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RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 1:00 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Ferdinand L. Hernandez presiding.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before we proceed to our Business for the Day, we would like to acknowledge the presence of former Deputy Speaker Romero “Miro” Quimbo. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The former Deputy Speaker, the debonair, Deputy Speaker Miro Quimbo, welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Additional Reference of Business.

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

The Secretary General will please read the Additional Reference of Business.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 4598, entitled:

“AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MAGNA CARTA FOR BARANGAYS”

By Representative Roman

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 4604, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING THE 7TH OF NOVEMBER OF EVERY YEAR A SPECIAL NONWORKING HOLIDAY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF CUENCA, PROVINCE OF BATANGAS IN COMMEMORATION OF ITS FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY TO BE KNOWN AS ‘CUENCA FOUNDATION DAY’ ”

By Representative Collantes

TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 4605, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PHILIPPINE SCIENCE HIGH SCHOOL CAMPUS IN UBAY, BOHOL AS PART OF THE CENTRAL VISAYAS CAMPUS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Aumentado

TO THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 4606, entitled:

“AN ACT RESETTING THE MAY 2020 BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN ELECTIONS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9164, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACTS NUMBERED 9340, 10632, 10656, 10923 AND 10952, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Oaminal

TO THE COMMITTEE ON SUFFRAGE AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

House Bill No. 4607, entitled:

“AN ACT INCREASING THE HONORARIA OF BARANGAY OFFICIALS AT THE MINIMUM WAGE LEVELS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991”

By Representative Abueg-Zaldivar
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 4608, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR REPRESENTATION
IN ALL LEVELS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT
FOR SENIOR CITIZENS, CREATING THE
SANGGUNIANG SENIOR CITIZENS, THE
KATIPUNAN NG SENIOR CITIZENS,
PROVIDING THEIR POWERS AND
FUNCTIONS, AMENDING FOR THE
PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, AS
AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
‘LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991’”

By Representative Abueg-Zaldivar
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 4609, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING AN ADDITIONAL
BRANCH OF THE MUNICIPAL TRIAL
COURT IN CITIES IN THE CITY OF
MALAYBALAY, PROVINCE OF
BUKIDNON, AMENDING FOR THE
PURPOSE BATAS PAMBANSABILANG 129,
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘JUDICIARY
REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1980,’ AS
AMENDED, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR”

By Representative Flores
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 4610, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LAND
TRANSPORTATION OFFICE (LTO)
REGULAR DISTRICT OFFICE IN THE
1ST DISTRICT OF ILOCOS SUR IN THE
MUNICIPALITY OF SAN ILDEFONSO AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Savellano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 4612, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A COMPREHENSIVE
AND RESPONSIVE CIVIL REGISTRATION
AND VITAL STATISTICS SYSTEM,
PROVIDING FUNDS THEREOF, AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON POPULATION AND
FAMILY RELATIONS

House Bill No. 4613, entitled:

“AN ACT REVIVING GOOD MANNERS

AND RIGHT CONDUCT (GMRC) AS A
SEPARATE SUBJECT IN THE BASIC
EDUCATION CURRICULUM”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 4614, entitled:

“AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MAGNA CARTA
FOR BARANGAYS”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 4615, entitled:

“AN ACT ALLOWING AND REGULATING
THE USE OF MOTORCYCLES AS PUBLIC
UTILITY VEHICLES, AMENDING FOR
THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 4136
OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LAND
TRANSPORTATION AND TRAFFIC CODE,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION

House Bill No. 4616, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A SYSTEM OF
REDISTRIBUTING AND RECYCLING
FOOD WASTE TO PROMOTE FOOD
SECURITY”

By Representative Peña
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FOOD
SECURITY

House Bill No. 4617, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING TECHNICAL
EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY (TESDA) TRAINING AND
ASSESSMENT CENTER IN BARANGAY
SANTA CRUZ, MAKATI CITY AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND
TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 4618, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THE INCLUSION OF
ELECTED AND APPOINTED BARANGAY
OFFICIALS AS COMPULSORY MEMBERS
OF THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE
INSURANCE SYSTEM, AMENDING FOR
THE PURPOSE, PRESIDENTIAL DECREE
NO. 1146, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE ‘REVISED GOVERNMENT
SERVICE INSURANCE ACT OF 1977’”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION

House Bill No. 4619, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS, GOVERNMENT OFFICES, PUBLIC BUILDINGS, PARKS, SCHOOLS, STREETS, ALLEYS AND OTHER PLACES OF PUBLIC CONGREGATION TO INSTALL CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION CAMERAS AS A MEANS TO DETER CRIME”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER
AND SAFETY

House Bill No. 4620, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS LEAVE TO ALL EMPLOYEES AND INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN THE CURRICULUM OF ALL SCHOOLS”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR
AND EMPLOYMENT AND THE
COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 4621, entitled:

“AN ACT REQUIRING HOSPITALS TO WAIVE PARKING FEES FOR THEIR PATIENTS AND PRESCRIBING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATION THEREOF”

By Representative Peña
TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

House Bill No. 4622, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING RURAL BANKS IN THE PHILIPPINES AMENDING FURTHER FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7353 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE RURAL BANKS ACT OF 1992, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Hernandez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND
FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 4623, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COASTAL AQUACULTURE CENTER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF LALA, PROVINCE OF LANA DEL NORTE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representatives Dimaporo (Abdullah) and Dimaporo (Khalid)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE
AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

House Bill No. 4624, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING THE CITY GOVERNMENT OF THE CITY OF DASMARIÑAS, CAVITE A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, ESTABLISH, OPERATE, AND MAINTAIN COMMERCIAL FM AND AM RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING STATIONS IN THE CITY OF DASMARIÑAS, CAVITE”

By Representative Barzaga
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE
FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 4625, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING RICE RETAILERS TO IDENTIFY LOCALLY PRODUCED RICE AS PRODUCED BY FILIPINO FARMERS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Roman
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD

House Bill No. 4626, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE DINALUPIHAN RICE DEVELOPMENT CENTER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF DINALUPIHAN, PROVINCE OF BATAAN, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Roman
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD

House Bill No. 4627, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING MULTIPURPOSE FISH AND SHRIMP HATCHERIES IN ALL SUITABLE AREAS IN THE FIRST DISTRICT OF THE PROVINCE OF BATAAN AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Roman
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AQUACULTURE
AND FISHERIES RESOURCES

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 334, entitled:

“RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE TO COME UP WITH A COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTING RULES AND REGULATIONS OR IRR THAT WOULD PRIORITIZE THE TOBACCO FARMERS AS BENEFICIARIES TO THE UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE PROGRAM”

By Representative Savellano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Resolution No. 335, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10533 OR THE ‘ENHANCED BASIC EDUCATION ACT’ IN ORDER TO REVIEW AND EVALUATE THE PROGRESS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN MEETING THE STANDARDS PROVIDED BY LAW”

By Representative Romulo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 336, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE STATUS OF AFRICAN SWINE FEVER PROLIFERATION IN THE COUNTRY”

By Representative Cabatbat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 337, entitled:

“RESOLUTION FOR THE APPROPRIATE HOUSE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION ON THE ALLEGATIONS OF UNREGISTERED FOREIGN WORKERS, NON-PAYMENT OF INCOME TAXES, RELATIVE TO PHILIPPINE OFFSHORE GAMING OPERATORS (POGO) INDUSTRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, AND RELATED ISSUES ON THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SECTION 25 OF 1997 NIRC ON NON-RESIDENT ALIENS, IMMIGRATION RULES AND REGULATIONS AND THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, WITH THE VIEW OF AMENDING EXISTING LAWS RELATIVE TO EFFECTIVE REVENUE COLLECTION FROM FOREIGN WORKERS AND EFFECTIVELY REGULATE THE POGO INDUSTRY WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO THE FILIPINO PEOPLE”

By Representatives Abante, Villanueva (Eduardo), Biazon and Lopez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 338, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON TOURISM TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF

LEGISLATION ON THE DELAYS OF THE TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENTERPRISE ZONE AUTHORITY (TIEZA) IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN THE 2ND DISTRICT OF CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY”

By Representative Rodriguez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 339, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CREATING A STANDING COMMITTEE ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES”

By Representatives Romualdez (Ferdinand) and Romualdez (Yedda)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMUNICATION

Letter dated 11 September 2019 of Marissa M. Reyes, Acting Deputy Director, Office of the General Counsel and Legal Services, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), furnishing the House of Representatives with a duly certified and authenticated copy of BSP Circular No. 1048 dated 6 September 2019.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

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

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 4228

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 4228, as contained in Committee Report No. 8, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 4228, entitled: AN ACT APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM JANUARY ONE TO DECEMBER THIRTY-ONE, TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

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

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status is that we are in the period of sponsorship and debate and now, we will begin the consideration of the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture, including its attached agencies and corporations. So, Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed with the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the said department, and recognize Vice Chairperson Luisa Lloren Cuaresma of the Lone District of Nueva Vizcaya, Vice Chairperson of the Committee on Appropriations, to sponsor the proposed budget.

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

Honorable Cuaresma is hereby recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, before we recognize the first Member to interpellate our Sponsor, we would like to acknowledge the presence of officials of the Department of Agriculture led by Acting Secretary William Dar. We also have Undersecretary Roldan Gorgonio, Undersecretary Ariel Cayanan, Undersecretary Waldo Carpio, Undersecretary Evelyn Lavina, Undersecretary Eduardo Gongona, Undersecretary Rodolfo Vicerra, Undersecretary Ernesto Gonzalez, Undersecretary Francis Villano, as well as the other assistant secretaries, directors and heads of the attached agencies and corporations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Secretary William Dar and the DA family, welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, the first Member who wishes to interpellate the Sponsor is Rep. Argel Joseph T. Cabatbat of the Party-List MAGSASAKA. I move for the Gentleman's recognition.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Argel Cabatbat is hereby recognized.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Mr. Speaker, noon pong ipinasa natin ang Rice Tariffication Law, ito ay nagtanggali sa kapangyarihan ng NFA to have the monopoly to import rice. We also curtailed its power to purchase palay from the farmers, Mr. Speaker. Dito sa Rice Tariffication Law, ang kakayahan na lang ng NFA ay bumili ng palay para sa buffer stocks, Mr. Speaker,

kaya lang ang nakikita po natin sa ahensiya ngayon, ini-encourage niya ang mga LGUs na mamili ng palay at nitong nakaraan, may instruction din siya na bahain ng bigas ang NCR para bumaba ang presyo ng bigas. Noong ipinasa po ang Rice Tariffication Law, ang gusto sanang mangyari ay iyong market ay maging free—everyone can import rice para bumaba ang presyo ng bigas, kaya lang sa nakikita natin ngayon, parang mayroong mixed signals dahil nagpasa tayo ng batas para hindi na mamili masyado ang NFA o ang gobyerno ng palay pero ngayon, ang Departamento ay tila nag-encourage ng mga LGUs na magkaroon ng malaking pondo para mamili ng palay.

So, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, ako po ay naguguluhan. Ano ba talaga ang policy natin pagdating sa pagbili ng palay? Are we encouraging the government to purchase palay, as what we have seen from actions of the Department under the leadership of Secretary William Dar, o susundin natin iyong gusto ng Rice Tariffication Law na kaunti na lang ang bibilbing palay ng NFA? Ano po talaga ang policy, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Good afternoon po sa inyong lahat, Mr. Speaker, and to the honorable Gentleman, the MAGSASAKA Party-List Representative. Both po—puwedeng ang NFA bibili, puwede rin po ang LGU ang bibili.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Department is acknowledging the role of the government in procuring palay as a form of welfare or help for the farmers, and second, to stabilize or to increase the farmgate price of palay. Iyon po ba ang policy ng government, na dapat talaga nakikialam ang gobyerno sa pamimili ng palay, dahil hindi po iyan ang nakikita natin sa batas.

Sa batas po, sa Rice Tariffication Law, tinatangalan na ang NFA ng kakayahan para mamili ng maraming palay pero nandito ngayon ang Departamento na nagsasabi at nangangampanya na sana tumulong ang mga LGUs na mamili ng palay mula sa mga magsasaka. Hinihingi rin na dagdagan nga ng pondo ang NFA para makapamili pa ng mas maraming palay pero ito ay hindi nakasaad sa batas. So, ano po ba talaga ang policy natin pagdating sa pagbili ng palay?

REP. CUARESMA. Ang NFA po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang kanila pong role is to stabilize palay prices—"buy high, sell low," a formula for financial bankruptcy. Iyon po.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, itong aking katanungan ay masasagot sana kung mayroon tayong programa talaga na napagkasunduan, napagplanuhan kung paano natin poprotektahan ang rice industry. Mr. Speaker, according to the law, by September 5 of this

year, mayroon na dapat tayong rice industry roadmap. Mr. Speaker, para malaman ko, nasaan na po ba iyong rice industry roadmap natin?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, mayroon na ho tayong bagong format para sa pagbili ng palay ng NFA. For the information of the honorable Party-List Representative of MAGSASAKA, Mr. Speaker, ang atin hong NFA ay bumibili na rin po ng palay ngayon.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, my question refers to the existence of the rice industry roadmap and during our budget briefing last September 5, iyon po ay hiningi ko na rin. Nasaan na po ba iyong rice industry roadmap natin na nakasaad sa batas na dapat ay mayroon na tayo by September 5, 2019? Nasaan na po ba iyon?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, mayroon na po tayo nito, as I said earlier, pero sa ngayon ay inaayos pa po ng ating bagong Secretary ng Department of Agriculture dahil po mayroon siyang mga new innovations na ini-introduce po, not only to the programs of the Department of Agriculture, but even those of the National Food Authority, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

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

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of the budget of the DA.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider, instead, the budget of the Office of the Vice President.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, allow us to acknowledge the presence of our special guests from the Office of the Vice President: of course, present with us this afternoon is the honorable Vice President

of the Philippines, Ma. Leonor G. Robredo; Chief of Staff Philip Francisco U. Dy; Assistant Chief of Staff Sofia Yanto-Abad; Paolo Raynor Salvosa, Director of the Technical Services Office; Jennifer Tan, Director of the Administrative and Financial Services Office; Julieta Villadelrey, Chief Accountant; Kelvin Gerome Teñido, Budget Officer; and Caroline Lourdes Mangalili, Chief of the Planning and Management Division.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Her Excellency Leni Robredo, Vice President and the officials of the Office of the Vice President, welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Paul Ruiz Daza to sponsor the proposed budget of the Office of the Vice President.

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

Hon. Paul Daza is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. DAZA

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives. It is my privilege to present for approval the budget of the Office of the Vice President for 2020.

Since June 2016, Vice President Leni Robredo has transformed her office from one performing ceremonial functions into an office leading advocacies for the Laylayan Program. Through its anti-poverty program Angat Buhay, the Office of the Vice President has partnered with 321 organizations from the private sector to mobilize P343-million worth of resources that have assisted 400,000 families and individuals. I am happy to say that the Office of the Vice President has prioritized institutional reforms within her office, which was certified under ISO 9001:2015 in 2017, and received an unqualified opinion from the Commission on Audit for 2018. For 2020, the OVP budget of P673 million is practically the same as the budget that was approved by Congress for 2019. The Vice President continues to maintain a lean workforce with only P100 million allotted for Personnel Services, P378 million for Maintenance and Operating Expenses, Medical Assistance and Poverty Alleviation Programs.

In view of the foregoing, Mr. Speaker, I move that we extend to the Vice President the same interdepartmental courtesy that we did in 2016, 2017 and 2018, and immediately approve her office budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of interpellation and debate and thereafter, recognize Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr. of the Third District of Camarines Sur for his interpellation.

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

Rep. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr. is hereby recognized.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, we commend the Office of the Vice President for constantly and judiciously engaging in outreach projects covering the most far-flung areas in the country through its Angat Buhay, Ahon Laylayan and Istorya ng Pag-asa Programs. Its measly budget, however, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, can hardly tide it over without the help from the private sector.

Here at the House, I express my support to the manifestation made by Rep. Rufus B. Rodriguez at the Committee level to augment the budget of the Office of the Vice President. I understand that, at the Senate, several Members of the Senate of the Philippines also expressed their desire to augment the budget of the Office of the Vice President.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of KABATAAN Party-List for her manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Honorable Elago is hereby recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to the Vice President and the OVP family and to all our colleagues here.

This youth Representation would also want to express her commitment—that we exhaust all means to augment the budget of the Office of the Vice President in support of its project, Istorya ng Pag-asa, which provided the needed deep well of inspiration for all young Filipinos to realize their historic and significant role as the hope of our land and their role likewise in our nation building.

Bilang Representante ng mga kabataan, tayo rin po ay nagpapasalamat sa pagkukuwento nila ng mga istorya, na kung hindi sila gumawa ng mga pagsisikap

para mailagay ang mga istoryang ito sa iba't ibang mga exhibit, sa iba't ibang mga libro at materyales, ay hindi po iyan makarating sa ating mga kabataan, bukod sa ito ay dagdag pa sa kanilang mga natututunan sa loob ng apat na sulok ng ating mga paaralan. Maliban diyan, Mr. Speaker, tayo rin po ay naging saksi kung paano binuksan ng Opisina ng ating Bise Presidente ang mga pagkakataon para sa ating mga kabataan na malaman pa kung paano sila makakapag-ambag, sa pangkabuuan, sa mga programa ng ating gobyerno, at kung paano nila magagamit ang kanilang mga natututunan sa loob ng eskuwelahan para magsilbi sa mga hindi pa natin naririnig o kaya naman ay wala pang ganoon na naiipong tapang upang magsalita. Kaya muli, Mr. Speaker, nagpapasalamat tayo sa naipahayag na commitment ng ating distinguished Sponsor sa pagsuporta sa Opisina ng ating Bise Presidente at sa pagpasa ng pondo na ito. Makakaasa ho kayo sa suporta rin ng mga kabataang Pilipino.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, please allow me to express the Sponsor's gratitude to my two esteemed colleagues for their manifestation, the Lady from the KABATAAN Party-List and the Gentleman from Bicol.

Thank you very much.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Jose Christopher Y. Belmonte of the Sixth District of Quezon City.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Kit Belmonte is hereby recognized.

REP. BELMONTE. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there being no other Member of the Minority who wishes to ask questions on the budget of the OVP, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the said Office.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion terminating

the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Office of the Vice President.

I so move.

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

The period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Office of the Vice President is hereby terminated.

Congratulations! (*Applause*)

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 1:27 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 1:33 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture, including its attached agencies and corporations and that we recognize Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma to sponsor the same and Rep. Argel Joseph T. Cabatbat to continue his interpellation.

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

The Sponsor, honorable Cuaresma is recognized and likewise, Honorable Cabatbat to continue his interpellation.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, ang rice industry roadmap sana ang magiging gabay natin kung paano bubuhayin ang industriya ng bigas at palay dito

sa Pilipinas pero hanggang ngayon ay hindi ko pa ito nababasa. May we ask a comment from the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, about the existence of the rice industry roadmap.

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, as I was mentioning earlier, there are new innovations that are being introduced by our new Department of Agriculture Secretary, and I could give you one example—because there are a lot of innovations being introduced by our new Secretary, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor and one of which is the SURE Aid Program. This is a loan assistance in the amount of P15,000 per farmer tilling one hectare and below, and this is zero interest and payable in 8 years, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, and actually, this was already launched in the province of Nueva Ecija. That is just one of the so many innovations, Mr. Speaker, and to the honorable Representative of MAGSASAKA Party-List, Congressman Cabatbat, I will just provide you with the list of the innovations that are being undertaken by our new DA Secretary.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be expecting the detailed report and the final draft of the rice industry roadmap, if there is any, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Ako po ay natutuwa sa pagkaka-appoint kay Secretary Dar at ako po ay naniniwala sa kanyang kakayahan, and we should not be faulting him for the shortcomings of the previous administrations that placed us where we are right now, Mr. Speaker. Iyong mga nabanggit na mga programa tulad ng SURE Aid ay maganda, kaya lang para po buhayin natin ang industriya ng palay at bigas dito sa Pilipinas, hindi po ba marapat na ibaba natin ang cost of production or itaas natin ang farmgate price ng palay? Tama po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Dito po sa mga innovations na gagawin ni Secretary Dar, magresulta ba ito sa mas mababang cost of production ng palay o mas mataas na farmgate price ng palay sa mga susunod na taon?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I would like to inform the honorable Representative of MAGSASAKA Party-List, Congressman Cabatbat, that that is just one of the innovations being introduced by our new Department of Agriculture Secretary. There are a lot and in fact, there are like 15 of them, and as I had said, I am going to provide you a copy of the list of all these innovations. Sa katotohanan lang po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang atin pong Department of Agriculture—of course, through our Secretary—ay

naka-focus po tayo hindi lamang sa pagbibili ng palay, pero naka-focus din po tayo na dapat itong ating mga farmers ay hindi dapat, kumbaga, masyado maging affected lalo na ho ng mga expenses that are being incurred during the planting season, Mr. Speaker and Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Aasahan ko po na sana sa ibibigay sa atin na mga dokumento ay nandodoon sa roadmap na either bababa ang cost of production ng palay o tataas ang presyo ng farmgate price ng palay, dahil kung hindi po ay huwag tayong mangako ng hindi naman natin kayang gawin para sa ating mga magsasaka.

Moving on to my next question, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, pagkapasa po ng Rice Tariffication Law, sa inaasahan nating pagbaba ng presyo ng bigas, nakamit na po ba natin ito? Bumaba na ba talaga ang presyo ng bigas ng dahil sa Rice Tariffication Law?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa kasalukuyan po, may ginagawa naman po ang Departamento at according to our data, ito ay bumaba na by 2 percent, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bumaba po ng mga 2 percent ang presyo ng bigas pero ikumpara naman po natin sa ibinaba ng presyo ng palay, sa ilang porsiyento naman po ang ibinaba ng presyo ng palay?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa kasalukuyan po, ito naman po ay inaayos at kagaya po ng sinabi ko a while ago, kagalang-galang na Kongresista Cabatbat ng MAGSASAKA Party-List, Mr. Speaker, the NFA is really doing something, of course, through the leadership of our Secretary, at talagang ni-relax naman ho ng NFA iyong kanilang requirement para po sa pagbili ng palay mula sa ating mga farmers.

Sa kasalukuyan po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyon po ang nagaganap sa iba't ibang bahagi ng atin hong bayan or bansa.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sa madaling salita, Mr. Speaker, bumaba ng 2 percent ang presyo ng bigas pero pagdating sa presyo ng palay, talagang malaki po ang ibinaba. Bagamat hindi ko nakuha iyong sagot, tama po ba, ito ay bumaba ng 37 percent?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kung ang atin pong pagbabasehan ay iyong presyo ho noong nakaraang taon ay talaga pong ito ho ay bumaba hindi lang ho siguro 2 percent, kung hindi hanggang 4 percent. Kung ang ikukumpara po natin iyong mga nakaraan, three years from now, medyo iba po pero, at

least, ang sa akin, bumaba po sa ngayon iyong presyo ng bigas.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sino po ang may kinalaman sa pagbaba talaga ng presyo ng farmgate prices ng palay, ang Rice Tariffication Law, mga importers o mga kartel?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa kasalukuyan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang atin hong Departamento ay gumagawa ng imbestigasyon kasi mahirap naman hong mag-speculate kung bakit po bumaba ng husto iyong presyo po ng palay, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Sa pag-aaral po ba ...

REP. CUARESMA. Sa kasalukuyan ho, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, tayo naman po, ang ating Department of Agriculture ay gumagawa naman ho ng hakbang para, kumbaga, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, hindi naman ho madehado ang ating mga farmers.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Aasahan po ba natin na magno-normalize din ang presyo ng palay at ng bigas?

REP. CUARESMA. Iyan po ay ayon sa information given to me, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kaya nga ho sa ngayon, talagang may mga new innovations being introduced by our Secretary kasi gusto rin ho nating ma-stabilize ito, iyong babalik ho sa normal iyong presyo po ng palay at bababa rin po iyong presyo ng bigas for our consumers.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Kung tayo po ay sigurado na magno-normalize din ang presyo ng palay at bigas—pero sa isang banda ay hindi ito natin sigurado hanggang ngayon dahil nag-iimbestiga pa rin tayo kung ano talaga ang nagpapababa ng presyo ng palay at iyong hindi nagpapababa ng presyo ng bigas. Paano natin masisiguro na magno-normalize talaga ang presyo ng bigas at palay kung hindi nga natin alam kung ano ang puno't dulo nito, kung rice tariffication ba, kartel o mga importers? Can I have a comment on that, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Kagaya po ng sinabi ko earlier, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyon hong mga innovations, isa lang po iyong SURE Aid Program ng DA at iyon aking binanggit ho kanina. Marami pa ho tayong mga ginagawa to really stabilize the farmgate price of palay in the Philippines, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Lumalabas, that we should pin all our hopes

on those innovations. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, Mr. Speaker, I agree.

REP. CABATBAT. Lahat ng milyon-milyong magsasaka ngayon ay dapat umasa sa mga innovations na iyan. Ang tanong ko po—may sapat bang pondo ang DA para magkaroon ng talagang substantial effect ang mga ito para sa ating mga magsasaka?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, iyong mga innovations na ginagawa po ng ating hong mahal na Secretary ng Department of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ay may sapat na pondo, and, of course, this is in partnership with the other players po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Although iyon hong ating pondo, ang pondo ng Department of Agriculture, ay kulang-kulang pero kailangang gumawa ng paraan ang atin hong Departamento para ho matugunan ang mga problema ng ating mga farmers, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Magkano po ba ang hiniling na budget ng Department of Agriculture mula sa DBM, at magkano ang naaprubahan?

REP. CUARESMA. For the 2020 budget, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, for the proposed funding that the DA needs, they submitted to the DBM the amount of P333,178,000,000 but what was given was P71 billion only, ang laki po ng bawas, kumbaga, it is not even one-third of the requested amount. Kaya kung minsan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, at least, ako ay nagagalak na ang atin pong bagong Secretary ay gumagawa ho siya ng innovations, of course, through his leadership, at siya naman ay galing na po diyan kaya marami na ho siyang mga balak noon pa but unfortunately, these were cut off when he was replaced as Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, lumalabas po na kulang ang budget ng DA at kailangan pa talaga nating dagdagan.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po pero lagi pong ganoon. Kahit ho noon, itong budget nitong 2019, ganoon din po, and what is amazing, the amount that proposed for the DA projects and programs was P333 billion, but the amount allocated by the DBM was only P71 billion, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, totoo po ba na sa ibang bansa katulad ng bansang Thailand, doble ang ibinibigay nilang pondo para sa agriculture kumpara dito sa Pilipinas?

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po dahil iyon ho ang kanilang prayoridad doon sa bansang Thailand.

REP. CABATBAT. So, parang lumalabas na talagang super underdog ang Philippine agriculture at ang ating mga farmers compared to the farmers in other countries.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po kayo, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, pero, malamang, sa tulong po nating lahat, lalong-lalo na po kayo na Representative ng MAGSASAKA, hopefully, makakamit po natin ito, and although we have this small or meager funding given by the DBM, hopefully, we will be able to make our farmers happy. Ang gusto ho ng ating Secretary, ang year 2020 will be the year of the farmers, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Sana nga po, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. On to my next question, ano po ba ang present capacity ng NFA sa pag-maintain ng rice buffer stocks?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, ang ibinigay po na budget for the NFA is just P7 billion, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, at ang volume nito is for 21.7 million cavans, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Based on this capacity, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, how much of the local produce can the NFA procure?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, iyong kaya lang po ay 3 percent, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. It is 3 to 4 percent, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Three to four percent, thank you. May we know the NFA rules and regulations for the acquisition, maintenance and distribution of the buffer stocks as laid down in the Rice Tariffication Law. Mayroon na po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong ating NFA, ang kanila hong mga stocks ay ibinibenta po, lalo na ho iyong mga imported ones, imported palay. I think they had an agreement already with some national agencies of the government, pati sa mga LGUs, para po sa NFA na lang po sila bibili. Ito pong ating NFA ay mayroon din po aside from, of course, the LGU that they talked with, mayroon na rin pong mga institutions na kanila na rin pong nakausap

para mabenta po sa kanila iyong palay na nasa bodega po ng NFA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can I be given a copy of the rules and regulations.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. We will provide you a copy.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Puwede rin po bang malaman kung ano ang procedure ng NFA sa pagbili ng palay? Sila po ba ay nagpupunta sa mga bayan-bayan, sa mga bara-barangay, para mamili ng palay, o hinihintay nila ang mga magsasaka na pumunta sa kanilang warehouses? Ano po ba ang moisture content requirement? Can the esteemed Sponsor explain the procedure of the NFA in the procurement of palay?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang NFA ho ay nagtalaga po ng mga buying stations po para po iyong ating mga farmers, easily, they could sell their produce po doon sa mga buying stations. At saka kagaya po ng sinabi ko, as I had said earlier, ni-relax po nila iyong mga requirements sa pagbibili—ito ang sinabi nila sa akin, na parang lahat ng mga requirements ay inalis na po just so we are able to be of help, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, to our farmers.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, although I appreciate the relaxation of the rules on the procurement of palay, pero iyong mga magsasaka po natin, wala pong mga trucks sila para dalhin ang mga iyan diyan sa buying stations. Paano ngayon naaabot ng NFA iyong mga magsasaka na namang walang truck, walang kakayahan na i-transport ang palay nila diyan sa palay buying station ng NFA?

REP. CUARESMA. Actually po, ang Departamento po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, they are really doing something about it. For example, kaya nga po ngayon may mga na-establish na ho na mga drying areas just for the national government, particularly the DA, this is to support the needs of our farmers po. Saka sinabi ko po kanina, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, na mayroon na po tayong mga nakatalagang mga buying stations po.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the NFA would look into this dahil marami pong mga farmers talaga ang hindi nakakapagbenta ni minsan sa NFA dahil sa problema ng transportasyon.

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, may bago na hong instruction, and it is not only an instruction coming from the DA, but that instruction is also coming from the Office of the President, kaya lahat ho, ang NFA at

kahit na po ang DA, they are really moving fast para ho, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, matulungan po nila iyong atin hong mga farmers. Ang atin pong Secretary sa ngayon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, talagang na-mobilize niya lahat po iyong ating mga regional directors and he instructed all the regional directors to go out, hindi lang iyong nakaupo sila sa kanilang mga opisina, but they have to go out para tanungin sa mga farmers po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kung ano po ang problema ng atin pong mga magsasaka.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Rice Tariffication Law is set to generate funds for the improvement of the rice industry. Kasama po diyan ang pagtatalaga ng pondo para sa mechanization. Ngayon po, sa porsiyentong mapupunta sa mechanization, gaano po kalaki ang na-allot natin para sa mga mechanical dryers? Alam ninyo po, sa nakikita ngayon natin sa field sa mga pangangailangan ng mga magsasaka, hindi na sila masyadong humihingi ng mga traktora. Ang hinihingi nila ngayon ay suporta sa kakayahan para mapatuyo iyong kanilang palay. Ngayon, gaano kalaki iyong na-allot natin para sa pag-purchase ng mga mechanical dryers? Mayroon na po ba tayong rules and regulations paano natin iyan gagastusin?

