me and for the friends and families of the victims of an accident that happened this morning, an accident that claimed the lives of 15 people who are mostly young students and are just in the early stages of their college life. The accident that happened in Tanay, Rizal early this morning, which involved a tourist bus owned by Panda Coach Tours & Transport, Inc., which was carrying some 50 students on their way to a camp in Tanay, Rizal.

According to the initial investigation, the bus lost control and rammed into an electric post, immediately killing 10 passengers. The rest died in the hospital, and the others were injured. One of the victims, a student who was interviewed on the spot of the accident, said that he did not think the bus was running too fast, but that before the accident, he remembered smelling a burning tire before the bus lost control. He said he remembered praying for safety before the bus finally hit the electric post.

It was heart-breaking, Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, to hear him call his parents, saying he was safe and for them not to worry because he was lucky to be alive. Unfortunately, the others, who a few minutes before were excitedly enjoying the trip with him, are now dead. Lives were taken too soon. Young adults, who

were eager to explore and were excited for the adventure that awaited them, now lie dead, leaving behind shocked and devastated parents, distraught friends and family members, and a shattered community full of questions. I too have questions, Mme. Speaker. Many of the victims were my constituents, as their school is in my district in Novaliches, Quezon City. I vow to get answers and make sure that the people responsible for this will be held accountable to it.

The student who was interviewed said the trip was a school requirement, but they had no teachers to accompany them. The radio report this morning relayed that only the school staff was with the students.

The representative of the bus company immediately told the media that the bus line has a legitimate franchise, as if saying that they have done nothing wrong or illegal. But what about the burning tire that one of the survivors smelled right before the bus hit the post?

Let me say with strong emphasis that the responsibility of the bus company for the safety of its passengers does not end in getting a franchise. It is not enough that the bus was operating legally. Being a public utility vehicle, there is so much responsibility involved. Is the bus fit to run the roads, much more carry students and ensure their safety when under their care? How often does this bus company check the suitability of their vehicles? When was the last time this particular bus was checked? A simple maintenance check before a trip would have spelled a huge difference in safety.

We have heard of this alibi many times before, Mme. Speaker, that the brakes malfunctioned and that the driver lost control of the wheels, as if this is a reason enough to absolve the driver and the operator of the bus of the crime.

Today, I wrote a letter to the administration of Bestlink Colleges of the Philippines in Novaliches, and asked for a report about the students' alleged excursion, if it was approved by the school, and what the purpose of the camping trip was, considering their destination was a resort. We also need to know if the parents were aware of the trip and if they have given their full consent.

No one deserves to be harmed because of the irresponsibility of others, Mme. Speaker. I cannot emphasize enough that a public utility vehicle plying our roads and ferrying passengers has an enormous responsibility not only to its passengers, but also to all those who are on the road. These PUV owners signed a contract with the government, with the people, when they applied for their franchise and were granted one.

Today, we mourn the dead, but we cannot allow these young adults to die in vain. Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, I deeply feel for the parents of these students. It is not natural nor normal for parents to bury their children, even more so, when their deceased children were supposed to be in the protection of the school and their teachers.

So many times we say that accidents like this must not happen again. Once and for all, can we discern what we can do to ensure that casualties like this are prevented? For one, we need to bring the guilty in, to pay for the crime of reckless imprudence, and fast. We bring the guilty to pay for the damages, to take care of all the expenses of the accident, including comprehensive investigation costs. And we want to see the action and results immediately.

Perhaps, it is about time that we visit the franchise of bus lines that have been involved in accidents, to check their track records, and ensure their licenses are up to date and are in order.

I call on the government agencies involved, Mme. Speaker—the DOTr, the DepEd perhaps, even the DOJ and the NBI. This is a national concern of paramount importance because young lives have been sacrificed again today.

We need to guarantee that after today, the malfunctioning brakes are no longer given as reasons that triggered the death of passengers. When students are harmed while in a school activity, we should not need to ask if the school or the parents are aware, or if they were involved in the planning of the said activities, because they should be.

Mme. Speaker, my dear colleagues, I am committed to follow up on the development of this case and I will report to you again, hopefully, a week from now on how this case will develop. Hopefully, we shall be able to determine that, indeed, we have enough laws to cover the rights of the victims of this crime and to ensure that this kind of accident does not happen again.

We have to make sure, as the Congress of the people, that we will do everything that we can to ensure that justice is given, swift and fair.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. TY. I move to recognize the Gentleman from the Second District of Quezon City, Hon. Winston Castelo, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER. (Rep. Cayetano). The Honorable Castelo is recognized. Please proceed.