REP. CUARESMA. Taon-taon, mayroon na ho tayong P5 billion for the purchase of machineries, and I would like to inform, Mr. Speaker, the honorable Representative of the MAGSASAKA Party-List that, indeed, iyon hong ating Department of Agriculture ay talagang hindi lang ho dryer iyong kanilang mga ibinibigay ngayon o kahit noong mga nakaraan, kung hindi iyon ho talagang kailangan ng atin hong mga farmers and this is, of course, in coordination with the farmers groups or organizations. Mayroon ho tayong needs assessment po for whatever is needed by the particular farmers group, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mapunta naman po tayo sa RSBSA. Gaano ho ba ka-reliable itong RSBSA? Ang RSBSA, Mr. Speaker, ito po ay ang Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture. May we know, Mr. Speaker, puwede po ba tayong magtiwala o gaano ka-reliable ang RSBSA na ito, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, puwede po ba tayong magtiwala—iyon lang po ang masasabi ko. For the information of Honorable Cabatbat, ina-update na po iyong ating kailangang datos para sa pag-e-evaluate po, at saka hindi lang po iyon, kaya ho ina-update iyong datos ay dahil magbibigay din po ng mga interventions. Saka, siyempre po, kapag tayo ay magbibigay ay magkakaroon din po tayo ng monitoring, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, ano-anong mga problema po ba ang napansin natin sa RSBSA before and when was the last census?

REP. CUARESMA. Kaya nga po, kagaya po ng sinabi ko, ina-update po dahil ang napapansin po natin ay kahit po mga patay na ay nandoon pa rin ho iyong pangalan nila, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Iyon naman hong hindi pa mga nakasali ay pinapa-register na rin po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, may we ask for a report as to how this is being improved, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. We will give you the report.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can we also ask for a report as to the previous procurement of mechanical dryers.

REP. CUARESMA. We will provide the list, Mr. Speaker, to Honorable Cabatbat.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Magkano o ilan po ba ang nasu-supply ng ating local farmers pagdating sa national rice consumption sa ngayon?

REP. CUARESMA. Pardon, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CABATBAT. For the past three years, mga ilan po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. According to the information given me, 93 percent po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Samakatuwid, 7 percent ang kailangan nating i-import na bigas para matugunan iyong pangangailangan ng buong bansa pagdating sa consumption ng bigas. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, mangyari na pakiulit po, Kgg. Cabatbat iyong question ho ninyo.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, 7 percent ang hindi natutugunan na consumption ng buong Pilipinas pagdating sa bigas. So, ito po ang pangangailangan natin na ma-import mula sa ibang bansa, tama po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Totoo po iyon, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Kaya lang po dahil sa naging

krisis ngayon, sa pagkapasa ng Rice Tariffication Law at pagbasak ng farmgate price ng palay, ilang magsasaka po ba ang inaasahan natin na titigil sa pagtanim ng palay?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kung maaari nga lang po, ayaw din naman ng Departamento na tumigil magtanim ang ating mga magsasaka kaya nga ang Kagawaran ng Agrikultura ay gumagawa po ng mga bagong innovations para tuloy-tuloy pa rin na magtanim ating mga farmers, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, iyan din po ang gusto natin, ang huwag silang tumigil magtanim.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po.

REP. CABATBAT. Kaya lang sa talagang nangyayari ngayon, ang cost of production ng palay ay P12 pero nabibili ang palay nila ng P8 lang. Hindi naman lahat ng ating mga magsasaka na apektado ang naaabot ng tulong na ginagawa ng DA kaya marami po talaga ang titigil sa pagtanim. Tama po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, kaya nga iyong ating Kalihim sa ngayon, ang gusto niya—may ani, may kita. Ito po ang isa sa ilang innovations niya, Mr. Speaker. We will provide the Honorable Cabatbat all the new innovations na-prepare ng ating Kalihim, not only for the betterment of everybody, but in particular, for our farmers po.

REP. CABATBAT. Mr. Speaker, mayroon po bang datos ang Department of Agriculture kung ilang mga lupa ang nako-convert mula sa palayan papuntang subdivision o ibang mga establisimiyento?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kapag conversion po ang pinag-uusapan, hindi ito sakop ng Department of Agriculture. Ang conversion po ay nasa Department of Agrarian Reform.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I beg to disagree that this is not the concern of the DA. This should also be the concern of the DA dahil diyan natin mapi-predict kung kaya pa ba nating pakainin ang mga Pilipino, lalo na kung napakaraming mako-convert na palayan papuntang subdivision at nadadagdagan iyong populasyon natin.

REP. CUARESMA. May concern din po dito, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang DA pero ang may final say po ay laging Department of Agrarian Reform.

REP. CABATBAT. Yes, Mr. Speaker, but I still

submit that the DA should also have data as to the rate of the conversion of palay fields for other uses.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, the Department has data on the reclassified farms, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, based on the trend of the rate of conversion of palay fields to subdivisions at sa paglaki ng populasyon natin, malamang ang mga magsasaka natin ay titigil na magtanim ng palay. Mangangahulugan po ba na mas magiging dependent tayo sa importation in the coming years, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Kaya nga ho, and I agree that— Mr. Speaker, may I inform the Honorable Cabatbat na kaya nga ho tayo mayroong Comprehensive Land Use Act para doon ho iyong basis natin para sa conversion.

REP. CABATBAT. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I know that the DA is doing everything it can, but I think I should also be doing everything I can to let everyone know that we are facing a crisis, na talagang hindi lang tayo ang magsa-suffer kung hindi iyong mga susunod sa atin, ang mga anak at apo natin.

So, I just want to hear a clear answer dito sa trend na nangyayari ngayon sa DA na nababawasan ang budget, nababawasan ang taniman natin, tumatanda ang ating mga magsasaka, nawawalan sila ng kita at gana na magtanim, at dumadami ang populasyon natin. Ang tanong ko po, mas magiging dependent ba talaga tayo sa importation kung magtutuloy-tuloy ang trend na ito, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Kaya nga po...

REP. CABATBAT. Unless we do something, of course.

REP. CUARESMA. Ang sabi naman po ng ating Pangulo na sa mga susunod na taon po ay bubuhusan niya ng pondo, that is, starting 2021, ang Departamento. I know that through our help here in the House of Representatives, at least makakatulong din po tayo, kumbaga ho, iyong plano po natin o plano ng Departamento para sa lahat, lalong-lalo na sa ating mga magsasaka, ay talagang ating ma-implement, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

Tungkol naman po sa importation ng rice, nag-e-exercise naman na ho ng ating Kalihim, Secretary Dar, ng general safeguard duty para at least ho, hindi napakabilis or napakadali ang importasyon po ng bigas dito sa ating mga lalawigan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme.

Sponsor. Does the Department think that the Rice Tariffication Law is a good law? Does the DA believe so?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, it is just starting, and through your support as the MAGSASAKA Party-List Representative, I know we can make it or the Department can make it, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CABATBAT. Just to wrap up, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to know from the good Sponsor, can we really industrialize as a country without giving full support to agriculture, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor? Is the Department getting the needed support for us to realize that, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. With the promise of the President, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that by 2021, full support will be given to the funding of programs of the Department of Agriculture, I know that we can make it, of course, with the full support of the House, and particularly the MAGSASAKA Party-List and the Honorable Cabatbat, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CABATBAT. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no further question, Mr. Speaker, just a sort of manifestation na tulungan po natin ang Department of Agriculture na mabigyan ng pondo ang kanilang mga programa.

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, salamat po.

REP. CABATBAT. Naghihirap po ngayon iyong mga magsasaka natin, nalulugi sila, baon na sila sa utang, at mas lalo pang nabaon sa utang dahil sa nangyari ngayon, at ang nakita nating aksiyon, so far, ay isang nabawasang budget para sa Department of Agriculture.

Gaya po ng sinasabi ko, kung hindi po natin itataas ang budget ng Department of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, baka sa mga susunod na taon ay kailangan na nating itaas iyong budget ng Department of National Defense, at huwag nating sisihin ang mga magsasaka na magrebelde dahil hindi na naaabot ng tulong natin ang lahat ng magsasaka, Mr. Speaker. Hindi lang po iyan, Mr. Speaker, papunta na rin tayo sa isang krisis na mag-aagawan na tayo sa bigas kapagka tumigil nang mag-import sa atin ang mga bansang katulad ng Thailand at Vietnam, Mr. Speaker. Kaya ako po ay nananawagan sa inyong lahat na ito ang panahon para gumawa tayo ng aksiyon para sa mga magsasaka, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Sana po sa leadership ni Secretary Dar, I hope that you can create a miracle because, as I can see it, the budget given to you is not really enough to help all our farmers substantially. Kailangan po ninyo ng milagro

at sana kayo talaga ang maging hero ng agriculture ngayon at sana maiahon ninyo ang mga magsasaka sa kahirapan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have no further questions.

REP. CUARESMA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Honorable Cabatbat.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of the proposed budgets of the Department of Agriculture and its attached agencies.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

PMS, PLLO AND ARTA

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider the proposed budgets of the Presidential Management Staff, the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office and the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, to sponsor the proposed budgets of the said agencies, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, Rep. Isidro T. Ungab.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Honorable Ungab is hereby recognized.

REP. UNGAB. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed budget of the Presidential Management Staff is P654,568,000 broken down as follows: Programmed New Appropriations, P633,541,000; and Automatic Appropriations, including the RLIP, P21,027,000, again, a total of P654,568,000.

This Representation is now ready to answer questions, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ZUBIRI. Mr. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of the officials of the Anti-Red Tape

Authority: Dir. Gen. Jeremiah B. Belgica and Dep. Dir. Gen. Ernesto V. Perez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ZUBIRI. Mr. Speaker, may we also acknowledge the presence of the Presidential Management Staff officials led by Usec. Ferdinand B. Cui Jr., Acting Presidential Management Staff Head; Asst. Sec. Vivian R. Puno, Asst. Sec. Joseph B. Encabo, Dir. Ma. Irene B. Calingo, Dir. Dominga R. Flores, Dir. Antonio P. Mendoza, Acting Dir. Joaquin Romeo S. Santiago, Acting Dir. Maria Kristine A. Yulo, Acting Dir. Cherry Pie Felisse M. Maraya, Acting Dir. Vivian M. Vargas and Acting Dir. Wilburn L. Tan; and the PMS support staff: Ricky V. Bulalakaw, Milagros C. Cabanit, Francesca Nicole B. Refuerzo, Ryan-John L. Rivero, Krismas T. Dulay and Christian R. Labrador.

From the PLLO, may we acknowledge the presence of Sec. Adelino B. Sitoy, Usec. Ryan L. Estevez, Usec. Gerard A. Salapantan, Asec. Romulo V. Arugay and Asec. Maria Rowena F. Sabban.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Sec. Adelino Sitoy from the PLLO, Usec. Andi Cui from the PMS, and Dir. Gen. Jeremiah Belgica from the Anti-Red Tape Authority, their officials and staff, welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ZUBIRI. Mr. Speaker, may we recognize Hon. France L. Castro from Party-List ACT TEACHERS to be the first interpellator.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. France Castro is hereby recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Magandang hapon po sa ating lahat.

Mr. Speaker, ang tanong ko po ay isa lang subject ito sa PMS, iyong may kaugnayan, Mr. Speaker, doon sa Yolanda Financial Assistance. Naka-receive po tayo ng report mula sa Department of Education tungkol doon sa summary on the Socio-Civic Project Funds—dati po itong Presidential Social Fund for Yolanda and Bohol earthquake affected DepEd personnel—as of September 10, 2019. Mayroon po ditong mga data tungkol sa mga probinsiya, partikular sa Cebu. Mayroon pang nakalagay dito tungkol sa status ng liquidation at ng documents to be submitted sa PMS for verification. Mayroon po dito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, iyong partial submission on the reconciliation between disbursement and fund balance. So, ang affected po

dito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, ay marami-rami po, kaya dito sa second tranche report po natin from Cebu, wala pa ring nakatanggap nito na mga government employees, including teachers.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, puwede po bang makahingi ng paliwanag dito?

REP. UNGAB. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With regard to Cebu, here is the explanation which I got from the staff—there is an ongoing reconciliation between fund balance and disbursement. Per Ester Roldan, DepEd coordinator, an advance copy of the reconciled report shall be submitted by Friday, 20 September 2019. That is the latest, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Ganoon din po, Mr. Speaker, ang mga nasa Eastern Samar, hindi pa rin natatanggap ang second tranche. Ganoon din po ang sinabi ng DepEd, for submission ng updated disbursement and fund balance report. So, ano po ang status muli nitong para sa Eastern Samar dahil ang tagal na rin hinihintay ito ng ating teachers?

REP. UNGAB. As per our staff from the PMS, Mr. Speaker, until now, iyong taga Eastern Samar has not yet submitted the reconciled report. There were repeated follow-ups made with Ms. Manalastas for the submission of the reconciled report on the disbursement and fund balance. That is for Eastern Samar, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Puwede po ba, Mr. Speaker, makita natin ang written report kaugnay nitong Cebu and Eastern Samar, at ano kaya ang intervention na gagawin ng PMS dito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. UNGAB. With regard to the agreements on the liquidation, nagpa-follow up daw po palagi ang DepEd Central Office liaison through Ms. Maria Clarissa Manalastas and the DepEd Division, Cebu, through Ms. Ester Roldan on a weekly basis. I requested the PMS to provide a written report or an update on Cebu and Eastern Samar in relation to your question.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you po, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Huli na lang po. Ito pong sa Baybay City at saka sa Borongan City, ang nakalagay po dito ay partial submission credit notice, so, muli, iyong second tranche ay hindi pa rin po natatanggap. Ano po iyong explanation ng ating ahensiya rito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. UNGAB. Mr. Speaker, here is the latest feedback—it is also awaiting the submission of a copy of that credit notice and per report of the coordinator, the said document will be submitted within this week. That is for Baybay City, Mr. Speaker. For Borongan

City, they are awaiting the submission of the report on the details of the fund balance and as per their report, the said document will be submitted within this week. That is for Borongan City, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So, iyong last request na lang po ng Kinatawang ito na makuha natin iyong written report para malaman naman po ito ng mga teachers natin na ka-textmate ko araw-araw kaugnay nitong typhoon Yolanda Financial Assistance na ito.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

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

REP. ZUBIRI. Mr. Speaker, may we recognize Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of the KABATAAN Party-List.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Sarah Elago of the KABATAAN Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Ang Representasyon po na ito ay nakikiisa sa ating community ng mga drivers at operators ng mga transport network vehicle services na lumapit sa ARTA para po ipagbigay alam dito ang kanilang mga issues, ang mga saloobin nila hinggil sa mga pabagu-bago na mga patakaran ng LTFRB. Nais ko pong humingi ng mga kongkretong mga aksiyon na nagawa na ng ARTA hinggil sa mga demands at mga aspirasyon ng lumalaki na TNVS community sa Pilipinas.

REP. UNGAB. Mr. Speaker, I think the question is related to the ARTA and the Vice-Chairperson in charge of that is the Honorable Daza. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, we have to terminate first the consideration of the PMS budget before we can proceed to the other agency, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, considering that we have decided to consider the three agencies together, I move that we recognize Rep. Paul Ruiz Daza to answer questions on the proposed budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Paul Daza is hereby recognized.

REP. DAZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As to the

query on the LTFRB, I am pleased to share with my colleagues here that the ARTA has helped over 3,000 applicants. But because of the delay in the processing, the ARTA asked the LTFRB to respond, and with their due diligence in the investigation of the delay, 3,130 had been deemed approved. So, marami na po tayong natulungan at mayroon pong tatlong officials ng LTFRB na kinasuhan na po ng ARTA sa Civil Service Commission.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may we be given details of the case filed by the ARTA against the officials of the LTFRB. Ano po ang batayan natin ng kasong ito?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, first of all, we will provide the details of those cases. Second, essentially, iyong mga kaso pong na-file is on the violation of the Republic Act that this very Congress, the Seventeenth Congress, passed, and is now a law which created the Anti-Red Tape Authority. So, this is essentially for simple applications where LGUs and national government agencies have 3 days to release them; 7 days for complex applications; and for the highly technical ones, 20 days. In this particular case of the LTFRB, it fell under the 20-day rule and because it went over the 20 days, the ARTA assisted the applicants and their applications were deemed approved. For the erring officials, as I mentioned earlier, appropriate cases were filed with the Civil Service Commission.

REP. ELAGO. Salamat po sa balitang ito, Mr. Speaker. Nais din po nating malaman kung mayroon naging sagot na ang LTFRB tungkol naman po doon sa pagtatanggal noong bank conformity document requirement para sa ating mga TNVS drivers. Marami po kasi, Mr. Speaker, doon sa mga nagtatrabaho o gumawa ng kabuhayan sa pamamagitan ng pagmamaneho ng Grab at iba pang mga TNVS ay mga wala pong naging trabaho sa matagal na panahon, o kaya naman sila po iyong mga kababayan natin na may special needs, o iyong iba naman po ay mga senior citizens na nahihirapan pong makapag-comply sa particular requirement na ito. Noong humarap po dito sa Plenary ang LTFRB, sila po ay walang depinidong sagot kung natanggal na ba ang requirement na ito. Ngayon, ano pong ginagawa ng ARTA para naman doon sa kanilang rekomendasyon na ito, dahil nakita nila na nakakaapekto doon sa pagiging madali ng pagbubuo nitong negosyo at kabuhayan dito sa ating bansa, sa LTFRB? Iyon po ba ang isa sa mga naging batayan kung bakit po may kaso ngayong hinaharap ang ilan sa mga opisyal ng LTFRB?

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, the ARTA agrees with my esteemed colleague and in fact, the ARTA made

policy recommendations to LTFRB and it is up to the LTFRB to accept them. In this particular case, may kasong na-file po sa mga officials ng LTFRB kasi mayroon silang mga nilagay na requirement na wala sa Citizen's Charter. So, tama po, the distinguished Lady from KABATAAN Party-List.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Aasahan po ng Representasyon na ito na tayo ay mabibigyan ng kopya noong kabuuang ginagawang mga hakbang ng ARTA pagdating sa pagtugon sa mga saloobin ng TNVS community. Pangalawa, baka naman po maaari na sa buwan na ito, magkaroon ng diyalogong muli sa pagitan ng ARTA at ng mga leaders po ng iba't ibang mga grupo ng TNVS para sila ay kasama natin sa pagpapanagot kung mayroon man pong mga pagkukulang. Bukod po diyan, kung maaari na nating malagay iyong mga mekanismo para hindi na po maulit muli iyong ganitong mga masasakit na mga pangyayari para doon sa mga kababayan natin na nais lamang magkaroon ng disentang kabuhayan. Iyon lamang po, Mr. Speaker.

Maraming salamat po sa distinguished Sponsor.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that the Sr. Dep. Minority Leader, Rep. Janette L. Garin, be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Rep. Janette Garin is hereby recognized.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There being no other Member from the Minority who would wish to interpellate on the proposed budgets of the Presidential Management Staff and the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office, we move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budgets of the two agencies.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, the Majority joins the Minority in moving for the termination of the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budgets of the Presidential Management Staff and the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office.

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

The period of interpellation and debate on the budgets

of the Presidential Management Staff and Presidential Legislative Liaison Office is hereby terminated. Congratulations to Presidential Management Staff and the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status is that we are still in the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority. So, I move that we recognize Rep. Janette Garin to interpellate on the said proposed budget.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Rep. Janette Garin is hereby recognized.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I have heard a lot of good things about the accomplishments of the Anti-Red Tape Authority and in fact, one of the prominent things that they have been quite successful with, I presume, is the backlog in the Food and Drug Authority. May I hear from our good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, on the accomplishments of the ARTA insofar as this agency is concerned.

REP. DAZA. Mr. Speaker, regarding the FDA, the ARTA had already assisted in over 3,000 applications that had now been approved through their intervention—applications that were pending for months and years. So, it is correct that many applicants have already been assisted by the ARTA.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

For the information of the honorable Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, when I joined the FDA sometime in 2015, the reason I joined the FDA family was the massive backlog in the Legal Department, so much so that businesses were actually being held hostage to this. In fact, there were actually issues that date back to 18 years or up to 20 years and so the small pharmacies, even bakeries and other businesses were forced to hire consultants on a monthly basis simply because there was an apparent collusion happening inside the Food and Drug Authority. When I joined the FDA, I brought in some lawyers who assumed posts in the Legal Department and from a backlog of around 22,000 cases, when we left, this backlog was at around, I think, 2000 cases. However, upon the change of leadership, apparently, the people who were delaying a lot of cases, who were actually inside the FDA, came back, organized but now, the backlog is again huge.

Can we get the assurance, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, from the ARTA that it will really move heaven and earth so that the institution will be cleansed of these scalawags.

REP. DAZA. We thank our esteemed colleague for highlighting the problems of the FDA and we assure her that the ARTA has already engaged the FDA, which is now undergoing a thorough investigation and its initial response is very positive. They have been very cooperative and they want to improve their systems to be able to cure the backlog that was mentioned by our esteemed colleague.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

My last request, if the ARTA family will be amenable. Will you be amenable to moving and expanding the coverage to include, not only FDA, but other government offices where businessmen are being held hostage by the loans that they have incurred simply because these government offices take one year or two years to pay these to the businessmen.

REP. DAZA. Republic Act No. 11032 that created ARTA is actually called, AN ACT PROMOTING EASE OF DOING BUSINESS AND EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES, so, what the honorable Lady mentioned is already covered by the Republic Act.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Hernandez relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Prospero A. Pichay Jr.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor.

Despite being a new agency, the Anti-Red Tape Authority is starting to evolve as young in age but seasoned in accomplishment. With that, Mr. Speaker, allow me to yield to the Minority Leader for his comment.

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

REP. ZUBIRI. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr., our Minority Leader.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Pichay). The Minority Leader is recognized. Please proceed.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, just a short manifestation on the Anti-Red Tape Authority. I think that if there is any agency in government under the Office of the President that would be remembered as a creation of the present administration and our President, it would be the Anti-Red Tape Authority, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. This is a welcome and wonderful development, and I would like to commend

our President for creating this agency so that there can be ease in doing business. Siguro, matatanggal na rin po iyong mga fixers at lahat po ng mga tinatawag nating nagpapa-delay at nagpapatagal—opo, lalo na po sa ating mga negosyante—at sa palagay ko, with the ARTA, naniniwala po ako that we are going to have more businesses coming in to the Philippines. Why? Because mawawala na po iyong mga delays sa ating mga government offices. I would like to commend the President for creating this agency. Also, I would like to commend, Mr. Speaker, the President for appointing the very first Director General in the person of Attorney and Pastor Jeremiah Belgica. That is just my manifestation, and because there are no more questions to be asked by the Minority, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate in behalf of the Minority. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. ZUBIRI. Mr. Speaker, we join the Minority in its motion terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the ARTA, Mr. Speaker. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Anti-Red Tape Authority is terminated.

REP. DAZA. Thank you.

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, to allow us to prepare for the next agency, I move that we suspend the session.

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

It was 2:36 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:47 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Ferdinand L. Hernandez presiding.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The session is resumed. The Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture, including attached agencies and corporations. With leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I move that we also consider, together with the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture, the budgetary support to the National Irrigation Administration.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, to sponsor the proposed budget, I move that we recognize Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma of the Lone District of Nueva Vizcaya.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Luisa Cuaresma is hereby recognized. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, before we recognize the first Member to interpellate, I would like to acknowledge the presence of the officials of the National Irrigation Administration led by Gen. Ricardo Visaya, Administrator; Sr. Deputy Administrator Abraham Bagasin; Deputy Administrator Romeo Can; and Deputy Administrator C'zar Sulaik; as well as the Department Managers, Regional Operations Managers and Project Managers of the NIA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Administrator Ricardo Visaya and the National Irrigation Administration family, welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, to interpellate the Sponsor, I move that we recognize Rep. Noel L. Villanueva of the Third District of Tarlac.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Noel Villanueva is hereby recognized.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Thank you, honorable Speaker. To the distinguished Sponsor, will you yield to some clarificatory questions?

REP. CUARESMA. With pleasure, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, one of the objectives of the Rice Tariffication Law is to liberalize rice importation and impose

tariff, and the tariff to be collected will fund the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund which will be used in the modernization of rice farming in our country. My question is, ilang taon po ba ang plano para gawing moderno ang pagsasaka dito sa ating bansa? Of course, we have a timeline in the program under the RCEF.

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong plan na ginawa po ng ating Departamento ay anim na taon po.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, in six years, with the annual budget of P10 billion, the Agriculture Department is assuring us that rice farming in our country will be modernized.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, it is a good start but we hope that in the future years to come, there will be more funding as has been promised by the President earlier. So, with that much funding that will be given to the Department of Agriculture, we hope that, really, within the six years, we will be able to already implement fully the modernization of our agriculture.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). I had been listening a while ago—what are the innovations that the agency is now undertaking to modernize farming or the rice farming industry in our country?

REP. CUARESMA. Well, we got a lot, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. We have like, of course, training—that is number one—and then, the seed component, the mechanization component, and the credit component that are on top of the regular program of the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Well, ako po ay nagpapasalamat sa mga innovations na ginagawa ng Kagawaran ngayon, lalo sa pagmo-modernize ng ating patubig at pamimigay ng rice machineries sa ating farmers. Do you think we can provide all our farmers with all these farm equipments? How can we distribute these farm equipments based on the number of rice farmers in our country?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kaya nga po mayroon tayong need assessment para po malaman talaga iyong pangangailangan po ng ating mga magsasaka. Iyong distribution naman po, when we talk about the distribution of these machineries, this is always in coordination with the different associations of the farmers.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Yes, I understand that and that is why we are now in the process of accrediting

farmers' associations, farmers' cooperatives, and other farmers' organizations. Is it not?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo. Marami na rin hong accredited na mga farmers' associations, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. When it comes to the requirements, n-simplify na rin po ang mga ito ng Departamento para hindi naman ho mahirapan iyong ating mga asosasyon to avail of this particular program of the DA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Yes, and I appreciate that effort from the Department. Marami na rin po sa mga magsasaka natin ngayon ang nakikinabang sa mga programang iyan pero kailangan pang lalong pag-ibayuhin, ano po, at piliin nang mabuti iyong mga kooperatiba, mga farmers' associations, na dapat mapagkalooban ng mga farm equipments na ito. We have to be strict in putting criteria on who will be the beneficiaries of these farm equipments.

Ngayon po, ang aking susunod na tanong ay ganito. Sinisisi po ang Rice Tariffication Law sa pagbaba ng presyo ng palay, hindi po ba, dahil daw po sa marami ang bigas na pumasok sa ating bansa. So, iyon po ang aking isang tanong—how many metric tons of imported rice have entered the country to date?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong sa una ninyong statement, sumasang-ayon po ako, tama po kayo doon na kailangan po ay piliin ng ating Departamento iyong mga accredited o kung ano iyong mga farmers' associations na maa-accredit po ng Departamento.

Now, with regard to the volume of palay purchased or imported rice na na-import po for this year or for Fiscal Year 2018, we have 1.25 metric tons. Ito ay ang sa NFA, at ang sa private ay 0.410 metric tons po.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Come again, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. It is 1.25 million metric tons and 0.410 million metric tons po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, noong nakaraang taon.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, ilan po ang kabuuan, ang total volume of imported rice na pumasok na sa ating bansa sa ngayon?

REP. CUARESMA. In 2018...

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). No, I am speaking about the present.

REP. CUARESMA. Just wait, I am going to that, Mr. Speaker...

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sa 2019 lang.

REP. CUARESMA. Okay. We have to sum up...

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Hindi, iyong sa onset of the Rice Tariffication Law.

REP. CUARESMA. Sa taong 2019, ang pumasok na po ay 2.4 million metric tons, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, 2.4 million metric tons of imported rice entered our country to date?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, what is your estimated palay production for this year?

REP. CUARESMA. Again, pardon?

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Ano po ang inyong estimated palay production for 2019?

REP. CUARESMA. Ang estimated production po for 2019 is 19 million metric tons po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Now, I will go now to my main question—what is the total rice consumption in our country? Ilan po ang nauubos natin na bigas sa loob ng isang taon?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the consumption for this year is 11.896 million metric tons.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, with our estimated production and the volume of importation that entered our country, does it mean we have an excess supply of rice to date? Ang ibig sabihin po, dahil sa maganda naman ang ani at malaki ang volume ng imported na bigas, sobra-sobra po ang supply ng bigas sa ngayon, hindi po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po kayo, Mr. Speaker, na iyong tanong po ninyo is, bakit kailangan pang mag-import samantalang mayroon tayong production of, like, 18.896 million metric tons of rice. Ang sagot po diyan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, dahil kailangan din po tayong magkaroon ng buffer stock.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Opo. Naiintindihan ko po iyon dahil po dapat supisiyente o sapat ang bigas para ating mga kababayan.

REP. CUARESMA. Opo.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Ang tanong ko po ay ito lang, simple lang. Sa ngayon po ay labis-labis, sobra-sobra ang supply natin ng bigas, hindi po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Kanina po ay nasabi ko po na ang production po natin ay nasa 19 million metric tons of palay pero mayroon pa hong mga deductions iyan. Siyempre, may losses po kasi iyan kaya iyong 11.96 metric tons ho, as you had mentioned, ay sapat na sapat sana but kagaya po ng sinabi ko, dapat mayroon po tayong buffer stock na talagang kailangan din.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Despite this huge volume of imported rice, why is it that the price of rice in the market has not gone down considerably?

Hindi po nakikita ng ating mga kababayan ang pagbaba ng bigas sa merkado bagamat sobra-sobra naman ang supply. Ano po kaya ang kasagutan dito?

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po kayo, Mr. Speaker. Tama po si Honorable Villanueva of the Third District of Tarlac na bakit pa mag-i-import samantalang napakarami na po.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). No, no.

REP. CUARESMA. O iyong presyo pala ng rice is, bakit hindi bumababa samantalang napakarami po?

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). That is not my point, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. That is why, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department is conducting an investigation kung bakit ganoon, na ang daming imported rice na ho pero hindi naman po bumababa iyon hong presyo ng bigas.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Kung sobra ang supply ng bigas at hindi naman bumababa ang presyo nito, parang taliwas po iyan sa law of supply and demand, parang hindi pinakikinabangan ng ating mga kababayan ang Rice Tariffication Law. Dapat sa ngayon, ang presyo ng bigas sa merkado ay nasa P32 lang, katulad na lamang noong ang NFA lamang ang nag-i-import po ng bigas. Bakit ngayon na pinabayaan na natin, ni-liberalize na natin ang rice importation, ganoon pa rin ang presyo ng bigas?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po ...

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). When NFA had the sole authority to import rice, we can see in the market, the price was P27 for regular-milled rice and P32 for well-milled rice. Bakit po ngayon, wala iyong mga presyo na iyan?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, bumaba na po sa ngayon ang presyo ng bigas per kilo. Actually po, mayroon na ho, hindi na lang po P32, may mga nagbebenta pa ho ng P30 per kilo pero iyong mga special variety po, iyon po ang P40 pataas po ang presyo per kilo.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). By the way, how many rice traders were issued import permits?

REP. CUARESMA. Pardon?

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). How many rice traders were issued import permits?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, wala na pong ini-issue na permit ang ating NFA.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Hindi po, iyon pong dati—sa ngayon ay na wala pero iyong nabigyan na po?

REP. CUARESMA. Ah, iyong nabigyan na. Bibigyan na lang po namin kayo ng list, Mr. Speaker. We will just provide Honorable Villanueva with the list of those who had been given a license to import.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Wala po bang readily available na datos ngayon diyan? Sino ang nabigyan ng import permits na mga rice traders? Saan o anong port of entry dumating o pumasok ang mga bigas na inangkat na iyan?

REP. CUARESMA. Per data from the DA, those who had been given a license is, more or less, 199, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Aside from that, we will just provide you with a copy of the list, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Anyway, okay, I will just need a copy of the list of rice traders who were issued import permits. I will expect that from the Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, bilang Sponsor po ng budget ng Kagawaran ng Pagsasaka, can you assure me that in six years, rice farming in this country will be modernized to the benefit of the Filipino rice farmers?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, with the promise of the President that they will add additional funding for the Department, maaaring magagawa po iyan within six years.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Within the timeline of six years, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, because as I had mentioned earlier, the amount proposed as the budget for the DA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, is P333 billion, but the amount given was not even one-third of the requested allocation. It was just like, it is only P71 billion. The amount requested, their proposal was P333 billion and the amount given by the DBM is only P71 billion, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Isang importanteng tanong po, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor—magkano na po ang pumasok na taripa sa rice importation?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, P9.1 billion po.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sa ngayon po, P9.1 billion ang nakolektang taripa?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sigurado po ba kayo sa figure na iyan?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that is as per record of the Bureau of Customs.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). To lower production cost, kaya po natin mino-modernize ang rice farming, hindi po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Mayroon po akong mahalagang tanong—is value-added tax imposed on fertilizers and pesticides and other farm inputs?

REP. CUARESMA. Doon ho sa RCEF ay hindi po included na may VAT po ang fertilizers, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Come again, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Hindi po kasali ang fertilizer.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). So, VAT-exempt ang fertilizer at pesticides. Are you sure of that, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, that is the information given to us by the Department of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Kung may VAT on fertilizer, pesticides and other farming inputs, siguro, puwedeng gawing policy ng DA na alisan na ang taxes sa mga farm inputs like fertilizers and pesticides para bumaba po iyong production cost. Mahal po ang fertilizer, mahal ang mga pestisidyo—ito ang mga nagpapabigat sa gastusin ng mga magsasaka po natin.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, tama po kayo, Honorable Villanueva, Mr. Speaker, kaya tinitingnan po ito ng ating Departamento ng Agrikultura para talagang wala pong value-added tax sa mga fertilizers.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Salamat po sa impormasyon na iyon.

Tungkol naman po sa asukal, hindi po ba pupuwedeng putulin na muna ang ating US quota? Five percent of our local production goes to the US market, and the price is way, way below the domestic market price.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department will consider that in due time.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Maybe a simple letter to the US Department of Agriculture that our low production of sugar is not enough for our local consumption will do.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po kayo, Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). There is no compelling reason we will subsidize the US market. Five percent of our sugar production goes to the US market, under the US quota na mas mababa po ang presyo compared sa domestic market price.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po kayo.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sana po mapag-aralan ng ating Kalihim ito. Ngayon, hinggil din po sa asukal, totoo po ba na may napipintong proposal na magkakaroon ng Rice Tariffication Bill?

REP. CUARESMA. Ano pong bill iyon, tariffication?

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sa sugar po, kung magkakaroon uli ng batas na tariffication.

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ay wala pa naman po.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sa ngayon po?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). What about in the near future? In the near future, is there a plan by the Department of Agriculture to impose tariff on sugar importation or liberalize sugar importation?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, ayon sa Departamento, wala pa naman pong ganoon.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Sana po, huwag na muna.

REP. CUARESMA. Magkaganoon pa man, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, tayo po na taga-gawa ng batas ay dapat i-block po natin iyang sugar Tariffication.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Opo, salamat po sa assurance ng DA Secretary na wala munang tariffication sa sugar. Ngayon po, ang susunod kong tanong, this Sugar Industry Development Act has a mandatory appropriation of P2 billion. Bakit po ang pondo ng SIDA ngayon is only P500 million?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, iyong ating pong bagong Secretary or Kalihim ng Department of Agriculture, ginagawan pa ho lahat ito ng pag-aaral. Ito po ay nabinbin, actually, pero through the leadership now of our new Secretary, I hope everything will go well, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Is it alright that the Secretary himself proposes an amendment to our GAB 2020 to increase it up to the mandatory appropriation of P2 billion for the SIDA fund?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). That is the law.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, in fact, there is an action plan already prepared by the Department of Agriculture to accelerate the disbursement of this particular fund and the Department will just provide you a with copy of this plan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). No, what I need is an assurance from the Secretary himself.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, according to our Secretary, that is an assurance coming from the Secretary, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). It is not only rice farmers who are suffering from low earnings, but even sugarcane farmers are now experiencing very, very low profits. Kaya po ipinasa iyong SIDA, the Sugar Industry Development Act, which has a mandatory appropriation

of P2 billion yearly pero yearly din, binabawasan po ito, hindi pa po nakukuha iyong P2 billion. What assurance can we get from our good Secretary on this?

REP. CUARESMA. Wala pong bawas, as mentioned by our Secretary. What is nice about it, as I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, there is already an action plan prepared by the Department, particularly by our Secretary, which we will provide to Honorable Villanueva.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Okay. I will take your word on that, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker and Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). My last question is, kasi ako ay binabanatan na ng mga Majority Leaders, napakahaba na raw ang aking oras na kinonsumo. (Laughter) My last question is about a very important irrigation project in my province, the Balog-Balog Multi-Purpose Project. This project, for the information of this august Body, was started way back in 1986 and until now, it has not gone into completion. Ano kaya ang timeline talaga natin dito sa proyektong ito?

REP. CUARESMA. On that particular project mentioned, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, my dear honorable Villanueva, according to our NIA family, that was started in 2017 and it is expected to be completed in 2022.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Well, I saw my good friend, the NIA Administrator, General Bong Visaya, and he has given his assurance that before our President Duterte steps down from Malacañang, we will have a ribbon-cutting dito sa proyektong ito. Asang-asa na po ang aming mga kababayang magsasaka na matatapos ang Balog-Balog Multi-Purpose Project sa tamang panahon.

Is that an assurance from the good Administrator himself, sa 2022 po?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. VILLANUEVA (N.). Ibabalita ko na po sa aking mga constituents iyan—na sa 2022, ang matagal nang proyektong ito ay, sa wakas, matatapos din sa pamamahala ni Administrator Bong Visaya.

Iyon lamang po. Maraming salamat at sana po ay lalo pang mapalakas at mapalaki ang pondo ng DA nang makatulong siya sa ating mga magsasakang Pilipino.

Maraming, maraming salamat po.

REP. CUARESMA. Maraming salamat din po sa support.

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

REP. ROMUALDO. Mr. Speaker, before we proceed to the next interpellator, we would just like to remind our Members, as well as all of our guests in the gallery, to maintain order and maintain the appropriate level of silence inside the session hall, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Noted.

REP. ROMUALDO. The next Member to interpellate, Mr. Speaker, is the Lady from the Second District of Marikina. I move that Rep. Stella Luz A. Quimbo be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Stella Quimbo is hereby recognized.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some questions?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some confusion arising from the Rice Tariffication Law. Siguro iyan ang dahilan kung bakit po marami pong may tanong tungkol diyan. So, my interpellation is, again, for the purpose of clarifying issues relating to the law.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of this new law, quantitative restrictions on rice have now been removed. Bukas na po ang ating rice market to competition from imported rice, and what would limit rice imports, at this point in time and moving forward, would be a tariff, right? For imports coming from the ASEAN, it is a 35-percent tariff. Hindi naman po totoo na mayroong competition pero hindi naman po unli-competition kung hindi limited competition due to tariffs. Naitanong na po kanina, Mr. Speaker, kung gaano karami na po ang ating rice imports. Tama po ba na it is about 2.4 metric tons?

So, my first question, Mr. Speaker, is, for this level of rice imports, what is the associated growth rate as compared to the same period of last year? Iyong 2.4 metric tons this year, for the first six months, how big is that relative to the first six months of 2018?

REP. CUARESMA. It is 0.4, from 2 million to 2.4 million, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. The growth is 0.4 or 400,000 metric tons, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. So 0.4—it increased to 2.4 million. Mr. Speaker, tila malaki po ang inilaki ng ating rice

imports. May we know, just for the record, may we hear a categorical statement from the Department if this is a cause for concern. Just for the record, can we hear po a policy statement from the Department regarding the current rice import situation.

REP. CUARESMA. That is why, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department of Agriculture, as a general safeguard duty, is studying it para ho o baka sakaling madoble pa ho iyong tariff, and this tariff will go to the farmers, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, thank you po. Mr. Speaker, before we talk about solutions or potential interventions, may we hear first the concern, what is the policy concern—ano ang pagtingin po ng Kagawaran sa sitwasyon ngayon? Ito ba ay problemang malaki, problema in the short run or problema in the long run? Ano ang kailangang gawin sa ngayon?

REP. CUARESMA. Dito po sa Rice Tariffication Law, marami pong importation of rice and that is why, as mentioned earlier, ito ay pinag-aaralan po as to how to protect the plight of the farmers and at the same time, we also have to consider our consumers' plight, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Iyon naman hong tariff na nakukuha natin from this importation of rice, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, it goes back to the farmers.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, is it correct to say that it is a tough balancing act—on one hand, we have increased rice imports that reduced rice prices for consumers but on the other hand, these may also adversely impact on our farmers and therefore, there is a need to properly use the revenues from the tariffs in order to address whatever adverse effects there may be.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, tama po kayo, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, that is why there is this balancing act na ginagawa po ngayon ng ating Departamento.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, you must be aware that RA 11203, Section 10 to be specific, provides for special safeguard measures where the Secretary of Agriculture may *motu proprio* initiate the imposition of a special safeguard measure following the satisfaction of certain conditions, particularly the breaching of what is called a trigger volume, and when that is reached, the current tariff, which is 35 percent for ASEAN, can be increased up to 47 percent. So, my question, Mr. Speaker, did the Secretary or his predecessor initiate the imposition of a special safeguard measure?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor,

that is why we have this general safeguard duty, iyon muna, and then, it will be approved by the WTO, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. So, the Secretary can readily implement whatever the WTO would recommend, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, can the Department clarify—did you initiate a special or a general safeguard measure? These are two different things. The special safeguard measure is available to the Secretary of Agriculture at any point in time. On the other hand, the general safeguard measure requires a determination by the Tariff Commission, in other words po, hindi po siya automatic. So, ang tanong ko po ay patungkol po sa special safeguard measure. So, iyan po ba ay ginamit na po ng ating Kagawaran?

REP. CUARESMA. Actually, what is being implemented now, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, is the general safeguard duty. Now, with the special safeguard measure, pinag-aaralan pa po iyan ng ating Departamento. Of course, the Department of Agriculture Secretary cannot implement whatever he likes without the approval of the WTO, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, dahil pinag-aaralan pa po ng Kagawaran kung mag-i-initiate ng special safeguard measure, ang tanong ko po ay ano po ang trigger volume para sa taong 2019?

REP. CUARESMA. Doon po sa general safeguard duty ay 2 million metric tons.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, ang trigger volume, kina-compute po siya base sa isang formula na nakalatag po sa batas, RA 8880. Ginamit ko po ang historical data, na-compute ko po iyan at ang aking computation po, using the high end or the conservative estimate, is 1.75 million metric tons. Samakatuwid po, kung tama po ang computation na iyan ay dapat available na po at this point in time ang special safeguard measure dahil June pa lamang po ay na-breach na po natin ang 1.75 million metric tons.

So, ang tanong ko po ay simple—bakit hindi po kinonsider ng Kagawaran ang paggamit ng isang special safeguard measure na available naman po sa Secretary of Agriculture? Iyan po ay automatic po at tinataasan na kaagad ang taripa to 47 percent, which means that it will substantially reduce imports immediately at no cost to the government and at the same time, actually, hindi lang po at no cost ito dahil that will generate tariff revenues to the government.

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, pasensiya na po, kakapasok lang po o bago lang po

iyong ating Department of Agriculture Secretary, but I was informed na ito ay ginagamit naman o ginagamit na.

REP. QUIMBO. Ano po?

REP. CUARESMA. The steps had been put in place and the general safeguard tariff will be issued by the end of the month. Maybe, we can just furnish ...

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, may I just have a written explanation as to why the general safeguard measure was used instead of the special safeguard measure? Siguro at this point po, maybe, let us not belabor that point. What I just wanted to put forward is that the special safeguard measure is an available intervention at no cost to the government, that also provides revenues to the government and has an immediate effect pagdating po sa pag-kontrol ng imports.

So, let me move po to my next point.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, we will take note of your observation. Okay, may we have the next question?

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, doon po sa pagtaas po ng imports, na-monitor po ba ng Kagawaran ang smuggling of rice? Noong tinitingnan ko po ang datos mula sa Bureau of Customs, napakalaki po ng inilaki ng imports, particularly na po sa buwan ng Marso, Abril at Mayo. In fact, halos 18,000 percent ang inilaki ng imports noong Abril. So, ang tanong ko po, ito ba ay dahil naging kaunti na kaya ang smuggling? May paraan po ba tayo ng pag-monitor ng rice smuggling?

REP. CUARESMA. Well, the Department is trying to monitor it, but it is the Bureau of Customs really, sila po iyong in charge dito sa importation of rice, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Siguro, Mr. Speaker, maganda rin pong ...

REP. CUARESMA. The Department is working with the Bureau of Customs, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Okay, Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear po that the DA is also interested in finding out the effect of this law on the smuggling of rice.

Mr. Speaker, my next question has to do with the interventions that you have taken so far. So, linawin po natin—hindi po natin ginamit ang special safeguard measure at sa halip, tayo po ay nag-apply po ng general safeguard measure at kung tama po ang aking intindi,

hinihintay pa po natin ang finalization niyan. Tama po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Hindi po.

REP. QUIMBO. So, ibig sabihin, ang tariff natin ay 35 percent pa rin pagdating po sa ASEAN.

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, for the information of Honorable Quimbo, ginagamit na po itong general safeguard measure, there are steps being undertaken, and as I said earlier...

REP. QUIMBO. Opo, pero hindi pa po siya final.

REP. CUARESMA. ... the target will be by the end of September, and maybe the latest is by October 10 of this year, Mr. Speaker.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, the third intervention that you mentioned has to do with the NFA. So, ang una ko pong tanong, Mr. Speaker, is, nagbago po ba ang mandato ng NFA dahil sa Rice Tariffication Law at kung nagbago man, puwede po ninyo bang banggitin sa amin kung anong pagbabago iyan?

REP. CUARESMA. Okay, so, iyon hong ating NFA, their duty will be buffer stocking and mamimili rin po sa ating mga local na farmers, that is why we or the Department has established buying stations in different areas of the country, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, buffer stocking po ang naging mandato na ngayon ng NFA. Ang price stabilization po ba ay mandato pa rin po ng NFA?

REP. CUARESMA. Hindi po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Okay, so, salamat po sa clarification na iyan. Nabasa ko po sa diyaryo kamakailan na nag-procure na po ang NFA ng palay, and at the same time, it will “flood” the market with rice. Nabasa ko po iyon sa diyaryo, so, I would like a confirmation po from the Department if tama po ba iyon na on one hand, you will procure palay from the farmers, which is good because that will support the palay price, but I just want a confirmation if you will use those stocks to flood the market in an attempt to reduce the prices of rice even further.

Tama po ba iyon, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, aside from that, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, marami po talagang bigas sa NFA, and that is why, as I said kanina po, the NFA is getting in touch with the different LGUs, and not only with the

different LGUs pero pati na po iyong ating mga national agencies para lang ho mabawasan iyong ating stocks na imported rice, at nang makabili naman po tayo ng mga produce ng ating mga farmers, lalong-lalo na dahil the harvest time will be at the end of September and early part of October.

REP. QUIMBO. I guess, Mr. Speaker, my concern is that, if indeed these procured stocks will be used to flood the market, that is already tantamount to stabilizing prices. So, ang tanong ko po ay, iyan po ba ay consistent dito po sa bagong mandato ng NFA sa ilalim po ng RA 11203?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, actually, that is the consequence, but it is not the mandate of the NFA to do that. Kailangan talaga na we have to sell the stocks para magkapera po ang NFA for them to utilize that particular amount doon po sa pagbili, lalong-lalo na, as I said kanina nga, it will be harvest time by the end of this month and early part of October para, at least, they have something to utilize for the procurement of the farm products of our farmers.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, just to clarify, mayroon na po bang rice shortage at this point?

REP. CUARESMA. Wala po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, kung wala pa tayong shortage, at kung magiging faithful po tayo doon sa batas, dapat ay hindi pa natin ginagamit ang buffer stock at this point in time.

REP. CUARESMA. Ang nangyayari po kasi, if we will not really keep on selling the palay stock of the NFA, baka ho mabulok ang mga ito. Aside from that, of course, whatever proceeds they will get from its sale, at least iyon na naman iyong kanilang ipambibili nitong mga darating na harvest, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, siguro, kung puwede na lang po, sana i-suggest sa Department na pag-aralan po nila ito, dahil sa tingin ko po ay may legal issue po iyan, lalong-lalo na po dahil maaari pong hindi po siya consistent po sa mandato ng NFA, dahil sa ngayon po, ginagamit na ang procurement for purposes of price stabilization.

Ang next ko po na tanong, Mr. Speaker, is, magkano po ba ang budget ng NFA para sa taong 2020?

REP. CUARESMA. The budget for NFA is P7 billion, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, kung P7 billion

po ang budget ng NFA, magkano po ba ang pagbili nila ngayon ang palay, P19 po ba?

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, P7 billion po ang budget ng NFA at P19 na po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyon hong dry palay na po.

REP. QUIMBO. So, P19 na. Mr. Speaker, kung i-divide po natin iyong P7 billion by P19, kulang-kulang po 3.9 metric tons ang kayang bilingin po ng NFA, so, ang tanong ko po is, Mr. Speaker, ito ba ay sapat? Na-compute na po ba ng Department of Agriculture iyong tinatawag po na effective procurement level, considering the new mandate of the NFA under RA 11203? Kung na-compute na po iyan ng Kagawaran, puwede pong i-share sa atin kung ano po ba iyan?

REP. CUARESMA. Ang NFA ay buffer stocking lang, so, in other words, kaya ang kanilang pondo po is just P7 billion ay para lang magkaroon tayo ng buffer stock, but at the moment, kaya kailangan maibenta po iyong mga nasa bodega ng ating NFA ay para ho umikot po iyong pera at may pambili po ang NFA, particularly that harvest time is fast approaching, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, perhaps, we would like to request the DA to submit to the office of the Minority Leader ito pong procurement plan po ng NFA, lalong-lalo na po dahil nga bago na po ang mandato ng NFA.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have here the data, and we will just give you a copy, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Opo. Mr. Speaker, I would like to now move on to the RCEF because under the law, that is one of the interventions that are available to cushion the impact of increased rice imports. Nabanggit na po kanina na ang ang tariff collected so far ay P9.1 billion. Tama po?

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po.

REP. QUIMBO. Ito po ay as of August 31, kung tama po iyong nabasa ko sa diyaryo.

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, tama po.

REP. QUIMBO. So, at this point in time, ngayon po ay September 18, siguro po, malapit na pong mag-reach ito ng P10 billion at importante po ang threshold na iyan dahil ayon sa batas, kapag lumampas ng P10 billion ay puwede na tayong magbigay ng direct cash transfers sa ating mga magsasaka. Ang tanong ko po, una sa lahat po, how much have we disbursed so far from the

RCEF? Ang alam po natin, whatever tariff is collected, this would now constitute the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes.

REP. QUIMBO. Since we have collected P9.1 billion already, magkano na po ang atin pong na-disburse at this point?

REP. CUARESMA. As of two weeks ago, doon pa lang po nag-start na mag-disburse tayo, noong nagbigay ng Notice of Cash Allocation, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. They are now disbursing and I would like to inform Honorable Quimbo that the Department can provide you the specifics of the disbursement.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the kind offer of providing information on the utilization of the RCEF. Since it is a milestone, the first time we were able to disburse some assistance for farmers, may we know, at this point, within a span of 14 days, how much have we spent so far?

REP. CUARESMA. At the moment, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, maliit pa lang po, more or less P32 million was disbursed, at dahil harvest season naman na po, the planting season will start November and December.

REP. QUIMBO. So, Mr. Speaker, they have spent or they have disbursed P32 million so far in a matter of two weeks. Congratulations po. How many farmers benefitted from that?

REP. CUARESMA. According to the records of the DA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, there are 75 individuals and 5 cooperatives who have already availed the scheme of that particular program.

REP. QUIMBO. So, 75 farmers received P32 million in total.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, 75 individual farmers and 5 cooperatives, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. The Department just started disbursing, as I said, two weeks ago.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, in what form did they get their assistance? We are looking at less than half a million pesos per farmer. What is the form of assistance provided to these 75 farmers?

REP. CUARESMA. Well, I have here the data, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. For individual farmers—I am sorry, I mentioned earlier 75, but it should be 74—the amount is P14.457 million; and for the 5 cooperatives,

the amount is P17.945 million; and it has a total of P32.4 million. So, if we have to compute the average amount per individual farmer, it is P190,000 for credit alone, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, it is good to know that the disbursement has been initiated. Could we request the Department to provide us with a progress report as they go along, and can they do this on a monthly basis to provide us a report, to provide this to the office of the Minority Leader, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, we will do that, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Siguro hindi lang monthly, baka puwedeng periodic na lang, every quarter or quarterly.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you po, Mr. Speaker. That would be good, iyong quarterly progress reports po.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the fourth intervention that I read in the papers is about your Kadiwa stores. May we know from the Department why this approach was considered?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, actually, the Kadiwa stores just recently opened and our farmers can bring their products or their produce to a particular Kadiwa.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, tama po ba na the purpose for doing this is to minimize contact with traders?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, that is true, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, ito nga iyong isang paraan para ma-avoid na, if ever, ang abusive traders. Tama po ba, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, it is in a way, and at least ay kikita po iyong ating mga farmers instead of the traders na sila iyong kumikita.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a welcome development. I would like to know if this is included in your 2020 budget?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, we started this in 2019, so, it is still part of the 2020 budget, and there is a supplemental allocation for this particular project, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, just for our information, how much was allocated for this program?

REP. CUARESMA. May I just ask—do you mean, Your Honor, 2019 or 2020? For 2020, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department allocated the amount of P85 million.

REP. QUIMBO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my last question, I would like to know kung ano po ang mga paraan na ginagamit po ng Department sa pag-monitor po nito ng presyo ng bigas at palay, at sa kanilang pagmo-monitor po ba ay kung malaki po ang spatial variation. Ang ibig sabihin, if you go from north to the south, malaki po ba ang pagkakaiba? Base lang po sa aking casual observation, iyon pong mga magsasaka na talaga pong nagrereklamo na halos P7 na lang binibili ang kanilang palay ay nandoon po sa bandang norte. Tama po ba ang observation na ito?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. The Department has this Bantay Presyo, and this is in partnership and in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry and the different LGUs.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, if that information is available, could they also kindly furnish us this information?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. With pleasure, we will give it to you, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. Mr. Speaker, pasensiya na po sa mga tanong ko.

REP. CUARESMA. We understand Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. QUIMBO. We really want the Department to succeed in implementing one of the landmark economic legislations of this administration. Bukas po, ang Kinatawan na ito ay magsusumite ng amendments sa GAB para lamang matulungan pa lalo ang DA sa pagpapatupad ng napakahalagang batas na ito. Magtulongan po tayo na mapababa ang presyo ng bigas. Huwag naman po sanang magutom ang ating mga magsasaka dahil sila po ang nagpapakain sa atin.

So, iyon lang po. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Mabuhay po ang DA.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. Thank you po, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor is the honorable Gentleman

from the Third District of Camarines Sur, Rep. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr. I move that he be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado Jr. is hereby recognized.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Well, I actually had the opportunity to interact with the Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary Dar, during the Committee discussions two weeks ago, so, let me just come up with some clarificatory questions.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, while the budgetary support for the majority of the attached corporations has generally remained unchanged, the significant rise in the budget support to the PFDA, Mme. Sponsor, for 2020 is very evident—from P765.2 million in 2019 to P1.43 billion in 2020, or an increase of 86.3 percent. Am I correct, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, yes, you are correct.

REP. BORDADO. The increased budgetary subsidy could be used for the implementation of infrastructure development programs, especially the construction, rehabilitation and improvement of fishing ports. Is this correct, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. Now, what are the plans of the Department of Agriculture for improving aquaculture in the country?

REP. CUARESMA. With the figure just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department allocated some amount, that is why there was an increase of 83 percent as mentioned by the Gentleman.

REP. BORDADO. Precisely, Mme. Sponsor. There has been an increase, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, and I am asking the Department of Agriculture to come up with specific projects which the Department will implement in the aquaculture sector.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, that is why the Department has initiated or has provided for different fish ports.

REP. BORDADO. Providing what, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. I would just like to inform, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor—I would like to present the budgetary support particularly on the construction, rehabilitation and improvement of fish ports and actually, a lot were given to the different fish port complexes just so we can improve them..

REP. BORDADO. Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, you are discussing fishing ports, but I am asking about aquaculture.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, we really have to develop, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, aquaculture and the target of the Department...

REP. BORDADO. I have not actually heard of any plan, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor...

REP. CUARESMA. Yes.

REP. BORDADO. ...I am just asking you to come up with the plans and programs of the DA insofar as aquaculture is concerned.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. In fact, the Secretary already has prepared different innovations and interventions and maybe, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, can we just provide you a copy of the innovations and/or interventions prepared by our new DA Secretary?

REP. BORDADO. So, in other words, the DA has prepared a program?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes.

REP. BORDADO. You will be giving us a copy of that particular report?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you very much. Next question, does the Department have ongoing explorations and researches being done to open up new fisheries or new fishing areas?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. What are these particular areas?

REP. CUARESMA. May I consult the DA, Mr. Speaker?

May I just ask, Mr. Speaker, the Honorable Bordado as to—what does the Gentleman mean, is it the location or the programs that are being prepared by the Department?

REP. BORDADO. Yes, both the programs and location of possible new areas for fishing activities.

REP. CUARESMA. Actually, again, just like the other programs prepared by our new Secretary, we have here the different programs for aquaculture, for fisheries, and the document is so voluminous, masyadong makapal, Honorable Bordado, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, kindly provide us a copy of that report.

REP. CUARESMA. Okay, we will do that, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. For my last question, evidently, all commodity programs will have reduced budgets in 2020. Am I correct, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. The National Livestock Program budget will have the biggest reduction of 20.2 percent or P237.5 million. Is this correct, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, that is right, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. This is quite unfortunate because of the widespread reports of mortality of swine in hog farms in Rodriguez, Rizal and Bulacan. Do you agree with me, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department would like to allocate a lot for this particular program but the problem is, the Department submitted to the DBM the amount of P333 billion and the amount granted for 2020 is only P71 billion, not even one-third of the proposed budget of the Department, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. In other words, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, the Department of Agriculture is ready to address the concern?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, it is still the Department of Agriculture that will provide an amount for livestock development, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. By the way, what do you call that illness affecting the hogs now sweeping across our country?

REP. CUARESMA. We call it, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, African swine fever.

REP. BORDADO. African swine fever—Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, how did the African swine fever crop up here in the Philippines?

REP. CUARESMA. Well, this came from the wastes of hotels and restaurants, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. What wastes, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, if we say wastes, I mean, food leftovers from hotels and restaurants dumped in Rodriguez.

REP. BORDADO. These leftovers are being used as feeds.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. In other words, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, you are telling us that this African swine fever actually started how many weeks ago?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, actually, during the month of July, there were already observations that we now have this kind of disease affecting our livestock, and the Department is doing its best to contain and control the spread of this particular disease. This is why the Department Secretary instructed all our Regional Directors, not only those in the local government units, to strictly monitor this because we do not really want, or the Department does not want this particular disease to spread..

REP. BORDADO. Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, the waste materials coming from hotels which are being used as feeds can be—how do you put that?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, because ang nangyayari po dito is that, in the hotels and restaurants, may nangongolekta po nito and then, they will use this and, maybe—yes, these wastes were dumped in Rodriguez, Rizal and then, there were people who were collecting these particular wastes na nandoon na ho, na ang wastes na ito ay ginagawa naman nila na pagkain ng mga baboy without cooking, kaya doon po nag-uumpisa iyong ating sinasabing African swine fever po.

REP. BORDADO. In other words, that started the African swine fever in the country.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. Okay. Marami po kasi ang nagtatanong kung paano po nagsimula ang nasabi

ng African swine fever. So, sa panahong ito, sinagot po ninyo, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ang kanilang katanungan. Thank you.

I will now proceed to my questions on the National Irrigation Administration budget, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes.

REP. BORDADO. We have here a report from the Development Research News stating among other things, Mme. Sponsor, that “Despite receiving the bulk of major public investments year after year, the country’s national irrigation systems have always performed below expectations.” Do you agree with this report, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, according to the family of NIA, hindi daw po. Accordingly, iyon hong ating budget for 2019 was just approved in the month of April and, of course, it took time before the SARO was released by the DBM.

REP. BORDADO. Mme. Sponsor, the report here is referring to even earlier years before, not just for 2019 or 2020. According to PressReader,

Despite receiving the bulk of major public investments year after year, the country’s national irrigation systems have always performed below expectations. This poor performance has been attributed by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) to overly optimistic technical and economic assumptions, inadequate water supply, inappropriate designs, and difficulties in operation and maintenance.