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

Would the Gentleman from Novaliches yield to some clarificatory questions, Mme. Speaker?

REP. VARGAS. Gladly, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTELO. Yes, first of all, Mme. Speaker, this Representation would like to congratulate the Representative from the Fifth District of Quezon City for taking up the cudgels for the families of those who perished unnecessarily this morning. I think as of this count, we have already lost 14 lives that were snuffed away needlessly. So, I would just want to ask the good privileged Representative on what legislative measures has he thought of so that the occurrence of this very tragic event will not be repeated?

REP. VARGAS. Mme. Speaker, this Representation is thinking of reviewing the franchise records of bus companies with records of different accidents and we are also looking into DepEd policies or our CHED policies when it comes to outings, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASTELO. That, Mme. Speaker, is very commendable considering there are at least two issues that are raised here: first is the road worthiness of the public utility vehicles that are being used, because as of now, there are lots of vehicles that would necessitate maintenance, and I think, one of the reasons for that accident is that it has not passed some scrutiny of the LTFRB. So, with the leadership here of the Gentleman from Novaliches, I am sure that errors such as this would be rectified so that we will be preventing such occurrence. Second, that he has pointed out is also true because in my district alone, there are a lot of private schools and they have a propensity for conducting a lot of excursions, field trips, and tours, all in the guise of Lakbay-Aral. And, Mme. Speaker, not only that, there are some serious allegations that they charge exorbitant fees that are totally not related to their courses, like they go to the mountains or they go to provinces. However, this has no relevance to the courses that they are now taking. In other words, they make a lot of killing from it. So, I think it is high time that we pursue the direction of the privileged Rep. Alfred D. Vargas to stop this proliferation of activities wherein they victimize a lot of people, hapless students whose parents are working very hard so that they would be able to pursue the education of their children, even to the point of risking the lives of these people.

So again, Mme. Speaker, I would like to commend the Representative from Novaliches for taking up the cudgels for the victims with his privilege speech. I hope this would put an end to this tragic event.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VARGAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. This Representation is counting on the Chairman of the Committee on Metro Manila Development in helping us craft legislation for this.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize Hon. Leopoldo N. Bataoil for his interpellation.

REP. BATAOIL. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). Honorable Bataoil is recognized. Please proceed.

REP. BATAOIL. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. May I ask the Gentleman from Quezon City if he is willing to accept clarification.

REP. VARGAS. Gladly, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BATAOIL. Mme. Speaker, this is really very tragic and very sad, and I am very much interested in the outcome of the investigation.

As you know, sometime last May 5, 2011, I was also a victim of a traffic accident which almost cost me my life and my daughter's. On May 5, 2011, we had a head-on collision with a bus and that incident never left my mind. And every time I hear major traffic accidents like this, I make it a point to find out what happened, what could be the cause of all these? May I ask the Gentleman from Quezon City if he sought an inquiry or a report from the investigating officer from the PNP or the LTO.

REP. VARGAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. I would be willing to do that, and would give you a copy of the report.

REP. BATAOIL. Yes, Mme. Speaker. That is very important because that can be the basis for our further action in ensuring that this kind of incident will be minimized in the future and it is really sad that we lost 14 lives of young children for a bright future. May I also ask the Gentleman from Quezon City if he is willing to invite the school authorities and the bus company concerned to a Congressional inquiry on the matter by the appropriate Committee.

REP. VARGAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. Actually, this Representation is filing a resolution of that kind later, if not later, tomorrow.

REP. BATAOIL. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

May I ask finally from the Gentleman from Quezon City to relay the condolences of our colleagues in the

17th Congress. We are, indeed, very sorry to hear about this very sad incident.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. VARGAS. It is much appreciated, Mme. Speaker.

This Representation would like to thank the Gentleman from the Second District of Pangasinan, and your deep condolences will be relayed to the grieving families of the victims.

Actually, Mme. Speaker, this Representation is going to meet with the families tomorrow, and we will see where we are going to go from here, and rest assured that I will be updating this august Body about the developments.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The Chair likewise expresses her sympathies for the family and loved ones of the students involved in the vehicular accident.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we refer the speech and the interpellation of Hon. Alfred D. Vargas to the Committee on Rules for its appropriate action.

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

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, there being no other Member who wishes to avail of the Privilege Hour, I move to terminate the Privilege Hour.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). There being no objections; the motion is approved.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. TY. Mme. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until tomorrow, February 21, 2017, Tuesday, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Cayetano). The session is adjourned until Tuesday, February 21, 2017, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

It was 6:57 p.m.