Mme. Sponsor, do you agree with this finding?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. With the previous findings of the COA, the NIA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, already introduced some reforms, particularly in the implementation of projects, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. What are those, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Like, for example, those projects that were started 35 years ago, at the moment, because of these reforms that were introduced by the present administration, medyo nagkaroon na ho tayo ng improvement in the implementation po.

REP. BORDADO. The PIDS, Mme. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, is citing several instances here, like the “overly optimistic technical and economic assumptions,

inadequate water supply, inappropriate designs and difficulties in operation and maintenance.” Are these being addressed, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. At times, one problem is that our watersheds are not being preserved, that is one cause, and because some watersheds are being denuded, that is one reason our dams, kulang po ang mga ito ng tubig, Your Honor. That is why, at the moment, the NIA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, has a MOA with the DENR para ang NIA na ang responsible doon sa areas na kailangan i-reforest, na kung saan nagko-contribute po ang mga areas na ito ng water to the dams. I think this is a good partnership because the DENR, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, already agreed that if the watershed is providing water to this particular dam, then it is already the NIA, though still in partnership with the DENR, na tutulong na po, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. In other words, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, you are telling us that the NIA has come up with the schemes, with the steps, with the approaches to address these concerns?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BORDADO. Again, we have a note here,

In 1964, the National Irrigation Administration was established to further strengthen institutional support for irrigation development, and provide greater financial adequacy for irrigation development. Moreover, the NIA has been given the necessary financial flexibility to charge the cost of irrigation to farmer-beneficiaries.

Do you agree, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Before po, we had this ISF, but these days, wala na ang ISF, libre na po mula sa irrigation service fee, kaya the government now is subsidizing already whatever is the need of our irrigation canals, of the irrigators’ associations, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, in 2012, the national irrigation systems that started operating in the 1990s showed poorer performance indicators than before, leading to the question—is the NIA or National Irrigation Administration still relevant in the scheme of things?

While the agricultural sector is being acknowledged or being described as the weakest link, we can say

that one of the reasons agriculture is the weakest link is irrigation. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. I agree, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kasi kulang po talaga ang patubig, because at times, one problem is the funding for these so many irrigation projects that were supposed to be implemented by the NIA, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. In other words, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, you agree with my stand, my position that the NIA has become irrelevant?

REP. CUARESMA. No, not really. Hindi naman po ganoon na irrelevant sila. Ang problema lang is that the much-needed fund is not really provided by the national government, particularly, the DBM, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. Yes. Speaking of funding, we have here another record. In the Bicol Region, for example, the regional allocation was P1.4 billion for 2019, but this has been cut to P851 million for 2020.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, and it may be because of the Cash Budgeting System, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. The Cash Budgeting System.

REP. CUARESMA. That is a system introduced by the Department of Budget and Management.

REP. BORDADO. Anyway, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, I am rather saddened by the fact that you agreed with me that the National Irrigation Administration is slowly becoming irrelevant, and it is one of the reasons agriculture is considered as the weakest link in the economy.

REP. CUARESMA. No. I agreed with you, Your Honor, that it may be because of the small amount or small budget of the Department, or though how much the Department in particular the NIA, would like to implement projects the way these should be implemented.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, can you do something to amend the budgetary allocation?

REP. CUARESMA. I hope that we can do that already, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, because once submitted to Congress, even in the Sanggunian, the legislative body cannot already increase the budget, but it can decrease it. That depends now on the President

of the Philippines, particularly the DBM as to whether it could provide a supplemental budget for the needs of the NIA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BORDADO. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, I do hope we can do something about this situation.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, with your support, Honorable Bordado.

REP. BORDADO. I fully support the National Irrigation Administration. Let us support the NIA and the Department of Agriculture.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, for the support, and I know that even our colleagues here will support the much-needed allocation, not only of the NIA, but also of the Department of Agriculture as well.

REP. BORDADO. Thank you very much, Mme. Sponsor. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate is the honorable Lady from BAYAN MUNA, Rep. Eufemia “Ka Fermia” C. Cullamat. I move that she be recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Honorable Cullamat is hereby recognized.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker. Magandang hapon kay Gng. Isponsor.

Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, mayroon akong tanong tungkol sa DA. Kanina po may tinanong na si Congressman Villanueva hinggil doon sa sugar liberalization, kasi noong August 6, 2019, ang sabi ng DA Secretary sa isang presscon ay susupportahan niya ang pag-liberalisa ng importasyon ng asukal. Nakita na natin na ang resulta ng Rice Liberalization Law ay mas bumagsak ang presyo ng palay. Ang tanong ko dito, itutuloy pa ba ng DA ang proposal na i-liberalisa ang importasyon ng asukal, G. Ispiker, Gng. Isponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kagaya po ng sinabi natin kanina, wala pa namang plano ang Departamento na may liberalisasyon tayo ng asukal, ng sugar, at kanina nga, iyong tanong ni Cong. Noel Villanueva na kung mayroong ipapasa na sugar tariffication law, ay wala po naman ganoong pangyayari, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CULLAMAT. Mr. Speaker, Gng. Isponsor,

mabuti naman po dahil ito ay magdudulot ng pagkasira sa ating lokal na industriya ng asukal at pagkawala sa kabuhayan ng 700,000 sugar workers at ng 84,000 na nagtatanim ng tubo, kung saan two-thirds pa nito ay ang mga maliliit na magsasaka at agrarian reform beneficiaries. Huwag po nating hayaang patayin ng bumabahang import ang lokal na produksiyon sa ating agrikultura, bagkus, palakasin natin ang lokal na agrikultura. Makakamit lang natin ang tunay na food security kung masagana at produktibo ang sarili nating agrikultura.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, tama po.

REP. CULLAMAT. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, mayroon pa akong tanong tungkol sa Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources o BFAR. Ang bulto ng budget ng Fisheries Development Program, 44 percent o P520 million ay nasa Aquaculture Sub-program. Samantala, bumaba ng 90 percent o P50 million ang Capture Fisheries Sub-program, na mula P266 million ay naging P215 million. Kalahati lang ito ng Aquaculture Sub-program budget. Bakit po ba ganito kalaki ang budget ng Aquaculture Sub-program kumpara sa Capture Fisheries Sub-program na mas nangangailangan ng suporta natin at kung saan nandoon ang mga maliliit na mangingisda na itinuturing nating poorest of the poor. Nangangahulugan ba ito na mas padadamihin ang aquaculture sa mga mangingisda kaysa paunlarin ang tradisyunal na paraan ng pangangisda para iangat sila sa kahirapan?

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po. Ang problema, Kgg. Eufemia Cullamat, Mr. Speaker, is that the Department submitted to the DBM all their proposed programs for 2020. The problem is, in the hands of the DBM, iyon lang po ang ibinigay nilang pondo, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CULLAMAT. Mr. Speaker, nais irehistro ng Kinatawang ito na dapat palakasin natin ang suporta para sa mga maliliit na mangingisda sa ating bansa. Ang ating mga magsasaka at mga mangingisda ay siya ring pinakamahihirap. Karamihan sa ating mga mangingisda ay ang maliliit na municipal fishers na nag-ambag ng 1.1 million metric tons na produkto, ngunit mahigit 34 percent na rin sa mga mangingisda ang kabilang sa pinakamahihirap sa bansa.

Sa tingin namin, ang paglalaan ng pondo sa mga programang aquaculture, kung saan mapupunta ang napakalaking bahagi ng pondo ng BFAR, ay lalo pang mag-eengganyo ng pribatisasyon sa ating mga pangisdaan. Ang mga malalaking pangisdaan lamang ang may kakayanang mamuhunan sa aquaculture dahil mayroon silang kapital para mag-operate ng industriya, ngunit sila rin ang nakikinabang sa suporta

ng Estado kumpara sa mga maliliit na mangingisda na nananakawan ng kanilang tradisyunal na pangisdaan ng mga malalaking aqua farms.

Napakalayo ng pagitan ng produksiyon ng mga pangisdaang munisipal sa produksiyon ng aquaculture. Lubhang maiipit o maaapektuhan ang mga mangingisdang nakaasa sa tradisyunal na pamamaraan sa pangangisda na mas nangangailangan ng suporta ng gobyerno. Sila ang kumakatawan ng pinakamahirap na sektor. Dagdag pa rito ang nakikipag-karera pa ang Tsina sa lokal na mga mangingisda dala ang kanilang malalaking barko na nangingisda sa ating exclusive economic zone o EEZ. Kagyat ang pangangailangang bigyan ng tulong ang ating municipal fisherfolks na nasa Capture Fisheries Sub-program upang maprotektahan sila at mapaunlad pa ang kanilang kabuhayan.

Sana makonsidera ito ng BFAR at ng Kongreso, G. Ispiker, Gng. Isponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Opo, sumasang-ayon po ako sa sinabi ni BAYAN MUNA Party-List Rep. Eufemia Cullamat. In fact, even the Department, sumasang-ayon din po sa mga sinasabi ninyo.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker, Gng. Isponsor. Mayroon din akong manifestation tungkol sa NIA.

Mr. Speaker, napakaraming malalaking dam sa mga proyektong pang-imprastruktura na nasa ilalim ng Build, Build, Build Program ng administrasyong Duterte na pinopondohan ng milyun-milyong pautang ng Tsina, mga oligarkiya at iba pang mga pribadong kumpanya. May mga malalaking dam dito ngayon sa Pilipinas tulad ng Balog-Balog Dam sa Tarlac Province na may malaking pondo sa National Irrigation Administration na aabot sa P13.3 million. Sakop nito ang 34,410 ektarya ng probinsiya ng Tarlac na maaaring maglubog sa 29 sitio at magdulot ng dislokasyon sa 1,650 na pamilya ng tribong Aeta. Ang Chico River Irrigation Pump Project sa Region II na sakop ang munisipyo ng mga lalawigan ng Benguet, Ifugao, Mountain Province, Abra, Apayao at Kalinga, ay may pondong mahigit na P4.3 million.

Ang Jalaur River Multipurpose Dam Project na nasa Stage II na sa probinsiya ng Iloilo at sumasakop sa 25 na munisipalidad ay may pondong mahigit-kumulang na P11.2 milyon. Ang mahigit na 123 kilometro na ilog ng Jalaur ay itinuturing na sagradong lugar ng mga Tumandok dahil ang lahat ng pinagmumulan ng tubig na gamit nila ay nanggagaling sa ilog na ito. Ang proyektong ito ay nasa lupang ninuno ng mahigit 17,000 Tumandok at makakaapekto sa 1.2 million na mga populasyon na nakatira sa 18 bayan sa Jalaur River basin.

Wika nga, "Water is Life." Ang ilog ay bahagi ng teritoryong Lumad, iba pang tribo at marami pang mamamayan. Ito ay pinagkukunan ng pagkain at tubig

para sa aming kabuhayan at agrikultura. Ang mga ilog ay may mahalagang papel sa kabuhayan, kultura at paniniwala ng maraming katutubong mamamayan sa ating bansa. Ang mga nasabing proyekto na bahagi ng "Build, Build, Build" campaign ni Pangulong Duterte ay sapilitang mapapalikas kaming mga Lumad, Aeta, Igorot, Dumagat at mga Tumandok sa aming lupang ninuno na walang angkop na relokasyon. Hindi lamang lupa at tahanan ang mawawala sa aming mga pambansang minority, ngunit pati na rin ang aming karapatang pantao dahil sa matinding militarisasyon na isinasagawa sa aming mga lugar upang mahawanan ang daan para sa mga proyektong ito. Ito rin ay sinasabing magdudulot ng pagkakalbo ng kagubatan at pagkawala ng biodiversity sa lugar na pagtatayuan. Ang tinaguriang "Build, Build, Build" ng administrasyon na ito ay may malaking epekto sa paraan ng pamumuhay naming mga pambansang minority at pati na rin lahat ng mamamayan ng ating bansa, lalo na sa susunod pang henerasyon. Ang karanasan namin sa mga ganitong uri ng proyekto ay kinasasangkapan ng operasyong militar kung saan sapilitan kaming pinalikas sa aming mga komunidad. Ginagawa na ito ng mga nakaraang administrasyon, ang paglalagay ng mga military checkpoints at pagkakampo sa mga komunidad upang makapasok ang mga proyekto nang labag sa aming kagustuhan. Ito ay nagdulot ng napakaraming paglabag sa aming karapatang pantao at ang aming karapatan bilang katutubo.

Nakakadismaya na nagpapatuloy ang paggamit ng kapangyarihan ng kasalukuyang administrasyon upang ipuwersa ang mga proyekto na nakakasira sa kapaligiran at nakakapinsala sa kabuhayan naming mga pambansang minority. Huwag nating hayaan na masira ang ating kabukiran at kalikasan, at mapalayas kaming mga katutubo sa lupang ninuno dahil sa mga proyektong kalakhan naman ay utang ang pondong ginagamit para itayo ang mga ito. Protektahan ang mga kolektibong karapatan ng pambansang minority sa pagdepensa sa lupang ninuno at irespeto ang aming karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya.

Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, ito lang po. Magandang hapon sa ating lahat.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor is the honorable Gentleman from the Lone District of Ifugao. I move that we recognize Rep. Solomon R. Chungalao.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Rep. Solomon Chungalao is hereby recognized.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the honorable Sponsor.

There are just few clarificatory questions actually directed to the National Irrigation Administration. I am thankful that they furnished me with a report of what I had requested during the Committee hearing on the NIA budget regarding the Magat River Integrated Irrigation System where the NIA admitted that the Maris Reservoir Optimization Project was undertaken by SN Aboitiz Power at its own expense and at no cost to the agency. My question is—is this Maris Reservoir Optimization Project the same as the Magat Hydroelectric Power Plant Project?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, they are the same.

REP. CHUNGALAO. So, it is the same project actually?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CHUNGALAO. I know that the NIA administrator is new, so, this is more directed to, Mme. Sponsor, to the project manager Wilfredo C. Gloria. So, would it be placed on record that the Magat Hydroelectric Power Plant Project is the same project that is the Maris Reservoir Optimization Project?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, may I know what particular project you are referring to, is it the Magat River Project?

REP. CHUNGALAO. Yes, Mme. Sponsor, actually...

REP. CUARESMA. What is the other one, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CHUNGALAO. ...what was given to me is the Maris Reservoir Optimization Project undertaken by SN Aboitiz at no expense to the NIA. Is this the same project which is called under SN Aboitiz as the Magat Hydroelectric Power Plant Project? Is it referring to the same project?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that earlier I said yes, but it seems that—may I please confer with the family of the NIA because there are two positions here at hindi ko alam kung no or yes. Or, may I just ask the one in-charge of that project to just clarify it with you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Napapahirapan tayo kasi dito with the NIA under the project manager. Bakit hindi nila aminin na iyong Magat Hydroelectric Power Plant Project is the same

Maris Reservoir Optimization Project? Iyon lang, Mr. Gloria, ang tatanungin ko lang.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, can I call for or may I request for a recess.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 4:28 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:35 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Sponsor is recognized.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. May we have the question again, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. CHUNGALAO. Mr. Speaker, the honorable Sponsor, in order not to delay the approval of the budget of the Department of Agriculture and the NIA, I may just ask that I be furnished the program of work and the background study on the Maris Reservoir Optimization Project undertaken by the NIA and funded by Aboitiz.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will provide Honorable Solomon Chungalao, the Representative of the Lone District of Ifugao, the program of work as requested.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, may we ask that we be given, next week, a copy of the same as soon as possible?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Well, the reason I have to bring that out, Mr. Speaker, is that my farmers in the lonely and very poor province of Ifugao wrote a letter to the President on this matter, and there are some owners who have not yet been paid, but whose properties were expropriated. That is why in the budget hearing of the DOJ, where the Secretary of Justice and the Solicitor General were present, I asked, "Is it possible that the

power of eminent domain, through expropriation, be exercised by a government agency and it will be a private corporation that will pay just compensation?” and it was clearly made of record that that cannot be. The records here say that it is a project of the NIA paid by SN Aboitiz. These are the things that we would like really to be resolved. We will take that up with the filing of a proper resolution for proper investigation.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CHUNGALAO. So, with that assurance from the Sponsor and some of the members of the Committee on Rules, this Representation will terminate its interpellation and then, perhaps, take another avenue in order to investigate this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Thank you, Your Honor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of the proposed budgets of the Department of Agriculture, the National Irrigation Administration, and all other attached agencies of the DA.

I so move.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the proposed budget of the Development Academy of the Philippines.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

DAP AND PHLPOST

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to begin the consideration of the proposed budgets of the DAP and the Philippine Postal Corporation—joint consideration.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of our guests from the Development Academy of the Philippines, headed by Atty. Engelbert C. Caronan Jr., MNSA, President and Chief Executive Officer, and the other members of the Development Academy of the Philippines family.

Likewise, we also move to acknowledge the presence of our guests from the Philippine Postal Corporation, headed by Mr. Joel Otarra, Postmaster General and CEO, and all the other members of the Philippine Postal Corporation family.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The officers of the Philippine Postal Corporation and Development Academy of the Philippines, welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, Hon. Isidro T. Ungab, Representative of the Third District of Davao City, to deliver his sponsorship speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Isidro Ungab is hereby recognized.

REP. UNGAB. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the requested or proposed budget of the Development Academy of the Philippines is P402,214,000 and that of the Philippine Postal Corporation is a total of P500,256,000—both as budgetary support to the said government corporations, Mr. Speaker.

This Representation is now ready to answer any question from the Members, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Jose Christopher Y. Belmonte.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Kit Belmonte is hereby recognized.

REP. BELMONTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there being no Member from the Minority who wishes to ask any questions on the Development Academy of the Philippines and the Philippine Postal Corporation, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budgets of both agencies.

I so move, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

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

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in the motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Development Academy of the Philippines, including the attached agencies.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Philippine Postal Corporation ...

REP. TADURAN. Mr. Speaker, the Philippine Postal Corporation and Development Academy of the Philippines.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). ... and Development Academy of the Philippines is hereby terminated.

Congratulations!

The Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE *Continuation*

REP. DE VENECIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the joint consideration of the proposed budgets of the Department of Agriculture and its attached agencies, as well as the National Irrigation Administration.

I so move.

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 4:44 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:49 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Evelina G. Escudero presiding

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that Hon. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma, Vice Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, be recognized to sponsor the said measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Luisa Cuaresma is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Lady from GABRIELA Party-List, Rep. Arlene D. Brosas, for her manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Arlene Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List is now recognized.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Mme. Speaker, to our good Sponsor, *maaari po bang magtanong ng ilan lamang na katanungan?*

REP. CUARESMA. *Maaari po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.*

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

Just a quick question *po* about climate change. How is the DA adapting to climate change? *Ano po ang measures and provisions that you do with regard to the impact of the climate change now, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?*

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the DA is making a research to develop resilient crops.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, how much is the budget of the DA for the climate change?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, P160 million is provided for this climate change program.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, may we have a copy of your latest report with regard to climate change.

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

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. We are going to provide Hon. Arlene Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List the data with regard to the climate change program of the DA.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor.

On to my next question, on the approval of the sanitary and phytosanitary clearance for rice imports under RA 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law, the Bureau of Plant Industry was mandated to facilitate private sector importation by issuing sanitary and phytosanitary clearance for rice imports. The law also states that “failure on the part of the BPI to release the SPSIC without informing the rice importer of any error, deficiency, omission, or additional documentary requirement shall mean automatic approval of the SPSIC applied for within seven days after submission of the complete requirements.” Now, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, does this mean that inaction on the part of the Bureau of Plant Industry regarding import clearances for more than seven days would mean automatic approval of the import clearance? Can the good Sponsor account how many import clearances were automatically approved because of this, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, there are 199 companies that had been issued permits.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, how many po iyong dati na na-approve? Ito po ay automatic na na-approve, ano, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, hindi po automatic ito na nabibigyan ng permit. Ito po ay may proseso po sa pagbigay ng permit.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, ang tinatanong ko po ay iyong mga nag-apply within seven days after submission of the complete requirements, automatic na ba sila na makakakuha ng clearance?

REP. CUARESMA. May I have again the question, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, the question is, does this mean that inaction on the part of the Bureau of Plant Industry regarding import clearances for more than seven days would mean automatic approval of the import clearances? Now, can the good Sponsor account how many of the import clearances were automatically approved because of this?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that is provided in the law. The Department of Agriculture processes the application and, of course, in the level of the Department of Agriculture, masyado ho silang istrikto ngayon sa pag-process.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor,

ilan na po? Ilan po iyong previous at ilan po iyong ngayon? Iyon lang po.

REP. CUARESMA. Ang na-release po, iyong na-process ay 3,115 po.

REP. BROSAS. Three thousand one hundred fifteen.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes po.

REP. BROSAS. Para po?

REP. CUARESMA. SPS.

REP. BROSAS. Ng nakaraan, the previous one? Before, how many lang?

REP. CUARESMA. Ngayon lang naman po itong Rice Tariffication Law, Your Honor. Ngayon lang po ito.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, that is the data now.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Iyong previous po na data, how many iyong nabigyan ng clearance or nagkaroon ng automatic clearance?

REP. CUARESMA. Ganito po iyon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, in the previous data, there were more than 1,000 given.

REP. BROSAS. One thousand.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. With the RTL now, ito ay 3,115 po, magmula po noong naibigay na ho ang mandato sa Department of Agriculture under the RTL or the Rice Tariffication Law.

REP. BROSAS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, that is why I am asking kasi iyong particular provision na ito ng RA 11203, sa tingin namin, ito po ay benefit to the rice importers, dahil kapag seven days na hindi naaksiyunan ito—seven days—magkakaroon ng clearance iyong mga private rice importers. Ang ibig sabihin po, ito po iyong nagbibigay kasi ng credence to the accusation regarding the unlimited importation of rice, hindi ba, kaya po tinatanong natin kung ilang iyong previous at ilan po iyong ngayon.

REP. CUARESMA. Actually, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, with the 3,115, it is only like 1,784 po ang nagamit.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, there was an increase of about 2,000 kasi 1,000 plus iyong dati at nadagdagan ito ngayon.

REP. CUARESMA. More or less, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. So, 3,115. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, do you have the list nito pong mga binigyan ng SPS import clearance approval?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker. We will provide Hon. Arlene Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List the list of those given an import permit.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, the Business Mirror report indicated that 1,518 import permits were issued to traders from March 5 to June 30, and the total approved rice imports, during the said period, reached P1.478 metric tons. At this rate, it is anticipated that the Philippines, ironically, will be the largest importer of rice by the end of 2019. May we know from the DA the updated figures on the SPS import clearance approval? Ilan na po ang na-approve na clearances? Based on the latest database, ilan na po ang active rice importers natin? How many were added this year to the list of active rice importers compared to last year?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, kagaya po ng sinabi ko kanina, 3,115 were given and then, ang nagamit lang po is something like 1,300. What the Department of Agriculture is issuing is not actually a permit, but an import clearance, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, iyong sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) clearance, we can account for that, hindi ba, kasi SPS po siya. Pagkatapos, matagal din mag-process ng SPS minsan kaya parang kapag tumatagal siya ay automatic na pupuwede nang mag-import.

So, how do you account doon, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that is not true. Ang ini-issue po is a clearance, not really a permit and actually, the Department of Agriculture really is rigidly monitoring the processing of the clearances that had been given previously and even up to this time, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. As we said earlier, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, we will provide a copy to Hon. Arlene Brosas of the list of those given clearances. In fact, according to the DA, they already submitted to the Committee Secretary a copy of all these, but at any rate, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, they will provide you with a copy.

REP. BROSAS. Yes. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, as of now, can the good Sponsor enumerate the top 10 rice importers based on volume, as well as the top sources of rice imports, iyong mga bansa po. So iyong top 10 rice importers natin, pati iyong mga bansa po.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, it is in the list that we will be providing you, the top 10. When we talk of the countries which are exporting rice, these are only Vietnam and Thailand, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. It is in the list, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, may I be provided with the list now, so, I can see it.

REP. CUARESMA. We only have one copy here.

REP. BROSAS. May we have a one-minute suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker, so I can see the list?

REP. CUARESMA. So, we will have a break? May I call for a suspension, Mme. Speaker. As I had said, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this was already submitted to the ComSec, so I will just ask the ComSec to reproduce this immediately so that we can provide at the soonest possible time the list of those who had been given an import clearance, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Speaker, I am asking for the list right now so I can peruse it.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, I will just ask the ComSec to reproduce it and immediately give you a copy, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, my next question is about that. I would like to know the accounting of the landed cost per country kung saan tayo nag-import ng rice. For example, kung Vietnam iyan, ano ang landed cost niyan, kaya kailangan ko po sanang makita iyong pagkakasunod-sunod, if that is India or Vietnam, ganyan po.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the list actually of the countries that are exporting rice is with the Bureau of Customs. In our list, wala naman po ito, and you cannot see from there the addresses of those who had been given an import permit.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, can we not put it on record kasi I have asked this from the PCC, I have asked this sa DTI. Kung maaalala po

nang mga nakarinig noong mga nakaraang araw, ito po iyong tinatanong ko, iyong top 10 importers, then, the DTI said dito na hingin sa Department of Agriculture ang listahan ng top importers dahil hindi daw sa kanila iyan. Ngayon po, tinatanong ko sa Department of Agriculture pero hindi pa rin maibigay iyong list ng top 10 importers ng bigas dito sa ating bansa.

REP. CUARESMA. I am just so sorry, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, that at the moment, we cannot provide you with the list, but the DA already submitted to the ComSec a copy of this list. May I beg your indulgence, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, that we be given time to give you a copy of the list. As I said, I am going to ask the ComSec to provide you with a copy of this list.

Yes, we can provide you with the list, the ComSec is already here. This came from the ComSec, Mme. Speaker, and we can already provide Hon. Arlene Brosas with a copy. As I said, the list was already submitted to the ComSec and the ComSec will be providing you with the list, Honorable Brosas, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, kanina po tinatanong ko ay iyong mga bansa.

REP. CUARESMA. There are other countries na nag-e-export po dito, Mme. Speaker, pero ang pinanggagalingan po ng karamihan is mostly Thailand and Vietnam. May mga nanggaling din po ng India at iyong mga ibang lugar po like Myanmar, Pakistan, Spain, but the bulk of the imported rice that arrived in the Philippines came from Thailand and Vietnam, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, mag-example po tayo: sa kaso ng Vietnam po, magkano iyong landed cost of imported rice?

REP. CUARESMA. Now, we have here the data, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. From Vietnam, for five percent broken rice, it is P30.83 per kilogram. For Thailand, there are two categories: for five percent broken, it is P35.31 per kilogram; and for 25 percent broken rice from Thailand, it is P34.69 per kilogram.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, kung P30—tama po ba ang pagkarinig ko?—kung P30 ito, binibenta ito nang magkano dito? Ang market selling price dito sa bansa natin, let us say, P38, kaya kung sa P30 ito nakukuha natin, may P8 pesos na diperensiya. Saan napupunta iyong P8 at sino po iyong nagmo-monitor dito?

REP. CUARESMA. Actually, as I had stated a

while ago, there is a partnership, a joint undertaking between the DA and the DTI po, sa pagmo-monitor po ng project doon po sa imported rice, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, parang hindi kasama sa nabanggit ng DTI sa prime commodities na kanilang mino-monitor ang rice. So, who is really monitoring kung magkano po iyong market selling price nitong imported rice? Dapat po ay may strict monitoring tayo sa usaping ito. The least that this government can do under a highly-liberalized trade regime ay siguruhin na may monitoring tayo kasi po iyong P8, halimbawa, hindi ba kung sobra-sobra iyong ipapatong doon sa bigas na nakukuha natin, pagkatapos ay bibilhin ng mga mamamayan natin ng mahal pa rin, pero walang nagmo-monitor ng ganoon...

REP. CUARESMA. We agree with you, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. Mayroon pong nagmo-monitor, at kagaya po ng sinabi ko kanina, nagmo-monitor po ang Department of Agriculture and the Department of Trade and Industry.

REP. BROSAS. So, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, itanong po natin sa DTI kung ano ba talaga dahil last time po, noong tinanong ko, ang sabi nila sa akin ay hindi kasama doon sa prime commodities ang rice, and that I will have to ask nga ang DA. Iyon po ang sabi nila. So, ngayon, sa inyo po, are you saying na walang nagmo-monitor noong ganoong market selling price?

REP. CUARESMA. Mayroon po. As I had stated, Mme. Speaker, that is a joint undertaking of the DA and the DTI.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, may I know kung anong branch o sino po sa DA ang nagmo-monitor niyan?

REP. CUARESMA. It is the Asec for Agribusiness, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Agribusiness, so, sa kanya, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, puwedeng i-report kapag sa tingin natin ay may sobra-sobrang patong doon sa bigas na binibili ng mga mamamayan natin?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, tama po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, kaya po namin itinatanong dahil malaking misteryo po sa amin na nananatiling napakamahal ang presyo ng bigas sa mga pamilihan sa kabila ng propesiya ng mga

nagsulong ng Rice Liberalization and Tarification Law na bababa raw ang presyo ng bigas hanggang P27—iyon po kasi iyong ipinangako, e—dahil sa pagbaha umano ng murang imported rice. Ang nangyari po, bumagsak iyong presyo ng palay, hindi naman bumagsak iyong presyo ng bigas, bagkus, ay tumaas pa nga. Nagdurusa tuloy ang humigit-kumulang 2.4 milyong mga rice farmers natin sa buong bansa dahil sa patakarang i-liberalize ang ating industriya ng bigas.

Meanwhile, kaugnay po sa DA intervention program to assess iyong mga farmers natin, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, iyong ACEF po, iyong Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, na included sa Special Provisions ng DA budget for 2020, iba po ito sa RCEF, tama po ba, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, iba po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Magkaiba po sila.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, ano na po ang status ng utilization nitong nakaraan at ngayon po ay saan ito ilalagay ng DA?

REP. CUARESMA. Is it the RCEF, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund or the agricultural credit policy?

REP. BROSAS. ACEF—Agricultural, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Agricultural. Just a moment, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I will just get the data from the staff of the DA. I have here now the copy, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the status of the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, the ACEF: accounts with releases, the amount is P216.95 million; and the accounts in process as of August is P730.96 million.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, interesado po tayo dito sa how the fund works para maavail ng mga magsasaka. So, para sa mga farmers po, paano po ito maaavail ng ating mga farmers, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Ito po ay loan at ang Land Bank po ang nagpo-process, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, doon po sa mga loans. If you would like a copy again, Mme. Speaker, if the Honorable Brosas would like a copy of the distribution, we can provide it to Hon. Arlene Brosas, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Yes. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, honorable Sponsor.

Now, last time po, ilan po ang nakinabang dito sa ACEF na mga magsasaka natin?

REP. CUARESMA. Is it the RCEF or the ACEF?

REP. BROSAS. ACEF.

REP. CUARESMA. ACEF.

REP. BROSAS. ACEF pa rin po. Next po iyong RCEF.

REP. CUARESMA. Parehong CEF kasi. Okay. The coop associations that availed of this program of the DA, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, there are 11 coop associations. Those are the accounts that already had releases, iyong nakapag-release na po, but there are accounts in process at ito ay para sa 44 cooperatives or associations. Then, when we talk of individual farmers, there are 667 releases already for individual farmers, and the number of accounts that are in process are 2,096, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, honorable Sponsor. May we be furnished a copy of the report.

Now, we will go to the much-discussed RCEF po or the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund amounting to P10 billion in annual appropriations. Of this amount, 10 percent is allocated for the expanded credit assistance; 10 percent po para sa rice fund that shall be made available in the form of a credit facility. Ito po iyong pautang at ang sabi ninyo, with minimal interest and minimum collateral requirements for rice farmers and cooperatives, at managed by the LBP o Land Bank of the Philippines at DBP o Development Bank of the Philippines. Sa aktuwal po, this amounts to only P1 billion and unfortunately, sa porma po ng pautang, magkano po ba ang sinabing “minimal interest rates” ng funds na ito from the Expanded Rice Credit Assistance Program at ano iyong sinasabing minimum collateral requirements, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, wala pong collateral ito, and the interest is only 2 percent or even less than 2 percent per annum. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I would also like to repeat that there is no collateral po dito sa RCEF.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, kinaklaro po natin ito nang mabuti kasi alam ninyo naman po, sa porma ng pautang, pagkatapos, hirap na hirap na iyong magsasaka ngayon, sila iyong naging biktima ng Rice Liberalization and Tariffication Law na nangyari pero pautang iyong ating ino-offer. Samantala, mayroon po kayong SURE Aid na sinasabi—hiwalay po ba ito, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, sa

RCEF, iyong Expanded Survival and Recovery Assistance Program for Rice Farmers or SURE Aid na tinatawag?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, actually, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this is in addition to this program, the RCEF of the Department of Agriculture. The SURE Aid Program is, as mentioned earlier, a loan assistance for a farmer tilling one hectare of land and below. It is a loan amount of P15,000 per farmer, with zero interest payable in eight years, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, magkano po itong SURE Aid na ibibigay, the total amount?

REP. CUARESMA. We have P2.5 billion, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. The fund for this SURE Aid is P2.5 billion, but there were already releases in the amount of P1.5 billion starting on the first week of September, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, saan pong budgetary item nanggaling ang fund na ito?

REP. CUARESMA. It is from the ACPC, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. ACPC, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. ACPC, that is the Agricultural Credit Policy Council, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. BROSAS. Ano po ang terms of payment nito?

REP. CUARESMA. Now, with the SURE Aid, it is payable in eight years, that is, with zero interest, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, iyong sa RCEF ay pautang, iyong sa SURE Aid ay pautang din.

So, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, umaaray po iyong mga magsasaka natin bunsod ng malupit na hambalos ng Rice Liberalization and Tariffication Law, sadsad ang presyo ng palay pero napakamahal pa rin ng bigas sa pamilihan.

Kaya sino po ang makikinabang sa patakarang ito? Nagpipyesta po iyong mga rice importers and traders sa limpak-limpak na komersyanteng patubo. Kanina, itinanong ko po, magkano ang landed cost? Magkano naibebenta sa pamilihing-bayan? Ano po ang ibinibigay ng gobyerno na ayuda? Dalawa lang po iyong sinabi ninyo, for now, iyong RCEF ay P1 billion,

iyong SURE Aid ay mayroon pang P2.5 billion, pero ang P1.5 billion ay nai-release na. Puro po ito utang, utang. This is beyond being callous. This is cruelty to our rice farmers.

Habang binabarat po ang ayuda para sa ating mga magsasaka, binibuhusan naman ng bilyong-bilyon pondo ang intelligence work at iba pang programang pansupil sa mamamayan. We should not be surprised that under these dire circumstances, the cries of the Filipino farmers, mothers and consumers will be amplified as the growls of empty stomachs grow louder. Bigas po ang panawagan ng ating mga magsasaka, hindi bala. Direktang ayuda, hindi pautang sa mga magsasaka.

For these reasons, we in the Makabayan bloc, together with those na mga gusto pa pong pumirma, will file a joint resolution, and we are actually seeking a P15 billion supplemental budget to the NFA for the massive buying of palay. We ask for the broadest support for the immediate passage of this measure.

Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Marami pong salamat with the initiative of the Makabayan bloc.

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

REP. CUARESMA. In my level as Representative of the Lone District of Nueva Vizcaya, I will support it, if ever you have that kind of bill that shall be passed, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of the proposed budgets of the Department of Agriculture, the National Irrigation Administration and attached agencies.

I so move.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, allow us to greet the guests of Hon. Jose Enrique "Joet" S. Garcia III from the Second District of Bataan. These are the members of the Kababaihan ng Bataan Lingap sa Kaunalaran at Tagumpay or KABALIKAT, headed by Mrs. Vicky S. Garcia and Mrs. Isabel F. Garcia. Allow me to read the names of these ladies: Corazon Mojica, Marissa Isidro, Divina Salva, Rebecca Delfin, Rizalyn Glova, Evangelina Enriquez, Lyn Foronda, Gina

Estrella, Liza Vasquez, Julie Narag, Elizabeth Angeles, Kathrina Saldaña, Anita Bautista, Linda Apostol, Teresita Alfonso, Edna Calma, Lenie Francisco, Nora Mallari, Lucila Zuniega, Ma. Isabel Dalay, Olivia Ortile, Joan dela Cruz, Gina Baldo, Perry Camacho, Rogina Clemente, Antonio Clemente and Captain Daday Adame.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Hon. Jose Enrique “Joet” S. Garcia, headed by the lady of Rep. Joet Garcia, will please stand up. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)
The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 5:24 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:27 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS VICTIMS’ MEMORIAL COMMISSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now begin the consideration of the proposed budgets of the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Violations Victims’ Memorial Commission.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The consideration of the budgets of the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Violations Victims’ Memorial Commission is now opened.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Before we recognize the Vice Chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights, Hon. Jose Luis Martin C. Gascon, and Exec. Dir. Carmelo Victor A. Crisanto.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The Honorable Gascon and Executive Director Crisanto, welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Cong. Michael John R. Duavit to sponsor the said budget.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Michael John R. Duavit is now recognized.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, will the honorable Sponsor yield for a few questions, Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor?

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. CRISOLOGO. May we recognize, from the Minority, Cong. Arlene D. Brosas.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Cong. Arlene D. Brosas is now recognized.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, maaari po bang magtanong ng isa lang na katanungan?

REP. DUAVIT. It would be my honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, maaari po bang malaman kung magkano ang kabuuang budget na hinihiling ng Commission on Human Rights sa DBM?

REP. DUAVIT. Could the Lady please repeat the question, Your Honor? I did not hear it.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, maaari po bang malaman kung magkano ang kabuuang budget na hinihiling ng Commission on Human Rights sa DBM?

REP. DUAVIT. The total budget that was asked or requested was over P3 billion, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, napakalaki po ng kaltas o hindi inaprubahan ng DBM dahil ang inaprubahan pong budget ng DBM ay magkano lamang?

REP. DUAVIT. The approved budget in the 2020 NEP and the GAB was P780 million, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Mme. Speaker, honorable Sponsor,

malaki po iyong kinaltas at hindi inaprubahan ng DBM, kaya ang gusto po sana namin na ang maging priority ng gobyernong ito ay ang pangangalaga sa karapatang pantao at pagbibigay ng serbisyo para sa pagtatanggol sa karapatan. Kaya, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, at the proper time or in the period of amendments, this Representation would like to propose an amendment to augment the budget of the Commission on Human Rights, particularly on the additional budget for financial assistance to benefit human rights victims and their families, in the amount of P15 million; additional budget for Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses in the amount of P15 million; additional travel expenses to intensify investigation, documentation and monitoring of cases, legal and clinic caravan, jail visitation and promotion services in the amount of P35 million; and the effective implementation of the Mental Health Law in the amount of P500,000, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. DUAVIT. Mme. Speaker, after the Committee's review, it appears that there may have been a few oversights. Two years ago, the administration granted the request of the CHR for a new staffing pattern, increasing the number. Last year, the administration also almost doubled the number of vehicles for use, but the MOOE, sadly, might have been overlooked. Given also the other issues raised by the Lady with regard to the programs that require compliance, the Committee is in agreement with the said manifestations, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Jane I. Elago from KABATAAN Party-List.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of KABATAAN Party-List is now recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Good afternoon to the CHR family, to Chairperson Chito Gascon and all the Commissioners and all our human rights defenders.

First, Mme. Speaker, I would like to ask, how many cases of human rights violations have been filed before the CHR?

REP. DUAVIT. Over 6,000 in the last year, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, ilan na po sa mga kasong ito ang naresolba na natin, at ang mga kaso na sa kasalukuyan ay mayroon po tayong imbestigasyon?

REP. DUAVIT. We have 964 resolved cases, Your Honor. Out of the 6,500 new complaints, Mme. Speaker, 964 have been resolved. We are estimating that by the end of the year, at least 30 percent, at the very least, 30 percent and, optimistically, half will be resolved, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, tayo po ay manghihingi ng detalyadong ulat mula sa Commission on Human Rights hinggil sa mga kaso na ito at nais ko ring maipabatid sa aking mga kapwa Mambabatas na ang Commission on Human Rights po, sa dami ng kanilang mga hinahawakang kaso, ay makararanas po ng napakaliit lamang na nakalaang pondo para sa susunod na Fiscal Year. Sa kanila pong hiningi na P124 million para sa taong 2020, nasa P76 million lamang ang inirekomenda ng DBM para sa paglutas at mabilis na pagtugon sa mga kasong ito ng paglabag sa karapatang pantao, kaya nananawagan din tayo na pag-aralan ang lahat ng options upang higit pang mataasan ang pondo ng Commission on Human Rights.

Kung ikukumpara ang kanilang proposed budget para sa 2020 na nasa P3.1 billion, nasa 26 percent lamang o nasa P819 million lamang ang inirekomenda ng DBM para sa kanila, higit na mababa lalo na po sa panahon na ito, Mme. Speaker, na tayo po ay kumakaharap sa tila talagang nakababahalang klima ng kawalan ng katarungan.

Sa pinakahuling tala ng mga advocate para sa agrarian reform, nasa 228 na po ang napapaslang na mga agrarian reform advocates at peasants. Nandiyan din po ang 74 na mga bata na namatay at napaslang sa kurso po ng legitimate drug operations. Nandiyan din ang pinakahuling tala ng Global Witness Report na nasa 78 environment defenders na ang napapaslang sa pagtatanggol ng ating kalikasan.

Tayo po ay nananawagan, hindi lang ng mas mataas na pondo, kundi ng suporta ng Kapulungang ito, sa pamamagitan ng pagpapalakas ng ating Congressional oversight dahil po maraming mga panukalang resolusyon ang hindi lang naka-file sa loob po ng Commission on Human Rights kundi maging sa House Committee on Human Rights ng Eighteenth Congress.

Mme. Speaker, huling katanungan na lamang po para sa ating Komisyon. Sa dami rin po ng mga kasong ipinapadala po sa inyo na nagmula naman o may kinalaman sa deklarasyon ng martial law sa Mindanao, nais pong malaman ng Representasyong ito kung ano ang kasalukuyang gampanin ng Commission

on Human Rights sa pagtitiyak na maiiwasan po natin ang mga abuso o kung mayroon mang abuso, ito po ay mabibigyan natin ng hustisya ang mga nagiging biktima ng mga paglabag sa karapatang pantao?

REP. DUAVIT. There are 155 cases being investigated by an inter-agency task force, Mme. Speaker, with regard to that particular topic.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang CHR po ay parte ng inter-agency task force. How often does this task force meet, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. DUAVIT. At the very least, once a month, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Once a month. Maaari ba na maging tulay din ang Commission on Human Rights pagdating sa paggabay sa Kongresong ito hinggil sa mga susunod pang deliberasyon kung dapat pa nga bang ipagpatuloy ang deklarasyon ng martial law sa Mindanao o kinakailangan na itong ma-lift sa mga susunod na pagkakataon na ito ay ihaharap muli sa Kapulungang ito?

Iyon lamang, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Muli, ang Representasyon po ng KABATAAN Party-List ay nagpapasalamat sa Komisyon sa kanilang mabilis at maasahang pagresponde sa mga nararanasang theat, harassment at intimidation ng mga kabataan at estudyante na nagtatanggol sa karapatang pantao, gayundin po, ang kanilang napakabilis na pagresponde pagdating sa mga welga o sa mga strikes po na inilulunsad ng mga manggagawa. Kung mayroong hindi nasusunod sa mga dapat na mga procedure, nandiyan po ang CHR para magpaliwanag, hindi lamang sa hanay ng mga manggagawa kundi sa hanay na rin po ng mga kapulisan na siya pong nagme-maintain ng peace and order sa naturang mga lugar.

Bilang panghuli, ang pagbubukas ng pintuan ng Commission on Human Rights para sa mga biktima ng human trafficking, ito rin po ay nagiging sangktuwaryo para sa human rights defenders na naghahanap ng lugar kung saan mas mapapalakas ang kanilang boses para sa hustisya at para sa katotohanan.

Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. I would like to believe and actually, I do believe that every single Member of this House is actually a human rights advocate, and we will continue to work along with the CHR to realize all of our dreams.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we now recognize Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of BAYAN MUNA Party-List.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Honorable Zarate of BAYAN MUNA Party-List is now recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, yamang wala nang nais magtanong sa parte ng Minorya, iminumungkahi po namin na tapusin na ang panahon ng interpelasyon at pagdedebate tungkol sa panukalang budget ng Komisyon ng Karapatang Pantao.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority in the motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budgets of the Commission on Human Rights and other attached agencies, Mme. Speaker.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). There is a joint motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budgets of the Commission on Human Rights and Human Rights Violations Victims' Memorial Commission.

Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of Commission on Human Rights is hereby terminated.

Congratulations!

REP. DUAVIT. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, before we move to the consideration of the budget of the next agency, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of our Speaker, Hon. Alan Peter "Compañero" S. Cayetano. They are the officials of the local government of Oras, Eastern Samar, headed by Municipal Mayor Viviane P. Alvarez, Vice Mayor Carlo A. Libanan, and Sangguniang Bayan members: Adolfo Mugas, Edwin Moslares, Armando Balanay, Pacita Morales, Reynaldo Lim, Irvin Pormida, Benito Colico, Edgar Maestre and Aloysius Maiso.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano please stand up to be recognized. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. I move that we suspend the session, Mme. Speaker.

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

It was 5:42 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:44 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Continuation

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mme. Speaker, before we go back to considering the budget of the Department of Agriculture, I would like to acknowledge the presence of our beloved former Speaker Feliciano Belmonte Jr. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). We recognize the presence of former Speaker Sonny Belmonte. *(Applause)*

Welcome, Mr. Speaker.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of the proposed budgets of the Department of Agriculture and its duly attached agencies and corporations, as well as the National Irrigation Administration.

I so move.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, next to interpellate the Sponsor is the honorable Gentleman from BUHAY Party-List, Rep. Jose L. Atienza Jr. I move that he be recognized.

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

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.
Thank you, Mr. Majority Leader.

With the kind indulgence of the Lady, we would like to ask some questions from the Department of Agriculture, today, as they are the Department on the spot, as far as our country is concerned.

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

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker and Lady, first, we welcome the intro of an effective executive and manager in the person of Secretary William Dar whom we expect to do a lot better than the past.

I only have one very big concern, and this is regarding the fisheries sector. Alam nating lahat na ang ating bansa ay mayaman sa kalikasan, and it is a fact, at one point in time, that our country was teeming with healthy aquaculture and aqua species. Mayaman ang ating bansa sa lamang dagat, but in the past and up to now, our fishermen remain to be at the lowest rank in our economic sector. Mahirap na mahirap po ang pangangisda ngayon.

Once upon a time, we tried to personally help them by liberating many of our water bodies which our fisherfolk have been deprived of. I am sorry to say and I will say it again that it was the Department of Agriculture that prevented us from succeeding. I am talking about the period of 2008, 2009 and up to 2010.

Today, we find our fisherfolk not improving their economic conditions. In fact, they are now suffering more than before. So, I would like to ask the new Secretary, does he accept the challenge that the BFAR should be given the authority to develop, to improve, to manage and to do everything within its power so that our fishermen would have a better deal with the new government?

How does he look at the problems of the fisherfolk today? Is it the same as the attitude that we got in 2008, 2009 and 2010? We faced a blank wall then because the Department of Agriculture was the biggest hindrance toward liberating the water bodies deprived of our fisherfolk. How does he see the condition? Iyon po ang aking itinatanong. Mali po ba iyong aking pananaw o nakikitaan niya ito ng katuwiran?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, tama po iyong pananaw ninyo na talaga pong dito sa programa ng Department of Agriculture being implemented by the BFAR is talaga pong bumaba. That is why in the level of our new Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, they are strengthening the three major programs that support the municipal fishermen—we have the aquaculture and the commercial fishing, and I would like also to inform you, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, that again, the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture is P333 billion,

but the only amount given to them by the DBM, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, is P71 billion, and in this P333 billion, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, P19 billion was proposed as an allocation for the Fisheries Division, but unfortunately, the DBM just provided P5.9 billion, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor. At any rate, though it has like a very slim amount allocated, still, through the leadership of our new Secretary, they are implementing what I have stated earlier, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, we would not argue on pesos and centavos because we know that the Department of Agriculture is underbudgeted. We know that the BFAR is not given enough. We are talking about attitude, personal commitment, and the best effort to help the fisherfolk today. The Filipinos have two staples, one is rice, and the Department of Agriculture takes care of that, and the other is fish. Kailangan pong lumusog ulit ang ating industriya ng palaisdaang pampubliko—I am not even talking about investment, so I do not agree with the figures that are presented to us on a regular basis that the fisheries and the fishing industry are indeed improving, when they cannot answer why a fisherman who does not belong to a corporation, becomes poor and has become poorer. We cannot accept what they claim is a successful fisheries program because it is not working in favor of the ordinary fisherfolk.

REP. CUARESMA. We agree, Mme. Speaker, and Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. Ako ay nagpapasalamat dahil sa mga pagsang-ayon ninyo, kaya't ngayon ay babanggitin ko na lang iyong mga problemang dapat tingnan ni Secretary Dar bilang isang bagong dating na punong-puno ng pag-asa. Baka siya ang makapagbigay ng aksyong kailangan.

REP. CUARESMA. Opo.

REP. ATIENZA. The fisherman today is even in a deeper and darker spot in our history. They cannot fish anymore in the open seas because one, medyo nauubos na ang isda riyang; and two, kalaban pa natin ang Tsina riyang, at naagrabyado sila sapagkat ang mga Tsino ay suportado ng kanilang gobyerno at mayroon silang mga sandatahang nakaalalay.

Ang ating mga mangingisda ay sumusugal pa rin sa kanilang buhay, subalit iyong mga katubigan na nasa loob ng ating kapuluan—the inland bodies of water—wala po naman ang China diyan, wala po namang kumpetensya diyan, at wala po namang mang-aagaw diyan. Iyan ay kapabayaang lang ng gobyerno kaya hindi lumalago ang isda diyan sa mga lugar na iyan. I need not stress that Laguna de Bay, the third

largest inland body of water lake in Southeast Asia, once upon a time, provided healthy fish, good tasting and safe to eat fish, but today, it is highly polluted and a highly degraded body of water. It is no longer providing us with good tasting fish, simply because the government has allowed the responsibility over this body of water to be arrogated upon by the private sector. Iyong mayayamang mangingisda ang kumikita riyang.

Why and how I cannot understand. I would expect the new Secretary to raise hell if necessary so that this body of water be given back to the ordinary fishermen. Tingnan po ninyo, nagbabago po ba ang mga baklad diyan? Kapag kayo ay pauwi sa inyong mga probinsya, silipin ninyo ang Laguna de Bay at kung hindi kayo maluha. Wala na pong pangangisdaang diyan sapagka't iyan ay ari-arian na ng mga korporasyong pinababayaan ng gobyerno. Sila ang nakikinabang sa ating katubigan, sila ang nakikinabang sa yaman ng ating dagat at wala na pong pupuntahan ang ating mangingisda. Hindi sila makalabas. Hindi sila makapangisda sa loob, saan mabubuhay ang ating mangingisda?

Marami po akong nakakausap sa kanila. Nawawalan na po sila ng tiwala at pag-asa. Ang nasasabi ko na lang, “Darating din at darating na iyong yaman natin na pakikinabangan ninyo.” Hindi po naman nawawala iyong Laguna de Bay diyan, temporary po iyan. The corruption that goes on in managing the Laguna de Bay must not continue and it should not continue. That body of water belongs to the fishermen of Southern Luzon, Rizal and Metro Manila up to Central Luzon, but today, ang nakikinabang diyan, Lady defending the budget, is not the fisherfolk. Ang tubig po diyan ay malapot na at maraming bahagi diyan ay mababaw na, puno ng burak, putik, at lason na nanggagaling sa mga baklad.

Ang sabi ng mga mangingisda sa Laguna na nakakausap ko ay sila ay natatakot lumapit man lang sa mga istrukturang iyan. May mga security guards diyan. Marami silang kilalang nabaril na dahil nagsikap silang mangisda sa paligid-ligid. Why are we allowing this? I am taking advantage of the presence of the new Secretary and I ask the question, why are we allowing the water body of Laguna de Bay and for that matter all water bodies including Taal Lake, na iyan ay agawin at pakinabangan lang ng mga mayayaman? Marami sa kanila ay banyaga pa. Mayroon lamang Filipino dummies na nagpapagamit.

Ang ating bansa ay pinagpala, alam natin iyan. We are a blessed nation with so much natural resources, and fisheries is one such natural wealth. So, we have to protect what we have so that the Filipinos may gain from what God has given us. Pakitanong nga ninyo kung nakita na ng ating bagong Sekretaryo ang problemang lumalala sa ating bansa? Pakitanong po ninyo kung...

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. ... nakita na niya ang lumalalang

problema sa ating mga katubigan at problema ng mahihirap na mangingisda?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, we share the same sentiments. Now, according to our Secretary, they will look into the fish industry, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. May we or can we expect the new management of the Department of Agriculture to attend to the problem of our fisherfolk.

I speak on behalf of our impoverished fishermen. Hindi po sila makapangisda sa labas, hindi sila makapangisda sa loob. Marami sa kanila ay hindi na lang nangingisda kundi umaasa na lang kung ano ang kikitain nila sa bawat buwan. But in reality, if we put our acts together, I have been very vocal about this, from 2008, and I came to Congress in 2013, I heard the President in 2016, in his State of the Nation Address, nagulat po ako. Ang sabi niya, "I will liberate all the water bodies of the country because the fisherfolk are dear to me." Palakpak ako nang palakpak. Namaga iyong kamay ko sa kapalalpak dahil tama po iyon. He pointed to the Laguna Lake, iyan ay hindi mananatili sa kamay ng mga mayayaman. Iyan ay aking palalayain and I commit to you. That was July of 2016. By December, kapag nandiyan pa iyang mga iyan, wala na, burado na ang Laguna Lake Development Authority. December came, 2017 came and passed 2018. We are now in 2019. I am also reminding the President on this score. Where is your promise, Mr. President?

The job lies on the hands of the Executive, from the President down to the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Fisheries, that they should put everything together. Remove all of these fish pens. Liberate the water into good health once again, and they should do the same to the other water bodies.

Nandiyan po ang Pampanga River. Wala na pong talangka riyan. Ang talangka riyan ay pumasok na yata sa ulo ng mga ibang taong gobyerno. Wala na po riyang matamis na isda. Ang Taal Lake, paubos na po iyong tawilis, an endemic specie of fish that is enjoyed by every Filipino, malapit na rin pong mawala. Pakisilip naman ninyo, punung-puno na rin ng baklad itong kalahating portion ng Taal Lake. Anong hinihintay ninyo, mapuno ng baklad iyan, pakinabangan iyan ng mga may puhunan samantalang iyong mga mangingisda ay wala na pong makukuha? Nawala na rin po iyong maliputo. Nawala na rin iyong isda sa Cagayan na noong araw ay pinapakyaw ni Presidente Marcos. Siya lang ang kumakain noon.

Marami tayong yamang dagat na talagang papalakpakan natin ang ating mabuting Sekretaryo kung aasikasuhin niya. I will definitely watch his performance, whether he was listening tonight, whether

he accepts the challenge. I am challenging him. Do your job, Mr. Secretary. Do the President a favor of succeeding in that vision. Start with Laguna de Bay because, to me, that is the simplest example of water arrogation, monopolization—monopolizing against the interest of the common fisherman.

Puwede po ba nating makuha ang kanyang pagsang-ayon o pagtanggap? Para po naman may pagbabasehan tayo pagdating ng budget dito sa ating Kongreso muli sa susunod na taon, kung siya pa ang Sekretaryo, uungkatin ko muli itong usapin na ito at tatawagin ko siyang sinungaling. Hindi ka gumawa ng trabaho mo. Hiniya mo ang Pangulo. The President needs better men to help him accomplish his goals for a better Philippines.

Kung tayo po ay magtatalo lang sa salapi, hindi ko po aaksayahin ang panahon ko, pero paratingin sa kanila ang aking mensahe ngayon, iyan ay akin po talagang kalooban na nais kong ibahagi sa kanila. You must perform the task of clearing, cleaning, managing, improving, and developing our existing water bodies. Hindi na kayo mag-iimbento pa ng ibang paraan. May lamang-dagat iyan. Mayroong lamang-isda iyan. Alisin lamang natin ang korapsyon sa ating harapan.

This malpractice cannot thrive without corruption in the picture. People are making money, probably billions of pesos, bigger than your budget, Mr. Secretary, at the expense of everybody. We will expect then his action on this matter, and we will be clapping for him all the way, and we will be supporting him in every step of the way because we know that the job, the task he is having—we are all here to serve public interest and not our own good. He would be the best Secretary of Agriculture ever if he can clear the water bodies of all the illegalities. Mind you, it is not only in Luzon, it is not only in Central Luzon, it is also happening in the Visayas and Mindanao where the water bodies are arrogated by the rich and the powerful, and the poor fisherman remains poorer every year.

Let us be one in our purpose, wala po akong interes diyan kung hindi gawin ang tama at ipagtanggol ang karapatan nating mga Pilipino. Maaasahan po ba natin iyan, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. In fact, the Secretary is listening to the statements of the honorable BUHAY Party-List Cong. Jose Atienza Jr. Ang sabi niya, "100-percent support ako diyan sa sinasabi ni Honorable Atienza."

REP. ATIENZA. Kagaya po ng aking nasabi kanina, siya ay bagong dating, kaya bigyan natin siya ng pagkakataon gumawa ng higit sa mga nakaraan, subalit kapag hindi niya nagawa ang ating napag-usapan ngayon, sisingilin ko po siya at lalagyan ko pa ng interes, sapagkat umasa kami sa inyo at kayo naman ang hindi tumupad.

Maraming, maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. I reiterate my earlier position. This is not a question of pesos and centavos. This is a question of commitment, whether the new Secretary will perform his task. God will guide him all the way and continue blessing all of us Filipinos, but we must do our share and we must perform our tasks.

Thank you and good night.

REP. CUARESMA. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat sa BUHAY Party-List Representative, Hon. Jose Atienza Jr.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA, Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The Hon. Carlos Zarate of BAYAN MUNA is now recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Magandang gabi po sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor at sa pamilya ng Department of Agriculture. Yayamang iyong iba ko pong katanungan ay nabigyan na rin ng kalinawan kanina ng ilang nating mga kasamahan, mayroon na lang akong ilang punto na gusto kong malinawan. Puwede po bang magtanong sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor ng ilang clarificatory questions.

REP. CUARESMA. Sige po.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. Una, tama po ang naturan ng ating mga kasamahan sa bawat administrasyon, sa bawat paglalahad ng budget dito sa Kapulungang ito. Ang palagi pong sinasabi natin, isa diyang ay dapat ang Kagawaran ng Agrikultura o ang sektor ng agrikultura ang dapat bigyan natin ng importansya. Sa tingin po namin, ito dapat ang magiging pundasyon ng ating ekonomiya, pero napakahabang panahon na po. Kahit na sa usapin ng food security, ito palagi ang ipinapangako ng mga natatalagang Sekretaryo ng Department of Agriculture, to attain food security at the end of the year o kung anong panahon man, pero ang nangyayari po ngayon at kung titingnan natin ang kasalukuyang kalagayan, lalong-lalo na ang sitwasyon ng ating mga magsasaka sa palay, kalunus-lunos ang kanilang kalagayan at mukhang ang ipinapangakong food security ay wala na.

Ang una ko pong katanungan, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, sa taong 2020, naglaan tayo ng pondo na kung tawagin sa ating budget ay Remedies Fund

na P10 million. For 2019, magkano ba ang pondong ito? Kabahagi po ito sa ating Special Provisions. Ito ay pondong gagamitin so that we can design safeguard measures for the protection of our domestic industries and our producers from increased imports, which may cause or threaten to cause serious injuries to our industry.

Ang pondo raw na ito ay gagamitin para labanan ang mga potensyal na sisira sa ating local industry for too much importation. Iyon po ang aking katanungan. For 2019, magkano po ang pondong ito?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, for 2020, the amount is P10 million.

REP. ZARATE. Sa kasalukuyang taon ay P10 million, sa susunod na taon ay P10 million din po ang pondo? Tama po ba, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Sa kasalukuyang taon, puwede po ba tayong maglahad kung ano ang ginagawa natin para gamitin ang pondong ito at malabanan ang pananagasa o pagkasira ng ating lokal na industriya dahil sa importasyon ng agricultural products na ginagawa ng ating bansa sa kasalukuyan?

REP. CUARESMA. Kung sa Departamento po, mas gusto nilang madagdagan, pero kagaya nga po ng sinasabi ko, kung may proposal, lagi namang may cut iyong budget na ibibigay. But the Secretary is very much willing to provide an additional budget for this particular program, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. My question really is, what kind of activities ang ginagawa natin gamit ang pondong P10 million para malabanan natin—what example of activities ang ginawa ng Kagawaran para malabanan natin ang masamang epekto ng importasyon ng mga produktong agrikultural na papasok dito sa ating bayan?

REP. CUARESMA. The office in charge of the implementation of this particular fund, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, is utilizing it to monitor, analyze and study all trade-related matters pertaining to agriculture, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

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

Dahil nga po naglagay tayo ng P10 million na pondo this year and P10 million ulit sa sunod na taon, ito po ay isang admission on our part na talagang mayroong masamang idinudulot ang importasyon ng mga produktong agrikultural sa ating bayan. Tama po ba ang aking pagkakasabi nito, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker? We have this kind of fund for the purpose of protecting our domestic industry and our producers from increased imports that may cause or threaten to cause serious injury to our industry. This is, in fact, an admission that importation or liberalization of import causes injury to our local agricultural industry. Is that correct, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Actually, one of the functions of the agency or the division involved in this fund is to build up data para mayroon tayong basehan in the future whether there are negative or positive consequences that shall arise, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

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

At any rate, the provisions of the Special Provision explicitly state that this is a fund intended to protect us from the harmful effects of the importation of agricultural products.

Last question na lang po patungkol dito, do you think this P10 million is enough so that our local industry will be protected from such effect, the injurious effect of the importation of agricultural products into our country, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, kasya naman daw po. Kailangang pagkasyahin. Kung mayroon pang additional, so much the better, and the Department will welcome whatever increase that the national government will provide.

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

Dahil po sa katotohanan ngayon, hindi na actually ang industriya ng bigas o ng palay ang threatened ng too much liberalization sa pag-import ng mga produkto. Sa pagkakaalam po ng Kinatawang ito, kahit ang industriya ng pagbababoy, ang industriya ng poultry at ang industriya ng iba pang mga agrikultural na produkto natin ay umiiyak na po dahil hindi nila masasabayan ang pagpasok ng mga imported na produkto na dahan-dahang pinapatay ang ating lokal na industriya.

Iyan po ang isang dapat tingnan ng ating Kagawaran bilang nasa Ehekutibo at maging ng Kapulungang ito. Tama na po ang pag-liberalize natin. Iyong mga dikta na ang ating sektor ng agrikultura, ang merkado ng agrikultura ay buksan nang makapasok ang produkto ng ibang mga bansa, habang sa katotohanan ay walang proteksyon ang ating mga lokal na industriya.

Pupunta po ako sa last item of interpellation. Puwede po bang maitanong natin sa ating Sponsor, magkano ba ang kabuuang ni-request natin na pondo sa DBM para sa taong 2020?

REP. CUARESMA. The amount requested, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, is more than P333 billion.

REP. ZARATE. That is P333 billion.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Magkano po ang na-approve?

REP. CUARESMA. Again, the amount given to the Department of Agriculture is just more than P71 billion, not even one-third of the proposed budget.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mme. Sponsor. Humingi po kayo ng P333 billion at ang na-approve ay P71 billion?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Halos 21 percent lang ng kabuuang hiningi ninyo ang na-approve ng DBM.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po.

REP. ZARATE. Puwede po bang mailahad sa Kapulungang ito ang kadahilanan bakit 21 percent lang ang na-approve ng DBM samantalang sa inyong pagtingin, sa inyong pag-aaral, ang kailangan dapat para mabigyan natin ng tamang atensyon ang sektor ng agrikultura at ang kasamang iba pang mga sektor nito—bakit P71 billion lang ang ibinigay mula sa hininging P333 billion, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, wala po kaming alam na kadahilanan kung bakit iyon lang ang ibinigay, the amount of P71 billion, sa proposed budget for 2020 ng Department of Agriculture, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Itinatanong ko po iyan dahil kung sinasabi natin na sa susunod na taon ay prayoridad ang sektor ng agrikultura ay hindi ho natin nakikita iyan kung budget ang ating titingnan. Sa katunayan po, sinubukan kong pagsama-samahin ang pondo ng DA proper, iyong mga attached agencies, kasama na iyong NIA, kasama na iyong RCEF dahil para rin sa bigas iyon, so ang para hong lumalabas, ang kabuuang pondo na iyan ay nasa P106.508 billion lahat-lahat. Kung ikukumpara mo ito sa ating gross value of our agricultural production, ang

kabuuang production natin sa bansa noong 2018 ay nasa P1.822 trillion, so para pong ang ating porsiyento mula sa ating lahat na budget ay nasa 5.8 percent lang. Can you imagine po iyon? Iyon lang po ang kanyang kabuuang ...

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po kayo, Mme. Speaker. Tama po si Hon. Carlos Zarate.

REP. ZARATE. Tama po.

REP. CUARESMA. But we hope that by 2021, as promised by the President and with the support—dahil narinig naman ho natin iyong mga manifestation po ng mga kagalang-galang na Kongresista, iyon hong mga unang nagsalita ay talagang makakamit po natin na malalakihan na po iyong ating budget for 2021, Mme. Speaker, and Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you po. Lalo na kung iyong budget na iyan ay ikukumpara natin sa kabuuang budget sa susunod na taon na P4.1 trillion, lumalabas na napakaliit talaga, kahit sabi ko nga, pagsamahin na lahat iyong DA proper, NIA, RCEF, sinubukan ko rin uling i-compute, nasa 2.5 percent lang ng kabuuang budget iyan.

So, matanong ko, Mme. Speaker, kung ganito ang nakikita nating tantos ng paglalaan natin ng pondo sa Kagawaran ng Agrikultura, masasabi ba natin na prayoridad ng administrasyong ito ang agrikultura, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Well, ang hirap din pong magsalita, but with the new innovations now that are being introduced by our new Secretary, Mme. Speaker, and Your Honor, we hope that we will be able to cater to if not all, majority of the needs of everyone, particularly, the farmers, Mme. Speaker, and Your Honor.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Gaya po ng nabanggit ko, nasasalamon sa inilalaan nating pondo ang tunay na prayoridad ng isang administrasyon. Kung talagang ang prayoridad ng kasalukuyang administrasyon ay palakasin ang ating sektor ng agrikultura, dapat nakikita po natin iyan sa inilalaan nating pondo. Kaya po talagang kung hindi man nakalulungkot, nakapanggagalit na rin na sa halip na ang budget ng mga pangunahing ahensiya ay ating popondohan nang malaki ay makikita ho natin dito sa kasalukuyang budget, nasasalamon din nito, mas malaki pa nga ang pondo doon sa budget na panggiyera at budget ng Intelligence, Confidential Funds na halos 200 percent ang kanyang itinaas. Kaya po iyong sinabi ninyo na umaasa tayo na sa 2021 o sa 2022 ay, sa nakikita ho nating trend ngayon, mukhang wala ho tayong maaasahan sa naiiwang—kung ganoon ho ang trend

palagi, iyon hong inaasahan natin ay dapat nangyari na noong nakaraang tatlong taon, at alam naman po natin na itong budget for 2020 ay mahalaga dahil ito na iyong taon na nakikita na natin ang napakasamang epekto lalong-lalo na itong regime of import liberalization in all sectors of agriculture and sub-sectors niya.

So, sana po, again, dapat hong pag-aralan ito ng Kagawaran at maging ng Kongresong ito dahil sa atin hong mga ipinapasang batas dito ay mas pinapaboran natin ang mga batas na nagli-liberalize sa ating ekonomiya. Pagkatapos, nasa huli uli ang pagsisisi, gaya po noong nadikdik na natin na issue rito ng bigas. Noong nakaraang taon, ang sabi, kapag ipinasá ang Rice Import Liberalization Law ay maisasalba nito ang sektor ng mga magsasaka sa palay, pero ang nangyari ho ngayon, dahan-dahang pinapatay ang sektor ng palay at sinusugan ko ang sinabi ng aming kasamahan sa Minorya na si Congressman Cabatbat na ang...

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, and Your Honor, I share with your sentiment and alam ko na itong Kapulungang ito ay malaki po ang maitutulong pagdating po sa mga gastusin na dapat ipatupad ng Departamento ng Agrikultura.

REP. ZARATE. At any rate, maraming salamat, Mme. Sponsor. Maraming salamat sa ating Speaker at sa pamilya ng DA.

Magandang gabi po sa ating lahat.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes. You are welcome, Gentleman.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Gentleman from BAYAN MUNA, Rep. Ferdinand R. Gaité, for his interpellation of the Sponsor.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Ferdinand Gaité of BAYAN MUNA is now recognized.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker, at sa ating kapita-pitagang Sponsor. Maaari po bang mag-clarify ng ilang katanungan hinggil sa budget ng ating Department of Agriculture, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. With pleasure, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. GAITE. Marami na po kanina sa ating mga kasamahan, ang ating mga colleagues sa House of

Representatives ang nagtanong hinggil sa—mukhang ang pinakamainit na issue talaga ay iyong Rice Import Liberalization Law. Pasensya na po, iyon pa rin ang itatanong ko. Lalo na, although not in the other areas, but as government workers to which I belong to, iyong advocacy ko po, ito po iyong isang dahilan kung bakit iyong unyon sa NFA ay tumindig bilang pagtutol dito, sapagkat nakita na nga iyong mga consequences ng decision na tanggalan ng maraming kapangyarihan ang Department, ang National Food Authority, lalo na sa usapin ng regulatory functions at iba pa.

Alam po ba ng Mme. Sponsor na bunga doon sa gagawing reorganization ng NFA, alam na po ba, ano ang impact sa ating mga kawani sa loob ng National Food Authority, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, nagkaroon po ng reorganization base po sa bago nilang mandato. Sila po ay, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, pinag-submit ng proposal at iyon hong proposal na iyon ay still nandoon pa lang ho, under study po, pinapag-aralan po ng GCG itong organizational structure na nagaganap ngayon sa NFA, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po. Kaya po talaga isang concern po natin ito dahil kahit noon pa man ay hindi po isang beses na ang NFA ay nalagay sa threat. Noong simula, mayroong tinatawag silang decoupling where the regulatory functions will be separated from its marketing functions. Mayroon silang mga functional delineation na ang tawag po ay paghahati ng various functions ng NFA, pero to date, ito pong naganap na rice import liberalization, ang talagang threatened ay ang security of tenure ng mga worker. Dahil doon sa nabanggit na reorganization plan, bagama't ito ay still under study at dadaan sa Governance Commission for GOCCs, to which the National Food Authority belongs, also dalawa ang amo ng NFA eh—amo niya ang DA, amo rin niya ang GCG, lalo na sa usaping pampinansyal at iba pa, nguni't batay sa nakuha naming information, sa kagyat, out of the more or less 4,000 employees, 800 empleyado will be directly affected because of the removal of the regulatory functions of the NFA.

Second, due to the change in the direction of the NFA, there are now proposals for the collapse of the various provincial offices. Sa nakuha naming information, kung ang isang rehiyon dati ay may apat o limang probinsya, gagawin na lamang isa o di kaya ay dalawang provincial offices ng NFA—at ito ay napakalaking impact sa mga manggagawa, meaning, hindi lang pala 800 ang posibleng matanggal. Out of 4,000 employees, because of the merging of various provincial offices, drastic iyong nakikita nilang effect at posibleng mas mataas pa iyong sinasabing bilang ng mga empleyadong matatanggal.

Ano ho ba ang tingin ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor dito sa effect ng naturang plano ng reorganization that will have a direct impact on the employees of NFA? Marami riyan sa mga empleyado ng NFA—noong panahon, ang tawag pa sa NFA ay NGA o National Grains Authority—ay naririyon na, panahon pa ho ni D.A. Tiangco, if I am not mistaken. So, marami sa kanila ay diyan na nagsimula, diyan din tumanda, diyan na rin nagkaasawa, pero ngayon, because of the implementation of the Rice Liberalization Law, threatened ang kanilang kasiguruhan sa trabaho.

Ano po ang tingin ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor sa impact nitong batas na ito doon sa ating mga manggagawang empleyado sa naturang ahensya, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, iyon hong statement ninyo or ito hong mga nangyayari ngayon sa NFA ay wala pa pong katiyakan dahil ito ay still ongoing pa ho ang review. Sa katunayan nga po, iyon hong mga sinasabi ninyong mga empleyado ay marami na rin ho doon ang retirable at saka iyon hong mga iba naman, ang mga pinapag-aralan po, kagaya nga ng sinabi ko, are still ongoing pa iyong review. Iyong iba ho ay puwedeng ma-absorb ng iba't ibang division ng DA at ng ibang ahensya po ng gobyerno, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po sa kasagutan ng ating distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Sa totoo lang po, binabasa ko po iyong Implementing Rules and Regulations na lumabas noong, immediately after the implementation of the law on February 14, 2019, doon sa RA 11203, doon makikita iyong impact ng implementation ng batas sa mga empleyado. Nag-offer ng Compensation Package for employees who shall be considered redundant or iyong sinasabing bunga noong pagbabago ng mandato ng NFA ay posibleng matanggal. Doon sa nabanggit na Compensation Package under rule of affected offices and personnel of the NFA, it is subject to the approval of the President. So, wala hong sisinuhin dito, puwedeng regular, puwedeng casual, puwedeng contractual personnel.

Kaya ito po iyong isang dahilan kung bakit very concrete na kung ito ay may tinitingnan na ngang masamang epekto sa ating mga magsasaka bunga na nga ng naganap na pagbagsak ng presyo ng palay sa farmgate prices, but at the same time the promise of lowering rice prices in the markets have not materialized, ito rin po iyong isang very clear na negative impact sa ating mga kawani at manggagawa.

Kaya po ito iyong isa sanang concern na paano matitiyak na those who still want to remain in service will still have the fulfillment of retiring at the proper time that they wish to retire, kung umabot sila ng 60, iyong voluntary, o iyong 65, iyong mandatory. Pero

totoo po, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, mayroon po tayong—marami pa rin po tayong kasamahan diyan na too young to retire pero too old to be rehired. Kasi nga po iyong age nila ay definitely nasa bandang 50s na, hindi na sila qualified for certain positions kahit sa labas noong ahensya. Kaya po iyan iyong isang inaalala ng Kinatawang ito dahil sa napaka-significant na bilang ng mga empleyado na maapektuhan.

Kaya po ito sana iyong ma-address lalo na sa harap nitong itinutulak nga natin na mabigyan ng karagdagang suporta ang pagbibili ng palay ng NFA. Mayroon pong itinutulak tayong resolusyon na makatutulong sa ating mga magsasaka. Kaya po ito iyong isa sa mga napakahalaga ring concern para po maibsan o di kaya matanggal iyong possibility ng mass layoff ng mga empleyado ng NFA.

Hindi ko na po masyadong pahahabain, pero isa na lang katanungan. Ito rin iyong isa pang masasabi nating unintended consequence, isang negatibong epekto ngayon na hinihilingan po rin natin ng paliwanag sa Department of Agriculture. This may not or probably may have an impact, a causal reason na bakit ngayon, nabanggit kanina ni Cong. Caloy Zarate, na kahit iyong byproducts of palay, iyong darak, iyong binlid, at ultimo iyong ipa, apparently, ang darak daw ngayon, according to some of the farmers that we were able to talk to, mas mahal na ngayon ang darak kaysa sa palay.

Puwede po bang maipaliwanag ano ho ba ang dahilan kung bakit ganyan po iyong naging kalagayan na iyong isang produkto, byproduct lamang iyong isa, pero mas mahal iyong original na product, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, may I answer the first query of the Honorable Gaité with regard to those that should be affected with the rationalization or dahil nabawasan po ng function ang NFA, so definitely, there are like about 800 employees that shall be affected. Iyong atin hong Departamento ng Agrikultura ay ginagawa naman po lahat.

Of course, kagaya po noong sinabi kong una, there are a lot who are retirables out of 800 and others will be absorbed by different agencies and only national agencies of the government. Not only that, even in the different divisions of the Department of Agriculture, marami na rin pong retirables, so possibilities are talaga namang baka halos lahat po ay maa-absorb din po dahil nagtutulungan po, hindi lang ho ang DA, kundi pati iyong iba't ibang ahensya ng ating gobyerno.

Now, on the second question, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, ang sa ngayon is, sinasabi ninyo po kanina na P15 po ang darak, na noon po ay parang, if we have to compare, noong kabataan natin, ito ay hinihingi lang o ipinambabayad natin kapag ikaw ay nagpapa....

REP. GAITE. Pagiling, nagpa-mill.

REP. CUARESMA. Nagpapagiling ng palay, pero sa ngayon po kasi, itong palay ay hindi na lang ho kinakain ng baboy kung hindi ito ay marami na rin hong silbi o gamit. Kagaya po iyong iba, ginagawa nilang panggatong sa dryer. Puwede rin iyong iba ay kino-convert nila into fertilizer. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, hindi naman ho nagre-remiss ng kanilang gawain ang Department of Agriculture. In fact, the DA is doing its best para matugunan ho iyong predicament ng ating mga magsasaka.

REP. GAITE. Kinabahan po ako, Mme. Sponsor, baka ang proposal din ay mag-import na rin tayo ng darak. Hindi pa naman siguro, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, pero nevertheless, kasi nga po nabanggit ni Cong. Caloy Zarate, the mindset is now towards, mas ito nga, iyong import liberalization, but we are now seeing its negative impact on our economy. Marami, may mga consequential effect ito lalo na kapag itinigil mo o nahinto ang produksiyon ng isang bagay. Mayroong domino effect iyan kung kaya nababangit na nga dahil marami na ngang magsasaka ngayon na sa halip na magtanim sa isang paluging sitwasyon ay huwag na lang magtanim. Kaya ang produkto na kayang malikha natin locally ay lumiliit iyong volume dahil nga sa kompetisyon o unfair competition ng imported na produkto, and yet, there are mechanisms supposedly to protect our own industries pero hindi rin gumagana. Mayroon tayong PCC o Philippine Competition Commission na maganda sana. Binigyan ninyo po kami, through Cong. Arlene Brosas, ng kopya ng arrival of imported rice by company name, used SPCIC and the volume arrived. Pero maganda rin sana ma-vet ito kasi ang isang claim ng mga maraming mamamayan ngayon, nagtataka sila bakit napakataas pa rin relatively ng presyo ng bigas sa mga palengke o pamilihan. Ang kanilang normal na kasagutan ay dahil may kartel. Tanong ko po, may kartel ho ba sa importation ngayon ng bigas, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. CUARESMA. Anyway po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, we have a monitoring team that is already a joint undertaking of the Department of Agriculture and the DTI. Nagtutulungan po, imo-monitor po natin iyong prices para naman ho iyong ating mga consumer ay hindi po mahihirapan.

REP. GAITE. Kasi nga po, as of now, Mme. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, iyon nga po iyong sitwasyon ngayon. Iyong pangakong bababa ang presyo ng bigas sa palengke ay hindi pa rin nagma-materialize. Ang narinig naming isang komentaryo, ano iyong sabi ni Congressman Cabatbat—birth pangs. Hintayin natin kasi kakapatupad lamang nito noong Pebrero kung kaya hintayin daw natin iyong full impact. Ang sabi na nga rin ni Congressman Cabatbat ay aanhin pa iyong palay kung patay na iyong mga magsasaka.

Talagang hilo sa hirap na iyong ating mga magsasaka sa kalagayang talagang bagsak na bagsak ang presyo ng bigas, kaya't maaaring makatulong nga iyong panukalang resolusyon na bigyan ng mas malaking pondo ang NFA para makabili ng bigas at palay, at kung ito ay maa-allocate-an ng karagdagang P15 billion para makabili ng at least 750,000 metric tons, at hopefully, bilhin sa mataas na presyo—at least P20 per kilo ng palay—at ibenta naman din ng NFA at a higher price of which a large chunk will be subsidized by the NFA. Kung maibebenta nila ito ng P27, malaki ang maitutulong sa mga magsasaka at makatutulong din sa consumers.

Ano po ang tingin ng ating Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, I agree, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, to your statement. Sabi ko nga kanina kay Cong. Carlos Zarate of BAYAN MUNA, "I share the same sentiments."

REP. GAITE. Tama po.

REP. CUARESMA. Totoo naman po iyon. At any rate, I would still say that the DA is doing its best, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, para naman lahat ay happy hindi lang ho ang ating mga consumer but especially ito hong ating mga minamahal na magsasaka.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Sponsor. Sa kapakanan ng ating mga kawani sa NFA, sa kapakanan ng ating mga magsasaka, sa kapakanan ng ating mga hog raisers, millers, fish raisers, broiler—iyong nag-aalaga ng iyong paitlogan, at iba pa na dependent sa palay, bigas at mga byproducts nito. Dapat talagang ma-reconsider iyong batas na ito at sa pag-aaral, kung ito ay kailangan mang amyendahan o di kaya ay i-revoke, ito ang sigurong dapat kagyat na gawin para iyong deleterious effect ng batas na ito ay matanggal o maibsan.

Maraming salamat po, Mme. Sponsor. Maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CUARESMA. You are welcome, Mme. Speaker.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, next to interpellate is the honorable Lady from KABATAAN Party-List. I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Elago.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Rep. Sarah Elago is now recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

Marami po sa mga concern ng Representasyon ng KABATAAN ay puspunan nang naipaliwanag ng Department of Agriculture, ng ating distinguished Sponsor sa pamamagitan po ng interpelasyon ng mga nauna nating mga Mambabatas, kaya hayaan ninyo na lang po akong mag-focus sa isang subject matter. Tungkol po ito sa kalagayan ng ating mga magsasaka, ng ating manggagawang bukid sa mga niyugan, ang atin pong coconut farmers and workers, and plantation workers.

Mme. Speaker, kanina pa po natin binibigyan ng pagpupunyagi ang commitment hindi lang ng Department of Agriculture kundi ng ating mga kapwa Mambabatas tungkol sa mga hakbang na interbasyon para po tugunan ang problema natin sa pagbagsak ng presyo ng palay, ngunit nababahala po at nais malaman ng Representasyong ito, hindi lang po palay ang sumisisid ang presyo kundi po maging ang kopra. Sa matagal na panahon, iyan po ay nararanasan na ng mga nagtatrabaho sa niyugan, ang mga nakasalalay ang kabuhayan sa niyugan. Maaari po ba nating malaman mula sa Department of Agriculture, mula sa Philippine Coconut Authority kung ano na po ang kanilang mga hakbang para tugunan naman ang kalagayang ito ng ating mga magsasaka at mga manggagawa sa mga plantasyon po ng mga niyog?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the Department of Agriculture is trying to strengthen and is requesting or urging the different owners of this particular product, iyong mga farmer po natin na sila na lang po ang magbebenta dahil ito pong ating mga trader seem that they are not so much interested in procuring already itong mga niyog. That is why mayroon po tayong mga livelihood program na kung gusto mong malaman, we can provide you with the data on the activities or programs that the Department of Agriculture will undertake with regard to your predicament, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, sa pag-aaral po ng Department of Agriculture, ano pong dahilan kung bakit po hindi na interesado ang mga trader natin pagdating sa kopra lalong-lalo na po, Mme. Speaker, ang coconut oil, ang top dollar-earner at ang top farm-export ng Pilipinas. Hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues are brought in by the coconut industry to the Philippine economy. So, ano po ang dahilan kung bakit hindi na sila interesado kung ito man po talaga ang kalagayan sa pagbagsak po ng kabuhayaan ng ating mga nakabatay ang kabuhayan sa kopra.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the traders are linking the drop in oil prices doon po

sa abroad, kaya ito po iyong nangyari. Hindi naman karapat-dapat na ganoon ang gawin nila.

The Department of Agriculture provided P1 billion for this particular program para naman po matulungan hindi lamang po ang mga rice farmer or palay farmer, kung hindi pati itong ating mga copra and coconut farmer will also be supported by the Department of Agriculture, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, tayo po ay manghihingi ng breakdown kung saan gagastusin itong P1 billion na ito. Tama po ba, P1 billion para sa iba't ibang mga proyekto?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, kasi we got a lot of activities. The Department of Agriculture has five—mayroon ho silang limang activities or programs na ii-implement. Kaya nga po kanina sinabi ko, if you want, the Department can provide you a copy for you to also monitor and to know what is the support that is being given to the copra industry and the coconut industry, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

Hihintayin po natin ang mas malalim na talakayan na iyan kasama ang Department of Agriculture. Nais din nating malaman, Mme. Speaker, sa tala po ng DA, ilang milyong dolyar ang kinikita natin kada taon mula sa coconut industry? On the average or if you can have the 2018 figure, magkano po ang kinikita natin mula sa pag-e-export sa coconut industry, hindi lang po ito sa coconut oil?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, we will provide you the data para at least mayroon talaga kayong record at basehan, ano po.

REP. ELAGO. Pero, Mme. Speaker, would the DA confirm that, indeed, the coconut oil is one of our top dollar-earners and one of our top farm-exports.

REP. CUARESMA. Tama po.

REP. ELAGO. Kaya kailangan po ma-exhaust din ng DA lahat po ng pamamaraan para suportahan iyong kabuhayan ng mga magsasaka at mga manggagawang bukid sa niyugan, at gayundin, may pag-aaral na po ba ang DA sa kasalukuyan hinggil sa pagtutulak sa ating mga local government unit? Mayroon po ba silang itinutulak na mga hakbang sa kasalukuyan dito sa Kongreso hinggil sa regulasyon ng presyo ng kopra? Mayroon po ba tayong proposal para magkaroon po ng floor price pagdating sa kopra o kaya naman ma-regulate din iyong trading ng kopra dito sa ating bansa?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, wala pa pong ganoong proposal.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, binibigyan din po natin ng pondo ang Philippine Coconut Authority para sa pananaliksik hinggil sa pagpapaunlad ng ating industriya sa coconut, kaya dapat maksimisahan po natin ito para sa ganitong mga pag-aaral kung paano natin pauunlarin ang naturang industriya dahil sa milyong milyong dolyar na dinadala nito sa ating bansa.

Mme. Speaker, nais din nating siguraduhin na iyong kinikita ng ating mga magniniyog ay hindi lamang sapal kung hindi matatamasa rin ba nila iyong gata ng kanilang mga pinaghirapan. Malaki po ang cut ng Philippine Coconut Authority para sa taong 2020 at malaking challenge sa PCA iyong pag-aayos ng kanilang utilization ng ibinibigay nating pondo kada taon para naman sa susunod na budget deliberations, tayo po ay makakapagrekomenda ng mas mataas na pondo para sa PCA.

Bilang huling katanungan, Mme. Speaker, nais ko pong malaman, ano na po ang update tungkol sa paggamit o sa inyong mga pananaliksik, paggamit ng coconut oil bilang biofuel? Napakaraming gamit ng coconut oil, Mme. Speaker, bilang isang engine fuel. Sa tala po hindi lang ng PCA kundi mismo ng DOE, ang coconut oil ay isa po iyang direktang substitute para sa petroleum diesel. Iyan din po ay maaaring gamitin bilang additive sa iba't ibang tipo ng mga biodiesel. Bilang panghuli, talagang base ingredient iyan sa iba't ibang tipo ng biodiesel na puwede nating gamitin. Kaya ano na po ang pinakahuling balita pagdating sa development ng coconut oil? Dahil iyan po ay malaking batayan ng ating pagpasá sa Kongresong ito ng Biofuels Act, na tayo ay makatutulong din na iangat hindi lamang ang presyo ng kopra, kundi upang buhayin iyong kabuhayan ng lahat ng mga nakabatay po ang kabuhayan o ang negosyo sa coconut industry.

REP. CUARESMA. Mayroon po tayo rito, iyong biodiesel pong ito ay ibini-blend po natin sa atin hong mga diesel na ginagamit—mga 2 percent po iyon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, but the target of the Department of Agriculture by now or the DOE, I mean, is 5 percent, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, ang plano natin, by the year 2020 ay mapapataas na ito sa 10 percent.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. The Department of Energy, I know, is doing its best na at least makakaabot tayo dito sa 5 percent, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mme. Speaker, suportado po iyan ng Representasyon ng KABATAAN na iyong energy mix

na pinapangarap natin as we gear towards the shift to renewable energy sources ay makamit po talaga natin. Kaya kung paano po kami makakatulong, ipagbigay alam ninyo lang po sa Representasyong ito.

Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker. Maraming salamat sa ating distinguished Sponsor at sa buong DA family. *(Applause)*

REP. CUARESMA. Salamat din po.

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

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader, Benny Abante, to interpellate the Sponsor.

I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Hon. Benny Abante, Minority Leader, is now recognized.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Will the Lady Sponsor yield to some clarificatory questions?

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you. All of my questions are regarding the National Irrigation Administration. First of all, I would like to thank the National Irrigation Administration led by Administrator General Ricardo Visaya for submitting and complying with my query on the COA report on the 299 uncompleted irrigation projects as of December 21 of 2018, and submitting to me the list of all accredited contractors of the National Irrigation Administration.

My first question would be this, what is the status of the notices of suspension and disallowances issued by COA in 2017 and in 2018, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, the total number of projects is 134, Mme. Speaker, and the total number of packages is 286, Your Honor. Out of the 286, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, 224 projects have been completed and there are still like 40 ...

REP. ABANTE. Two hundred twenty-four is...

REP. CUARESMA. Completed po, Your Honor, and there are 40 packages ongoing and those that have been terminated are 22, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Well, as in the previous year's audit, it says poor documentation and record-keeping have been consistent concerns, particularly in the post-audit of payments of progress billings. Is that right?

In some cases, although notices of suspension were issued, some vital supporting documents were still not submitted, casting doubts on whether these documents actually existed. Iyan po ang sabi ng COA about the National Irrigation Administration in the 2018 audit report.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, according to the NIA, iyong iba po kasi ay hindi pa ho nakakapag-comply but now they are trying to complete the needed documents so that the agency can immediately comply with the observation of the audit, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Okay, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, what is then the status of the delayed irrigation projects of the National Irrigation Administration worth more than P20 billion? News reports from *The Manila Times* summarized the COA 2018 report on 299 uncompleted irrigation projects. May I cite some parts of the summary:

1. Irrigation projects with a total contract cost of P20.7 billion incurred delays ranging from a day to about six years, the COA said of NIA for 2018 and 2017;

2. Fifty-five of the 299 contracts pertained to the NIA's central office with a total contract cost of P17.63 billion suffered delays ranging from 15 days to 2,287 calendar days or six years;

3. Thirty of the contracts with costing P818.46 million pertained to NIA Regional Office XI incurred delays ranging from 58 days to 2,016 days or more than five years;

4. Forty-five of contracts worth P366.33 million were projects of NIA Region V suffered delays ranging from one day to 228 days; sixteen of the 299 contracts with total cost of P241,599,764 for NIA Region II were originally programmed to be completed in 2016;

5. Twenty-seven contracts pertaining to NIA Region I incurred delays ranging from 33 days to 129 days with cost of P133.98 million;

6. Twelve contracts for Region III with cost of P102.7 million suffered delays ranging from 24 days to 223 days;

7. Projects for Regions IX, XIII, VI and the Cordillera Administrative Region were also delayed;

8. Seventy-five of the 299 contracts that pertained to the Agno River Irrigation System Extension Project, as well as eight contracts that pertained to the Balog-Balog Multipurpose Project suffered delays.

And so on and so forth, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, in fact, I provided you, Your Honor, with a copy from the NIA during the budget briefing, I think, these were the issues that you brought up. I also would like to

add, Mme. Speaker, that as of now, we have completed 6 contracts involving 5 projects. Our remaining contract packages are 40 contracts involving 15 projects po. If there was an audit observation coming from COA, it is because of so many factors, one of which is the right of way, in particular, at marami pa hong mga factors nga po.

REP. ABANTE. Mme. Speaker.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the NIA also is doing its part; inaayos na po lahat, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Hindi ko po sinasabi, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, that NIA is not doing its part. Hindi ko po sinasabi iyon. Gusto ko lang pong sabihin sa lahat na, whenever there are a lot of contracts being bid out and done, it is prone to corruption. This Congress has the right to scrutinize because this is the budget that will be funded by the people's money, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. I agree. I agree, Mme. Speaker and Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. All right. Now, per documents, Mme. Speaker, submitted by the NIA Administrator, the following regretful observations came to light:

Number one, for the five SRIP Projects totaling about \$2.2 billion awarded to Oscar R. Sarmiento Construction Inc., two contracts totaling P814 million were already terminated. The NIA's response was only the forfeiture of the performance bond and possibly, possibly, blacklisting daw. They continue to work on the three remaining projects.

Let me finish this. The same, number two, Oscar R. Sarmiento Construction Inc., for SRIP also has the CMIPP which is worth P345.45 million and was also terminated without sanctions.

Number three, there are also the following: Villamar Construction Development Corp., P99.974 million; Leadway Constructions, P171.973 million; Victoriano Lim Constructions, all terminated projects. The NIA's only response was the forfeiture of performance bond and possible blacklisting daw.

Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, napakalaki po ng perang ito and that is just the answer. Ito pong trabaho natin sa Kongreso ay hindi po ito personalan, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor. Bakit ko sinabing hindi personalan ito? Wala akong farm-to-market road. Kahit sa Maynila ay mayroong San Andres Bukid, pero hindi po iyon bukid. Alam po natin na ang Metro Manila residents ay dependent po sa products at crops ng ating mga farmers sa mga probinsya, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, thank you for the information, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Your Honor, thank you for the information.

REP. ABANTE. And, Mme. ...

REP. CUARESMA. After siguro nito, I would like to talk to the Minority Leader para makita ko nga itong mga ito, for us to do something about it.

REP. ABANTE. I do realize, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, that, perhaps, the Mme. Sponsor ay nabibigla rin sa aking mga sinabi rito. Lalo pa, not one of these contractors were subjected to penalties; not one has been subjected to any case filed against them for damages, criminal cases or administrative cases. Notices of possible blacklisting were sent but not followed up, nor did NIA ever bother to forcefully implement this.

Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, this is the people's money and all of us here in Congress are paying our taxes.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. ...

REP. ABANTE. Involved po dito ang mga buwis na binabayaran po, na pinaghirapan ng ating mga empleyado, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, noted po. Hindi ko po alam na ganito pala, but as I have said, siguro ...

REP. ABANTE. Ito po, para malaman po ninyo ...

REP. CUARESMA. ... we can talk things over.

REP. ABANTE. ... ang NIA's official response to this COA report can be summarized as follows:

1. Bad and unpredictable weather conditions;
2. Only six months of the year are left for construction because the rest are subject to rainy weather;
3. Unresolved right of way;
4. Farming schedule and standing crops;
5. Peace and order situation;
6. Poor project planning, supervision, monitoring and control; and
7. Untimely release of funds.

Ang lahat po ng mga ito, ang mga reasons niyan, ay, iyan po ang dahilan kung bakit tayo nag-i-import ng bigas.

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, thank you for the information.

REP. ABANTE. Ultimately, Mme. Speaker, their

responses to the COA report can be summed up with one word, just one word. Whatever the response might be, that one word is “negligence.” Why? These are canned responses that the COA always gets from the implementation of projects. These are not new responses which NIA cannot anticipate, much less, prepare for.

Now, Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, if the NIA cannot do their job, perhaps the DPWH could step in and do their job for them. Perhaps it is time for the NIA to be abolished and all its functions transferred to the DPWH.

On the other hand, naniniwala po ba ang National Irrigation Administration na kung magkakaroon ng kumpletong irrigation system sa ating mga lands na puwedeng i-irrigate ay hindi na natin kinakailangang mag-import ng bigas? Naniniwala po ba sila na kapag kumpleto po ang sistema ng irrigation sa lahat ng ating irrigable lands, hindi na tayo mag-i-import ng bigas kahit na tayo ay binibisita ng mga bagyo?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, opo.

REP. ABANTE. Ang NIA po ay binibigyan ng budget ang mga contractors for several infrastructure programs, restoration, rehabilitation, against desertification, repair. How many kilometers of irrigable lands was budgeted for by NIA in the past year?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, may I look at the data of the NIA? May I be permitted ...

REP. ABANTE. Siguro po puwede nilang ibigay sa akin in writing, ano po.

REP. CUARESMA. Okay, yes, we will do that.

REP. ABANTE. I just would like to continue my questioning here.

Ang sabi po ng NIA, there are 1.2 million hectares of potentially irrigable lands. Ito pong 1.2 million remaining hectares of potentially irrigable lands ay mayroon na po bang budgetary requirement po ito? Mayroon na po bang plano na ito ay gawing irrigated lands, ito pong 1.2 million hectares?

REP. CUARESMA. Sa ngayon po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, wala pa po.

REP. ABANTE. Mme. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, ang sabi po sa akin ng mga farmers, kapag irrigated po ang lupa, magkakaroon ng at least two cropping seasons. Tama po ba ako?

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

REP. ABANTE. Can you imagine two cropping seasons, ladies and gentlemen. If all of these are irrigated, with two cropping seasons—my goodness, we could have an abundance of rice supply in the whole country.

REP. CUARESMA. Yes, I agree, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Last question is this: What is the status of the implementation of Republic Act 10969 on the free irrigation services?

REP. CUARESMA. May I have again the question, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor?

REP. ABANTE. Ano po iyong status ng implementation ng Republic Act 10969, iyon po iyong free irrigation services?

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker and Your Honor, according to the NIA, that was already implemented as early as 2017.

REP. ABANTE. Ano po iyon?

REP. CUARESMA. Implemented na daw po, Your Honor and Mme. Speaker...

REP. ABANTE. Oo, maganda naman pong sabihin na implemented pero mayroon po akong narinig...

REP. CUARESMA. ...noon pong January 2017.

REP. ABANTE. ... na NIA is still imposing some charges. Totoo po ba iyon o hindi?

REP. CUARESMA. Wala na po.

REP. ABANTE. Hindi po?

REP. CUARESMA. Wala na po, Your Honor.

REP. ABANTE. Tatapusin ko na po iyong questioning ko sapagkat marami na pong nakatingin sa akin.

So, with no more questions to be asked, Mme. Speaker, on the part of the Minority, I, therefore, move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate for the Minority. *(Applause)*

REP. CUARESMA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, thank you.

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the

period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budgets of the Department of Agriculture and its attached agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). There is a joint motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture, including its attached agencies and corporations. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture is hereby terminated.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. DE VENECIA. Mme. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 7:16 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 7:21 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III presiding.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAUTISTA. Mr. Speaker, I move for the joint consideration of the proposed budgets of the Dangerous Drugs Board and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

DANGEROUS DRUGS BOARD AND PHILIPPINE DRUG ENFORCEMENT AGENCY

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion to proceed with the consideration of the budget of the Dangerous Drugs Board ...

REP. BAUTISTA. And the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, PDEA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). ... and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency. Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAUTISTA. Mr. Speaker, we move to acknowledge the presence of our guests from the

Dangerous Drugs Board headed by Hon. Catalino S. Cuy, and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency headed by Director General Aaron N. Aquino.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The House welcomes the delegations of these two agencies.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAUTISTA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Rozzano Rufino B. Biazon from the Lone District of Muntinlupa to sponsor the proposed budgets of the Dangerous Drugs Board and the PDEA.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Sponsor has the floor.

SPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF REP. BIAZON

REP. BIAZON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the distinct honor and pleasure to present the budgets of two agencies: the proposed budget of the Dangerous Drugs Board amounting to P283.661 million which is 5.99 percent lower than their 2019 appropriations, and the proposed budget of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency amounting to P2.38 billion which is 15.7 percent higher than their 2019 appropriations.

This Representation is ready to answer questions, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

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

REP. BAUTISTA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. France L. Castro of ACT TEACHERS Party-List for her manifestation on the proposed budgets of the Dangerous Drugs Board and PDEA.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Representative of the ACT TEACHERS Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not only going to manifest, Mr. Speaker, but I am going to interpellate on the agency budget.

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

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maraming salamat muli, Mr. Speaker. Ang atin po bang distinguished Sponsor ay magbibigay ng kaunting panahon para sagutin iyong ilang mga clarificatory questions ng Kinatawang ito?

REP. BIAZON. Maaari naman po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker. Sa mga nakaraan pong pagtatanong kaugnay noong drug operation, at alam po ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor na pangunahin po sa mga programa ng ating Pangulong Duterte ay iyong pagsugpo ng droga, kung maaalala ko po doon sa last SONA, sabi niya po na relentless ang gagawin nating pagsugpo dito sa drug war. Naalala po ba ito ng ating butihing Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Opo, natatandaan po namin iyong mga payahag ng ating Pangulo noong nakaraang SONA.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ipinahayag niya o may isang pahayag din siya na kahit na matapos na iyong kanyang termino, sa tingin niya ay hindi niya masusugpo ang problema sa droga. Totoo po ba ito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Marahil iyon po iyong assessment ng ating Pangulo dahil din sa mga nadiskubre niya kung gaano kalawak iyong problema na ating hinaharap sa pinagbabawal na droga.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mr. Speaker, dahil nakaharap po sa atin ngayon iyong budget para sa PDEA at iyong mga ahensiya na mangangasiwa sana sa mga polisiya sa usapin ng droga, tama po ba, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, na iyong PDEA, kasama ang Dangerous Drugs Board, ay ang mga pangunahing ahensiya ng ating gobyerno na siyang gumagawa ng mga polisiya at pamamaraan para masugpo natin ang problema natin sa droga? Totoo po ba ito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Tama po, Mr. Speaker. Iyon po ang nakasaad sa batas, na ang pangunahing mga ahensiya natin sa pagsugpo sa pinagbabawal na gamot ay ang PDEA at ang Dangerous Drugs Board.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Nakakalungkot, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, sa nabanggit ninyo kanina na budget ng PDEA at ng Dangerous Drugs Board, ay napakaliit yata ng inilalaang budget sa ahensiya na ito na may napakalaking katungkulan para masugpo ang droga. Tama po ba, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Maaari po nating masabi, Mr. Speaker, na mas maganda kung madadagdagan pa ang pondong allocated para dito, lalong-lalo na po sa PDEA na siyang frontline agency laban sa pinagbabawal na gamot.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Naniniwala po ako na kung

matataasan siguro ang budget nito ay hindi po tayo magkakaroon ng napakaraming mga casualties. Ang mga namatay during drug operations, sa tala po ng PNP, ay more than 6,000 na. Kung titingnan naman po natin iyong ibang source, mayroon na pong 30,000 na namatay na may kaugnayan sa mga operasyon sa droga. Do you confirm this, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Siguro po, kung mabibigay natin ang hinihiling ng PDEA na karagdagang pondo para sa pagbili ng mga x-ray machines, iyong tinatawag na Raman spectroscopy equipment, makakatulong ho iyon doon sa mga operations nila laban sa mga big-time drug traffickers. So, siguro po, masasabi natin na malaki ang impact din ho iyon.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ano po ba ang policy ng Dangerous Drugs Board na siyang gumagawa ng polisiya kaugnay ng droga? Ano po ba iyong policy natin sa ahensiya, ito ba ay kill, kill, kill o rehabilitation ang ating policy kaugnay noong ating problema sa droga?

REP. BIAZON. Iyon pong pambansang istrategiya laban sa droga ay nagbibigay ng atensiyon sa demand reduction at saka sa supply reduction. So, kasama po doon iyong nabanggit ng ating kasamahan, Mr. Speaker, na rehabilitation ng mga nabibiktima.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, okay po, malinaw ano, pagbabawas po ng supply and demand at siyempre, iyong rehabilitation. Naniniwala po ba ang Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, na ang problema ng droga ay isang medical case o medical problem? Ang kaakibat nito ay iyong problema—kung mayroon kang ganitong problema ay sunod-sunod na iyong mga problema pang-ekonomiko dahil nandiyan na iyong krimen at iba pa. Tinitingnan po ba niya o naniniwala ba siya sa Kinatawang ito na ito po ay problemang medikal?

REP. BIAZON. Tama po. Kinikilala ng Dangerous Drugs Board sa kanilang mga patakaran at mga polisiya iyong medical aspect ng drug problem.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kaya ang nararapat na patakaran sana ng Dangerous Drugs Board dito ay iyong rehabilitation talaga, upang ang mga biktima nito ay talagang mabigyan ng kaukulang medical attention, at siyempre po, doon sa mga talagang talamak na mga drug lords, mga pushers at mga nagsu-supply ng drugs, dapat sila ay may matinding kaparusahan, tama po ba?

REP. BIAZON. Ito iyong nabanggit po natin na aspeto na medical kaya po ang itinutulak ng Dangerous Drugs Board ay madagdagan pa nga iyong 56 rehabilitation centers dahil binibigyan nila ng

kahalagahan ang pagpapagaling ng mga nalululong sa droga, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Salamat po dahil dito sa pagtatanong ko, malinaw na nakita natin ang polisiya ng Dangerous Drugs Board at ng PDEA.

Tutungo naman po ako, Mr. Speaker, sa susunod kong mga tanong about drug operations. Nakita natin, Mr. Speaker, 6,000 man iyan o 30,000, at kahit na isa lang iyan, ay nakakapanindig-balahibo na marinig na may namamatay sa mga operasyon ng droga. Kung ito man ay nanlaban or talagang legitimate ang operations, ay talagang hindi pa rin katanggap-tanggap na mayroong namamatay sa mga operations laban sa droga.

Ang PDEA po ay ang pangunahing ahensiya para doon sa pagsugpo ng droga at dito po sa mga na-conduct na drug operations, ano po ba ang papel ng PNP dito sa nasabing operations sa pagsugpo ng droga, Mr. Sponsor, G. Speaker?

REP. BIAZON. Sila ay nagsisilbing support sa principal operator which is PDEA dahil, ayon naman po sa batas, ito ang PDEA talaga.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Nagsisilbing support—so, ang ibig sabihin po nito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, kung ang PNP ay support at ang PDEA at DDB ang policy, therefore, iyong PDEA ang dapat na namumuno sa operasyon dahil ang PNP ay support lang at dapat ito iyong nakikita sana natin, dahil ang nakikita ko po natin ay pinangungunahan ito ng PNP. Hindi madalas na makita natin ang PDEA, so, ang tanong ko po dito, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, alam natin na pangunahin po dito ang PDEA pero bakit nakikita natin iyong PNP ang nasa forefront lagi ng mga operations.

Sa mga pagtatanong po ng ating mga kasamahan dito sa Kongreso kung ilan na iyong mga operations, puwede po bang malaman—dahil 6,000 na ang namatay at 30,000 naman ayon sa ibang source—mayroon po bang tala ang ating PDEA dahil sila dapat iyong nangunguna dito, at kung ilang operasyon ang na-conduct na ng PDEA laban sa droga?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, sa panahon po na nagsimula ang kampanya noong 2016 hanggang sa kasalukuyan, mayroon pong bilang na 63 na namatay na konektado roon sa operasyon ng PDEA. Hindi ho natin maiiwasan na ang PNP ay may mas malaking involvement, unang-una, dahil mas malawak ang kanilang presence sa buong bansa. Mahigit 100,000 ang tao nga o personnel ng PNP at mandate naman po nila ang law enforcement, samantalang ang PDEA naman ay may mas maliit na bilang. Sa katunayan, humihingi pa nga ho sila ngayon ng 1,000 additional drug enforcement officers kaya malaki ho ang disparity sa actual involvement precisely

because of the sheer number of PNP personnel and it is also their primary mandate. As far as the PDEA is concerned, from the start of the anti-drug campaign, only 63 deaths had been connected to their operations.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kanina po, tinatanong ko kung ano ba iyong papel ng PNP dito sa drug operations at pagsugpo ng droga, sinabi na ito ay support lang at ang PDEA iyong dapat na namumuno ng mga operations at kumbaga, ang nasa forefront nito, hindi ba? Sa sagot po ng ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, parang subjugated yata iyong mandate o mandato ng PDEA kaugnay sa pagsugpo sa ilegal na droga. Subjugated—ang ibig sabihin po ay parang pinangungunahan pa ng PNP iyong PDEA doon sa pagtupad ng mandato ng PDEA, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor.

Hindi ba ganito ang impression doon sa sinasabi ng ating Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, hindi po nagiging subjugated ang PDEA kasi, unang-una ho, ang policy still emanates from the Dangerous Drugs Board with the PDEA as the implementing arm. Noong sinabi po natin na “support,” this is in terms of being a force multiplier. Hindi naman po excuse ang PNP from being tapped as a resource sa implementation ng Dangerous Drugs Law.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kaso ang ...

REP. BIAZON. So, kapag sinabi po natin na “support,” hindi ho dahil sa pumapailalim ang mga patakaran ng Dangerous Drugs Board ang PNP, bagkus, nagpo-provide po ng force multiplier ang PNP sa pangangailangan sa enforcement ng batas.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, sinasabi natin kanina, 63 deaths in PDEA operations. Ilang operations ito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, mula noong 2016, ang ginawa po ng PDEA?

REP. BIAZON. Ang PDEA po ay nagsagawa na ng 18,262 operations mula po noong July 2016 nang magsimula ang kampanya sa ilalim ng administration ni Pangulong Duterte.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, 18,000. Ilan naman po iyong operations na pinangunahan ng PNP, o may alam ba tayo na data mula sa PDEA sa mga operations na ginawa ng PNP?

REP. BIAZON. Ang bilang po ng mga operasyon ng PNP ay roughly around 120,000.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ito po bang “roughly 120,000” na PNP operations on drugs ay coordinated lahat sa PDEA?

REP. BIAZON. Iyan ho ay ayon sa operational procedure, na ang PNP ay nagko-coordinate sa PDEA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Sa bawat operation po, ang nakalagay sa batas ay dapat ay naka-coordinate ito sa PDEA dahil pangunahin po talaga iyong PDEA na mag-implement ng mga operations na ito. Kung force multiplier lang at support, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, hindi ba ay dapat may alam ang PDEA sa every single operation na nako-conduct ng PNP? Kayo nga sa PDEA ay 18,000 lang pero sila sa PNP ay 120,000. So, puwede po ba akong makakuha ng kongkretong report kaugnay nito kung totoo na nakikipag-coordinate ang PNP sa PDEA?

Alam po ninyo, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, napakalaki po, hindi biro-biro ang 6,000 na ito, pati nga iyong ibang bansa ay talagang kinokondena itong war on drugs natin, at dahil 6,000 na ang mga namatay na ito, ang tingin natin ay there is an irregularity. Sa isang pagtatanong po natin, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, doon sa 6,000 na iyan, 200 lang ang na-inquest, so, mayroon pong problema dito at iregularidad. Hindi ba nagpapabaya ang PDEA doon sa kanilang katungkulan na sila ang dapat manguna dito? Ang PNP, iyon na nga, katulad ng sinabi ko, parang controlled yata ng PNP ang PDEA.

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, hindi naman ho tayo makakasang-ayon doon sa pahayag na iyon dahil nananatili ang PDEA bilang pangunahing ahensiya na nagpapatupad ng Dangerous Drugs Law. Noong ako po ay namumuno sa Bureau of Customs, nagbibigay-daan kami sa PDEA kapag pumasok na ang issue ng droga. Ganoon din po pagdating naman sa implementation ng batas ng PNP na, bukod sa may coordination sila kapag nag-operate, kapag sila rin po ay may mga nahuli, ang mga nakukumpiska nilang droga ay tino-turn over din naman sa PDEA.

So, hindi ho nagiging remiss ang PDEA sa kanilang duty at nagkataon lang po talaga na higit na napakarami ng PNP versus PDEA to the point na ang PNP ay may presensya sa bawat barangay samantalang ang PDEA ay wala.

Iyon lang po ang siguro talaga ang reyalidad kaya parang mas malaki ang bilang ng PNP operations, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Parang nakakalungkot talaga iyong reyalidad na nangyayari sa problema natin sa droga.

Next question po. Kapag nag-file po ba ng kaso dito sa mga drug-related na mga kaso na hindi coordinated sa PDEA, ano po ba ang nangyayari dito sa mga kaso, mayroon na po bang nangyayari kasi ang dami nito,

6,000 iyong sinasabi o binabanggit ng PNP? Nakalagay po kasi doon na kapag ito po ay hindi coordinated sa ating PDEA ay, iyon nga, kapag walang coordination ay na-di-dismiss ang kaso. Ano po ba ang masasabi ng ating distinguished Sponsor in terms of procedure?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kung mayroon pong mga na-di-dismiss dahil po sa lack of coordination, iyan din kasi talaga ang price that we have to pay for non-compliance. Hindi ito dahil sa may kakulangan on the part of the PDEA but probably, on the part of the PNP unit na hindi nakikipag-coordinate with the PDEA, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Ano po iyong mandate ng PDEA sa ganitong sitwasyon, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor? Hindi na-coordinate ito doon sa ating PDEA, so, ano po iyong dapat na ginawa o aksiyon ng ating ahensiya?

REP. BIAZON. Ang tama pong hakbang, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, kapag ganoon ang sitwasyon, dapat ay maghain ho ng reklamo laban doon sa hindi tumupad sa procedure sa batas. Sa karanasan po ngayon ng PDEA ay wala pa hong ganoong instance, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, malinaw po na talagang something is wrong sa ginagawa nating pag-atake doon sa problema natin sa drugs, kasi po talagang napakasakit sa loob natin na makita iyong mga ganitong statistics ng mga namatay. Kung aayusin lang po siguro iyong coordination at pagtutulungan ng PDEA at ng PNP, na hindi po ang PNP iyong gagawa ng mga talagang initiative operations at sila ay magko-coordinate, mas maayos ang magiging pagpapatupad noong ating programa dito sa war on drugs. Nagresulta kasi doon sa pagkamatay ng ating mga libo-libong mga mamamayan.

Okay, next topic, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, lately, may pahayag ang ating Chief ng PDEA tungkol doon sa recycling of drugs, at nabasa natin doon sa report na inaamin niya na may nangyayaring recycling of drugs, at kung mayroong mga nako-confiscate na mga drugs ay hindi naman ito accurately naire-report. Tama po ba ito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Tama po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, na mayroong pahayag na ganoon ang ating hepe ng PDEA.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Sabi natin kanina, pupunta na tayo sa demand and supply. Gusto nating mabawasan ito pero ang dapat na sugpuin siguro, hindi ba, ay iyong source o iyong pinanggagalingan ng mga droga, at siyempre, sa ating mga mamamayan naman na

biktima ng droga ay iyong dahilan ng kanilang pagdodroga, pero ang pinakamahalaga dito ay sugpuin iyong dahilan ng droga.

Mayroon po bang imbentaryo ang PDEA kaugnay noong mga na-confiscate o mga nakuha na droga mula sa mga biktima at nasaan po ba ito? Sa pahayag na iyon, ang ibig sabihin ay hindi na intact ang ebidensya na ito, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, mayroon pong talaan o imbentaryo ang PDEA sa mga droga na na-confiscate at na-turnover sa kanila. Mayroon ho silang pasilidad na pinaglalagyan o evidence room at tinitiyak naman po nila na ito ay well-secured, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, kumpleto po ito? Ilan po kaya iyong na-recycle at mayroon ba tayong data noong mga na-recycle?

REP. BIAZON. Ang bilang po na mga droga ng nasa kanilang kustodiya ay umaabot po sa 3,651 kilos iyong solid at mayroon pong 302.09 liters iyong liquid form, na may kabuuang halaga na P22 billion. Iyan po ang nasa kustodiya ng PDEA at tinitiyak po na ito ay secure at hindi po nare-recycle, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ito pong nakuha ng PNP, mayroon po ba tayong data, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Sa data po, maliban doon sa nabanggit ko na timbang at saka volume, nandito rin po iyong uri ng droga. Iba't ibang uri po ng droga iyan at mayroon po tayong data, may breakdown po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Mayroon po bang data sa mga nakuha under PDEA operations at iyong galing sa initiative po ng PNP? Mayroon po ba tayong ganoong data?

REP. BIAZON. Lahat po ng ito ay hindi lang nagmula sa PDEA operations pero kasama na rin po iyong mga na-turnover sa PDEA, ayon sa batas, na nagmula sa ibang mga law enforcement agencies, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Next question po. Dito sa recycling noong drugs, positive po ang ating hepe ng PDEA na nangyayari talaga ito, kaya ang tanong po, mayroon na bang nasampahan ng kaso ang PDEA? Mayroon na bang sinampahang PNP nito kasi mismong si PNP Chief Eleazar ay nagsasabi din na alam niya ito. Karamihan nga ay wala na sa serbisyo at may nag-AWOL pero parang kilala o determined na sila.

Na-determina na po ba natin ang mga PNP scalawags na ito na gumagawa ng recycling at may nasampahan na ba na kaso, maski isa?

REP. BIAZON. Mayroon na, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, mayroong mga nasampahan na ng kaso. Sa katunayan po, sa PDEA, mayroon hong lima na nasampahan na ng kaso, may dalawang na-dismiss, naparusahan na rin po, at iyong tatlo ay ongoing ang kanilang court cases. Tungkol po sa PNP, baka mas masasagot po ng PNP iyong nasa hanay nila dahil Internal Affairs Service po nila ang humahawak ng mga kasong ganyan.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Siyempre po, alam ito ng PDEA dahil siya rin naman ang nagsasabi na mayroong nangyayaring ganito. Isa rin sa mandate, hindi ba, ng PDEA ay iyong mag-imbetiga dito at kung kinakailangan ay magsampa ng kaso sa mga tiwaling PNP na ito. Mayroon po ba tayong ganoong data? Ang lima na ito, parang napakaliit kung tutuusin natin dahil sa laki ng problema na idinulot nitong recycling of drugs.

REP. BIAZON. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, it would be the PNP which will be in the best position to share with us the data on the number of cases filed against their personnel because it is an internal matter to them, where these cases are filed/initiated by the PNP service within its ranks.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Siguro, at least, G. Ispiker, G. Isponsor, dahil alam naman natin, at sinabing ganoon nga, that the PNP is coordinating with the PDEA, siguro, may mutual relationship naman iyon. Can the PDEA commit to this Representation na makakuha ng information kung may mga nasampahan na ang PNP, through their IAS, na may kaugnayan dito sa recycling of drugs, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, the PDEA has committed to request from the PNP the data required.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Last na po, Mr. Speaker, kaugnay dito sa recycling, dahil mainit iyong GCTA, hindi ba, mainit din iyong mga tiwaling mga opisyal na itinalaga ni President Duterte sa BuCor, at nabanggit po ng ating hepe ng PDEA—tama po ba ito, na-confirm po kung pinaalis sa BuCor ang PDEA at NICA at ano po iyong mga naging dahilan nito kung bakit pinaalis? Hindi ba noong 2016 at 2017, nakikita natin na isa sa source ng droga o iyong pinanggagalingan nito ay ang BuCor, ang Bilibid. In fact, may mga kinulong na nga, may kinulong na Senador, si Senador De Lima, kaugnay nito. Bakit noong panahon ni Senator Bato ay

tinanggal dito ang PDEA at NICA at ano pong dahilan, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Estrella relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Deogracias Victor "DV" B. Savellano.

REP. BIAZON. Ang naganap po ay isang paglilipat, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Binigyan ng ibang lugar ang PDEA kung saan puwede silang mamalagi doon sa loob ng New Bilibid Prison, ngunit hindi ideal iyong lugar na na-allocate para sa ating PDEA kaya po hindi rin na natuloy ang kanilang pagtatalaga ng kanilang mga tauhan sa New Bilibid Prison, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). May nakikita po bang problema dito? Alam ko, nakita natin ang problema, at sinabi na hindi ideal place para matunton natin iyong problema ng droga dito, hindi ba, kung may mga transaksyon. Sa tingin po ng Kinatawan na ito, there is something wrong with that decision. Ngayon po ba ay nandoon na ulit iyong PDEA sa BuCor?

REP. BIAZON. Sa kasalukuyan po, mayroon nang naitalagang bagong Director ng Bureau of Corrections kaya makikipag-ugnayan na muli ang PDEA para magkaroon ng presensya doon po sa loob ng NBP.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, maraming salamat po sa sagot na iyon. Sana ang source ang dapat nating puntirya hin, hindi iyong mga biktima ng droga, at sana iyong ating PDEA at ang Dangerous Drugs Board ay ma-i-assert iyong kanilang mandato na sila ang tanging mga ahensiya na siyang magresolba sa problema natin sa droga.

Iyon lang po, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor. Salamat po.

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

REP. BAUTISTA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Sarah Jane I. Elago from KABATAAN Party-List to interpellate the Sponsor on the proposed budget.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Savellano). Rep. Sarah Jane Elago is recognized.

REP. ELAGO. Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Magandang gabi sa lahat.

Unang katanungan, Mr. Speaker, ano pong masasabi ng PDEA at ng DDB hinggil sa kalagayan ng ating drug war, na iyong mga drug lords po na napakulong natin ay napakawalan sa pamamagitan ng mali at corrupt na pagpapatupad ng GCTA Law?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, natural po, nalulungkot ang PDEA at ang DDB sa mga napakawalan na drug lords dahil pinahirapan ng mga ahensiya na mahuli ang mga iyan, at umaasa ang PDEA na sa hakbang na ginagawa ngayon na repormahin ang GCTA-IRR, at least, ay hindi na ito mauulit para hindi masayang iyong efforts ng ating drug enforcement agencies.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, sa tala po ng PDEA doon sa mga napakawalan, ilan po dito iyong mga napakulong natin na drug lords? May tala na po ba sila kung ilan na rin iyong boluntaryong sumuko?

REP. BIAZON. Sa kasalukuyan, hindi pa ho sila nakakakuha ng access doon sa list ng mga napakawalan kaya hindi nila masabi iyong eksaktong bilang kung mayroon ba o kung ilan ang mga napakawalan na sa kanilang ipinakulong sa pamamagitan ng GCTA.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, talagang lubos na nakakabahala ang ganitong sitwasyon, lalong-lalo na dahil hindi naman po lingid sa atin na marami din po tayong mga kababayan iyong mga napaslang na—iyong iba po ay napagsuspetsahan ay wala na, hindi na nabigyan ng pagkakataon na humarap doon sa korte at maipaliwanag ang kanilang sarili o malinawan ang kanilang sitwasyon kung sila ay hindi talaga sangkot sa ipinababawal na droga, habang iyong mga drug lords, na siya talagang mga puno nitong mga nararanasan ng ating mga kababayan na nagiging dependent sa droga or nasasangkot sa drug deals, ay napapalaya. Kaya inaasahan din natin na gagawin ng PDEA iyong lahat ng kanilang makakaya na sang-ayon sa batas para muling mahuli sila at dagdag pa, para maiwasan na natin iyong mga kalagayan kung saan nauuna iyong kapangyarihan ng baril bago iyong pagdaan sa tama at akmang proseso na sasang-ayon sa ating batas.

Mr. Speaker, nais po nating malaman kung ano na po iyong pinakahuling pigura, in real numbers, sa report ng PDEA. Ito po iyong tala ng mga accomplishments ng Duterte administration pagdating sa pagsugpo sa ilegal na droga.

REP. BIAZON. Ayon sa talaan ng accomplishments ng PDEA for 2019, mayroong bilang na 5,610 operations conducted, na may 8,469 persons arrested; na may confiscated na 1,031.87 kilograms of shabu, 142.85 kilograms of cocaine at 7,986 pieces of ecstasy, all amounting to P7.29 billion. That is just for 2019 alone, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, ilang milyon na po ang kabuuang bilang, mula July 2016 magpasahanggang ngayon, noong mga sumuko na mga drug surrenderees po natin? Isama na rin po ng ating distinguished Sponsor

iyong bilang ng mga inaresto o iyong kasalukuyan pong nakakulong at gayon na rin, iyong bilang po ng mga pinaslang sa mga legitimate drug operations.

REP. BIAZON. Kanina po ay may nabanggit kayo na total number of drug surrenderees, na ang total po is 1.3 million individuals. Masasagot ko lang po iyong para sa PDEA—the total number of persons they arrested is 24,171 at iyong nabanggit ko nga ho kanina na bilang ng mga namatay sa PDEA operations ay 63 individuals. Nakapag-conduct na po sila ng mga operasyon laban sa 334 drug dens, naka-14 na po sila na clandestine laboratories, at 348 ang total na na-dismantle nila, both iyong drug dens at laboratories—ito ang accomplishment po ng PDEA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, nais po nating malaman iyong figure mula 2016 hanggang 2019 doon kasi isa sa mga pinakapinag-uusapan po ng mga estudyante, ng mga kabataan, doon sa kanilang pagsuporta sa drug war, habang binabantayan din nila—na iyong karapatang pantao ay napoprotektahan natin at naiiwasan natin ang lahat ng tipo ng abuso.

Ano na po ang official death toll ng PDEA mula July 2016 hanggang June 2019, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor? Mr. Speaker, tinatanong po natin ito dahil noong humarap po ang DILG, PNP at PCOO ay iba-iba rin po, iba-ibang figures din po iyong mga ibinigay. Nandito na po iyong lead agency pagdating sa drug war kaya nais po natin malaman kung ano na po ba talaga iyong bilang ng mga napapaslang?

Gayundin, Mr. Speaker, mahalaga ding malaman natin iyong deaths under investigation na drug-related sa tala ng PDEA.

REP. BIAZON. Kanina po, iyong binanggit ko ay ang datos mula July 1, 2016 hanggang August 31, 2019. Iyon nga lang, ito ay para lamang sa PDEA kasi hindi po natin masasabi ang accuracy noong data na ibinabato sa kanila, na sinabi po ng ating kasamahan na may pagkakaiba. As far as the PDEA is concerned, from July July 1, 2016 to August 31, 2019, the number of operations conducted is 18,262; persons arrested, 24,171; confiscated, shabu-3,204.99 kilograms, cocaine-232.51 kilograms and ecstasy-32,921 pieces; and the total value is P26 billion. The data with the PDEA, with regard to casualties in the anti-drug operations by other agencies, showed 5,651. I must reiterate that, for the PDEA data, there were only 63 deaths connected to their operations, Mr. Speaker.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Savellano relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Conrado M. Estrella III.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, maaari bang

maipaliwanag ng PDEA—hindi po ba dapat lahat ng operations na may kinalaman sa pagsugpo sa droga ay kanilang namo-monitor o naitatala, kaya dapat po kumpleto ang datos natin mula sa drug ops na ginagawa ng PNP.

Tayo po ay talagang interesado sa role ng PDEA at ng DDB sa lahat ng ito dahil hindi rin lingid sa kaalaman ng Kapulungang ito kung paanong may mga bata, may mga kabataan, may mga inosente at walang kalaban-laban, ang nadadamay. Masakit po na tawagin silang mga collateral casualties dahil taon-taon ay dumadami ang bilang nila at humahaba ang listahan ng mga nabibiktima. Kaya dapat gawan po natin ng paraan na tumigil ang pagdami ng listahan na ito at mapanagot lahat ng nag-aabuso sa kanilang otoridad at gumagamit ng shortcuts pagdating sa pagsugpo sa droga, dahil naniniwala po tayo na hindi naman ganoon ang gusto nating mangyari. Sa nangyayari ngayon, na may mga napapaslang na mga bata at kabataan, ano ang gagawin ng PDEA at DDB dito? Hindi po ba ninyo namo-monitor lahat, o paano natin ginagamit ang ating authority para matiyak na ang PNP at lahat po ng ating law enforcers ay sumusunod sa tamang rules of engagement, lalong-lalo na iyong mga kaso kung saan hindi natin maiiwasan na mayroong mga bata sa isang community o mayroong mga kabataan na maaaring madamay?

REP. BIAZON. Ang kampanya laban sa pinagbabawal na droga ay iniutos ng Pangulo sa lahat ng concerned agencies, kasama na ang PNP at PDEA. Kapag may operasyon, iyong planned operation na tinatawag, dapat ito ay may koordinasyon with PDEA pero minsan, hindi rin po maiiwasan kung ang PNP na nasa komunidad nga o nasa ground, may mga operasyon sila na sabi nga in flagrante, iyong nadatnan nila na may nagaganap na krimen. Kapag sila na ay humabol doon, hindi naman agad-agad mayroong coordination with the PDEA kaya siguro, mayroon ding pagkakataon na may datos na hindi agad naibabato sa PDEA. Ang utos ng Pangulo sa mga law enforcement agencies, dapat lahat ay kumilos laban sa droga at dahil sinasabi nga na ito ay isang problema ng ating bayan, kaya dapat lahat ng resources ay nagagamit. As far as the PDEA is concerned, also for the Dangerous Drugs Board, the figures speak for themselves. That the PDEA has been performing according to what is expected of them with minimal impact tulad nga po sa nabanggit na 63 deaths. Each one was investigated and was found to be proper—iyong operation. There was transparency, and even if we look back at the accomplishments of the PDEA stated in news reports, mapapansin po natin ang mga huli nila ay palaging mga big fish. Kapag nakakahuli sila sa isang drug den, bulto-bulto at hindi po sachets ang nakukuha ng PDEA, kaya masasabi natin na mayroon talagang accomplishment to speak

of as mandated of them. With regard to the Dangerous Drugs Board policy in relation sa kabataan, mayroon po silang mga sinusunod na mga policy na geared towards protecting children. Sinusunod nila ang mga patakaran tungkol sa youth and child offenders. Iyong mga kabataan na gumagamit, itinutulak natin papunta sa rehabilitasyon o referral sa ibang mga paraan para sila ay gumaling. Kaya masasabi po natin na itong dalawang ahensiya ay gumaganap naman sa mga tungkulin nila.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, iyong natala ng Child Legal Rights and Development Center na 75 na napaslang na mga bata at kabataan dahil sila ay napagkamalan o biktima ng mistaken identity, o kaya naman kasama noong kanilang tatay o nanay na pinagsususpetsahan na sangkot sa droga, o kaya naman po ay talagang namamatay sa gitna ng firefight, kung mayroong mga labanan na nangyayari lalong-lalo na sa communities na masisikip ang mga daan, hindi maiiwasan na mayroong mga natatala na masasabi po natin na hindi minimal na bagay, na hindi dapat natin ito maliitin dahil ang nakasalalay dito ay hindi lang ang kanilang buhay kung hindi pati yong pangmatagalan na trauma sa kanilang mga pamilya.

Opo, mayroon tayong mga kaso katulad ni Kian delos Santos na kung saan mayroon nang nakakulong ngayon na tatlong pulis na nag-abuso po sa kanilang kapangyarihan, ngunit nababahala tayo doon sa dinamidami na iba pang mga kaso na magpasahanggang ngayon ay hindi pa nareresolba. Nandiyan po iyong kaso ng three-year old na si Myka Ulpina na namatay sa isang drug op sa Rizal. Nandiyan ang kaso ni Julius Sebastian at Joshua Laxamana at napakarami pang mga bata at kabataan, kaya huwag po nating itrato na maliit na bagay lang ang mga pagkamatay na ito na mga bata at kabataan.

Mr. Speaker, hayaan po ninyo akong magtanong dito sa isang pahayag na sinambit ng ating PDEA chief tungkol sa quota sa drug war. Sinabi niya po itong tungkol sa pagbibigay ng quota, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

Sinasabihan ko sila na gusto ko within a month, I need 30 to 40 operations. Otherwise, sinasabi ko na I have created an oversight committee to look at whether you are delivering or performing well, otherwise, you will be out as the regional director.

Mr. Speaker, nababahala po tayo sa ganitong mga pahayag kasi maaaring ma-interpret ito na dahil mayroon tayong mga sinusunod na performance quotas, kahit iyong mga walang kalaban-laban, iyong mga natutulog sa daan, ang mga napapaslang na hindi natin nire-report as victims ng legitimate drug-ops, o nire-report natin bilang mga nanlaban. Ito na po ang impact

noong ganitong mga pahayag. So, may policy po ba o mayroon ba tayong sinusunod na standards pagdating sa mga quotas na ito para ma-gauge or matantiya po natin kung nagpe-perform ba ang isang station, at sa case na ito, ang regional office po ng ating mga kapulisan? Nakasulat ho ba ito sa papel? Ano po ang policy ng PDEA pagdating dito?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang PDEA po ay kaisa sa drug war at alam nating malawak ang nasasakop at impluwensiya ng drug lords, kaya po naman para matulak ang ahensiya na mag-perform, just like any other agency, it is given a target to accomplish. Having a target means there is a way to measure success kasi kung wala po tayong target, hindi natin malalaman if we are achieving success. So, puwede na po nating masabi na kung may number na ibinigay as a guidance sa ating operatives at the different regional offices, this is to push them to perform. Ang laki nga ng inaasahan po natin, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, sa law enforcement agencies natin, particularly sa PDEA, to perform. This is a management tool, setting a target that they should reach para masabi na sila ay may accomplishment, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, manghihingi po tayo ng kopya ng mga polisiya ng DDB at ng PDEA tungkol dito. Sa tingin ko po, nararapat lamang na progressive iyong quota sa paraan na dapat naman, kung na-reach nila ang target for a month, dapat paliit ito nang paliit kasi iyon naman talaga ang measure ng success, kung iyong supply ba ay nababawasan, kung ang mga drug dependents ay nalalagay natin sa rehab. Hindi dapat maging pamantayan natin ang bilang ng mga nahuhuli o ang bilang ng mga napapaslang kasi kung ganoon ay parang sinabi na rin po natin na hindi effective iyong mga nauna nating mga ginawang operations kung nagpe-persist iyong problema sa mga partikular na lugar. Kaya po aabangan iyan ng Representasyong ito.

Ngayon, Mr. Speaker, tungkol naman po sa binanggit na drug watch list ng PDEA. Sa isang news report, sinabi po ng PDEA na mayroon silang drug watch list na kung saan nakasulat at na-validate na ang 6,000 na tao, at mayroon pang 60,000 na kailangan ma-validate sa drug watch list. Nababahala lang tayo dito, Mr. Speaker, sa pamamaraan na nagpa-publish ng mga names na nasa drug watch list daw. Bakit hindi na lang po tayo direktang magkaso kung mayroon talagang mga dapat i-file na mga kaso against these drug personalities? Ang nangyayari po ay parang nagiging tool ito to threaten at sa nakaraang eleksiyon po ay mukhang parang nagamit pa para mag-discourage ng support sa mga partikular na kandidato. Kaya, ano po ba ang polisiya ng PDEA pagdating sa mga drug watch list na ito?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang mga watch lists ng PDEA ay subject to validation. Ang ibig sabihin po, patuloy nilang iimbestigahan at mangangalap ng impormasyon hanggang sa makakuha sila ng sapat na impormasyon para either mag-conduct ng operation o kaya ay maghain ng kaso. Hindi po patakaran ng PDEA na maglabas ng mga pangalan pero mayroon silang mga minamanmanan, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ELAGO. So, Mr. Speaker, maaasahan natin na wala na pong lalabas na ganitong mga listahan na hindi naman po vetted, hindi validated, na maski nga na-validate pa iyan ay dapat kasuhan na lang natin at hindi po parang trial by publicity. Ang nangyayari ay nalalagay din sa panganib ang buhay noong mga tinatrato nating inosente pa hanggang hindi pa po nahahatulan ng korte ang kanilang mga partikular na kaso.

REP. BIAZON. Ang PDEA, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ay hindi o walang patakaran na maglabas ng mga pangalan.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, ang huling concern po ng Representasyong ito ng KABATAAN Party-List ay tungkol sa mandatory random drug testing sa mga eskuwelahan. Noong humarap po dito ang Department of Health, sinabi nila na hindi pa malinaw ang mekanismo kung ano ang gagawin sa mga estudyante na makikitaan na may certain level of drug dependence. Mayroon ba silang pupuntahan na rehabilitation center? Paano po ang referral system natin dito? May pondo ba for 2020? Lalong-lalo na, Mr. Speaker, para sa taong ito, sa bisa ng CHED Memorandum Order No. 18, series of 2018, sisimulan na po mag-conduct ng mandatory random drug testing sa 2,300 universities and colleges sa buong bansa. Nababahala po tayo na ang mangyayari lamang dito ay parang tokhang sa mga eskuwelahan, hindi po mapapayagan iyan ng mga kabataan.

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, ang Dangerous Drugs Board po ay sumusunod sa mga sinasabi sa Dangerous Drug Law with regard to the conduct of random drug testing in schools. Unang-una rin po diyan, siyempre, ay iyong kanilang confidentiality at iyong engagement with school authorities. Sa ngayon po ay mayroon na silang na-accredit na 1,163 physicians o mga doktor na kung sakaling mayroon mag-positibo na mga kabataan, they will be referred for treatment to these physicians under the Department of Health.

Nagpopondo rin po ang Dangerous Drugs Board ng capacity building activities para po iyong mga doktor na ito ay may sapat na kaalaman at kakayahan ng mag-handle ng drug-dependent students or youth. Ito po ay kanilang programa na sang-ayon pa rin naman sa Republic Act No. 9165, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, paano po namo-monitor ng DDB ang conduct ng mga drug testing activities na ito? Sa tala po ng Representasyong ito, mayroon pong mga nag-report sa akin na ginagawa ang drug testing before the school year starts and then, parang nawawalan po ito ng bisa kasi it is being announced. So, hindi po ito talagang procedure na random, na dapat hindi alam kung kailan at sino ang magte-take. Ang nangyayari po dito ay parang nagiging dagdag na pagkakakitaan pa, pagkatapos, ay nade-defeat din iyong purpose ng random drug testing kung ganoon. So, mayroon po bang mekanismo in place para matiyak po na iyong conduct nitong random drug testing ay nasasaayon sa batas?

REP. BIAZON. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, Board Resolution No. 6, series of 2003, provides for a mechanism wherein there is a monitoring system, as well as a feedback system, from those who will conduct the drug testing in the different schools. So, there is, to say positively, a mechanism to monitor it.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, anong assurance po ang mabibigay ng DDB at PDEA na iyong nangyari sa tokhang, na ang sabi nga natin ay walang mapapaslang na inosente, na mayroon lang tayong mga target pagdating sa pagsugpo ng droga pero nagbunga naman ng mga pagkamatay ng mga walang kalaban-laban, ng mga inosente, ay hindi mangyayari sa loob ng mga eskuwelahan.

REP. BIAZON. The assurance is there, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. The PDEA has conducted itself properly since the start of the anti-drug campaign, and the record speaks for itself, and they commit not to tarnish the image of the agency, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ELAGO. Mr. Speaker, ang pinakamahalaga na assurance para sa mga kabataan ay iyong bibigyan po natin ng hustisya ang mga naging biktima, iyong lahat na maibibigay na suporta para sa lawyers, para sa speedy resolution ng mga kaso na mga deaths under investigation, at iyong lahat ng mga nadamay na mga bata at kabataan sa mga legitimate operations ay mabibigyan po natin ng hustisya at hindi na ito mauulit muli, na hindi na hahaba ang listahan at matitigil na ang pamamaslang.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker. Maraming salamat, distinguished Sponsor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Maraming salamat din po sa ating Representante ng KABATAAN Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAUTISTA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Victoria V. Umali from A TEACHER Party-List.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Representative from A TEACHER Party-List, Hon. Victoria Umali, is hereby recognized.

REP. UMALI (V.). Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as there is no other Member from the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budgets of the Dangerous Drugs Board and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

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

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, the Majority joins the Minority in the same motion.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a joint motion from the the Minority and the Majority to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budgets of the Dangerous Drugs Board and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The period of interpellation and debate on the budgets of these two agencies are hereby terminated.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I ask the leadership of the DSWD to please prepare for their budget defense. For now, Mr. Speaker, I move we suspend the session.

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

It was 8:20 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 8:24 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider the proposed budget of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

Please proceed.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, before we begin, may we acknowledge the presence of our guests in the Plenary from the Department of Social Welfare and Development. We have Secretary Rolando Joselito Bautista and the rest of the family of the DSWD, and all the heads of the attached agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Honorable Secretary Bautista and the rest of the delegation of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and attached agencies, welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. France Castro from the ACT Teachers Party-List—I withdraw that motion.

Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Sponsor of the proposed budget of the DSWD, Rep. Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong of the First District of Negros Oriental.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Sponsor, the Lady from Negros Oriental, is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. LIMKAICHONG

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, my distinguished colleagues, I rise to sponsor the proposed budgets of the DSWD and its seven attached agencies in the amount of P158,559,651,000.

Mr. Speaker, it is also my honor to be with my colleagues who will also be shepherding and defending the budgets of the attached agencies, Vice Chairman Junie Cua for the NCIP or the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples and Vice Chairman Peter John Calderon for the other attached agency.

Mr. Speaker, we are now ready to defend the budgets of the DSWD and its attached agencies.

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

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. France L. Castro of the ACT TEACHERS Party-List for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Representative of ACT TEACHERS Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Magandang gabi po sa inyo.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Could the distinguished Sponsor yield to some clarificatory questions about the budget and programs of the DSWD, Mr. Speaker?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Ang DSWD o Department of Social Welfare and Development po ay isang ahensiyang tagapagdala ng direktang serbisyo sa mga mamamayan, lalo na po sa mga bulnerableng sektor gaya ng mga kababaihan, bata, national minorities at iba pang mamamayan na direktang nangangailangan ng tulong. Tama po ba? Ito po ba ang totoong mandate ng ating DSWD, Mr. Speaker, kagalang-galang na Sponsor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. You are correct, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Sa ganitong katangian ng ahensiya, ito po ay isang civilian agency, with civilian personnel, with civilian projects, activities and programs, at siyempre po, civilian beneficiaries. On handling cash distribution intended para sa mga beneficiaries, nagto-total ito ng P154.363 billion. Tama po ba, distinguished Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. You are correct po.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Billions of taxpayers' money every year for various assistance programs, at kung ang batas lang natin ang masusunod, ang magde-determine at ang nakakaalam kung sino ang may pangangailangan ay ang mga social workers at mga field personnel ng DSWD. So, Mr. Speaker, ang tanong—tama po ba sa mandato ng DSWD na mga social workers and field personnel ang talagang nakakakilala noong mga totoong benepisyaryo na binanggit natin kanina po?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, tama po si Cong. France Castro.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Matatandaan din po natin, distinguished Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong Memorandum Circular No. 9 ni dating Secretary Judy Taguiwalo, na tinawag ng ilan na isang anti-pork memo at anti-padrino order, na-issue ito para protektahan ang pera ng bayan at siguraduhing mapupunta ang pera sa mga taong talagang nangangailangan. Bilang pagsunod

sa Belgica vs. Ochoa that declared pork barrel as being unconstitutional, at para rin protektahan ang mga empleyado ng DSWD gaya ng social workers mula sa influence-peddling and harassment—ang dalawang katangian na ito ng DSWD ay ang dahilan kung bakit tayo dapat mahigpit na siguraduhin ang integridad ng DSWD bilang sibilyan agency. Tama po ba?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. You are correct po.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Noong August 28, 2019, sa kasalukuyang taon, mayroon pong pinirmahan ang DSWD at ang AFP on collaborating on the activities and active partnership on the preparation, prepositioning and delivery of social protection programs, specialized and statutory programs and projects such as SLP, Pantawid Pamilya, RCCT, MCCT, Kalahi CIDSS, et cetera to ensure that the meager resources of the government will be given to the rightful beneficiaries and shall significantly impact on the internal security problems of the country. So, ang tanong ko po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, to ensure that the meager resources of the government will be given to the rightful beneficiaries, ano po—sinasabi natin na ang rightful na mga personnel para ma-determine kung sino po iyong tinatawag na mga rightful beneficiaries, ang nakasalalay dito ay ang ating mga social workers, field personnel, at minsan pa nga, may nagrerekomenda mula doon sa ating mga local government unit. Dito po sa pinirmahang MOU, parang bawat kibot po ng ating DSWD ay naka-coordinate at reported sa militar, sundalo o official man iyan ng AFP, para mag-intervene sa assessment and verification of beneficiaries sa distribution ng assistance mula sa DSWD. Tama po ba? Nakalagay po ito sa MOU, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, is my colleague referring to the PAMANA Program?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Hindi lang po sa PAMANA pero sa lahat po ng programa. Nakita ko na coordinated lahat ng gagawin ng DSWD dito sa pinirmahang MOU between the DSWD and the AFP. So, ano po iyong kapasidad ng AFP para ma-determine kung sino ba talaga iyong rightful beneficiaries ng mga programa ng DSWD, mga degree holder ba ito at nakapag-aral ba ito ng social work, sociology, social psychology or related disciplines? May karanasan ba ang mga ito sa community work, social needs assessment, et cetera? So, ito po iyong MOU na binabanggit natin, Mr. Speaker, kasi nakalagay dito iyong coordination ng DSWD sa ating mga military.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, to answer that question, it is not true that the Department of Social Welfare and Development is invoking such intervention.

In fact, the DSWD and the Armed Forces recently signed this Memorandum of Understanding to improve and synchronize the efforts of the government to deliver social welfare development programs in areas affected by calamity and armed conflicts. So, it is a collaboration of the Philippine Army and the DSWD. This is also to protect the social workers that are fielded to these conflict-affected areas.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, mukhang hindi po iyan directly specified, Mr. Speaker, sa sinasabi ng ating butihing Sponsor dahil nakalagay dito mismo, among the responsibilities, designate an official representative with overall responsibility in carrying out this MOU, including the formulation of work and financial plans for programs, projects, whenever necessary to be undertaken pursuant to it; notify the AFP on any changes on official designate-representative regularly; require all central offices, bureaus, counterparts to coordinate and engage with their AFP counterparts; agree with the other party within the limits of existing applicable laws to exchange information and documentation to the fullest extent possible on matters of common interests; require the bureaus, sections, units to submit quarterly reports in the implementation of E.O. 70 following the format of the DWSO; harmonize planning, monitoring; provide technical assistance and as need arises, conduct evaluation and effectiveness.

So, ganoon din po iyong nakalagay doon sa responsibility ng AFP. Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, nababahala po ang Kinatawan na ito dahil sa ibinibigay na napakalaking responsibilidad sa AFP dito sa pagpapatupad noong mga programa at mga projects ng DSWD. Ang tanong po, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Sponsor, paano natin mapapanatili iyong integridad ng ating ahensiya bilang isang civilian agency kung ang Memorandum of Understanding na ito ay nagpapakita ng pagkontrol ng AFP, ng militar, dito sa ating ahensiya in terms of implementation of its programs and projects?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, my dear colleague, the Department of Social Welfare and Development is hopeful that the collaboration with the AFP would strengthen the peace-building initiatives of this administration, especially in conflict-stricken communities and calamities. The EO 70, as you mentioned, is a wholistic approach in ending armed conflict, and it is an inter-agency program that supports the DSWD where it contributes to the improvement of the community. The PAMANA shall be used to provide community-focused intervention designed to address risk and vulnerability in conflict-affected and vulnerable areas.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Isa rin po ikinakahala, Mr.

Speaker, ng Kinatawan ito ay iyong milyong-milyon na mga kababayan natin na sinabi natin kanina na mga vulnerable civilians. Mga mahihirap na mga civilians na may 4 million para po doon sa 4Ps. Dito po sa bagong budget natin, mayroon po tayong inilaan—tama po ba ito—na P37.2 milyon mula sa TRAIN collections na magsu-support sa Unconditional Cash Transfer Program for the poorest 10 million households. Nakalagay po dito ay iyong coordination noong mga beneficiaries natin. Malinaw dito na iyon ating pong DSWD ay makikipag-coordinate dito, kaugnay noong mga beneficiaries ng mga programang ito, lalong-lalo na po doon sa 4Ps at iyong PAMANA na iyan at saka iyong UCT program po.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. It is necessary, Mr. Speaker, that the Armed Forces of the Philippines coordinates with all those national agencies, including the DSWD, in making sure that the social services will reach these conflict-affected areas and likewise, to develop community resilience against conflict vulnerability, as you mentioned. So, this is a strategy, as I said, a wholistic approach to end conflict and to help in the distribution of social services in those areas.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, pati po ba iyong mga listahan nitong beneficiaries na ito ay kailangang may kopya ang AFP o ang military natin? Kasi nakalagay din dito iyong coordination nitong mga—wala po bang nakikita ang DSWD na paglabag sa privacy law? Kasi, sa experience po natin sa teachers, malinaw na sinabi noong ating National Privacy Commission na itong mga essential, very confidential na mga listahan ay hindi dapat napapasakamay ng ninuman nang hindi natin alam iyong purpose lalong-lalo na po ngayon, Mr. Speaker, na laganap iyong mga human rights violation na ang target ay itong mga mahihirap, na ang target ay itong mga farmer, itong mga manggagawa, itong mga nanghihingi ng pabahay at iba pa. So, kung ito po iyong mangyayari, wala po bang nakikita ang DSWD na problema dito, Mr. Speaker, kagalang-galang na Sponsor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, it is not true that the AFP has to have copies of the list of beneficiaries. Under the program, especially those under the protective program, the list is based on the NHTS-Poverty Reduction list gathered by the DSWD. And this list is, of course, shared with the other agency but not necessarily given to the AFP—agencies like the Department of Labor and Employment, the TESDA and the DepEd—to address these social issues and concerns.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, sinasabi po ba, Mr. Speaker, ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor na mapoproteksiyunan ang privacy ng beneficiaries ng mga

programa ng DSWD? Kasi, primarily po, talagang ito ay iyong mga vulnerable na mga mamamayan natin.

Sa kongkreto, G. Ispiker, Gng. Isponsor, paano po iyong operationalization ng MOU na ito? Lahat ba ng mga application ay dadaan sa taong itinalaga ng AFP? May clearance ba sa kanya bago magbigay ng assistance? May AFP persons ba sa bawat desk ng DSWD? Babae o batang lumapit sa women's desk sa isang komunidad, inirereklamo ang pangha-harass o pangri-rape ng isang sundalo na nagkakampo sa mga pasilidad nila, sa barangay center, basketball court, halimbawa, ano ang gagawin dito? Hihingi muna ba ng clearance sa battalion o brigade bago bigyan ng tulong ang babae o bata sa mga ganitong mga pagkakataon kasi coordinated ito? So, kung mayroong mga magiging problema po tayo against dito—alam naman natin sa parte ng Mindanao, iyong martial law, nagko-cause ito ng karamihan sa human rights violations.

Kung tayo po ang lalapitan, ang DSWD, paano po iyong operational system natin sa ganitong pagkakataon, kagalang-galang na Sponsor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, may batas po tayo, under the Privacy Act, hindi puwedeng ibigay iyong mga record or name or data regarding individuals, but the reason the AFP is present or collaborating with the other national agencies is to make sure of the safety and security of the DSWD personnel in the implementation of DSWD programs, and the AFP, again, does not intervene in the guidelines of the DSWD in the delivery of services to the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kung kumontra po ba ang militar sa assessment o verification ng social worker, sino po ang masusunod, beneficiary raw na member, halimbawa, ng mga tinatawag ng mga militar na enemies of the State, hindi ba? So, alam naman nating lahat na ang mga progresibo na lumalaban o nag-o-oppose sa mga policy, ang tawag diyan ng ating gobyerno ay mga enemy of the State.

So, ano ang mangyayari sa mga beneficiary na sana o iyong taong manghihingi ng tulong sa social worker or field officer ng DSWD? Anong assurance ninyo na walang mangyayaring masama sa kanila samantalang napakarami ang mga human rights violation? Halimbawa po ang mayor, may mga referral, halimbawa, at hindi ito na-verify o wala doon sa assessment ng militar, ano ang mangyayari sa mga ganitong klaseng referral, G. Ispiker, kagalang-galang na Sponsor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the DSWD serves every Filipino who is qualified under the program. Kapag nag-qualify po sila regardless of religion, regardless of their political ideology, tinutulungan po sila ng DSWD.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Siguro mag-cite pa ako ng example, Mr. Speaker. Mayroon pong nangyaring ito, mayroon pong MOU sa panahon po ni Sec. Judy Taguiwalo na kung saan iyon po sanang mga benepisyo para sa ating mga pambansang Minorya ay pinigilan po ito noon ng ating ahensiya o hindi nagawa dahil po sa recommendation. Ito nga, wala pa ngang MOU, ginagawa na iyong subjugation ng military sa DSWD.

So, hindi malayo po, Mr. Speaker, Gng. Sponsor, na mangyayari rin ito dahil alam naman po natin na sa bawat intervention ng AFP sa execution ng mga program ng DSWD, the entire agency turns into a mere adjunct of the AFP and the NTF, and subjugates the social services. Distinguished Sponsor, tatandaan po natin, mayroon pong P154 billion under the disposal of the DSWD na programa totaling the programs of this na sa tingin natin magiging malaki ang parte, responsibilidad na gagawin na rekomendasyon dito ng AFP.

Sana po manatili, hindi ba, iyong supremacy of the civilian authority over the military dahil sa nakikita ko sa MOU ay mukhang hindi ito mangyayari. Titingnan natin, Mr. Speaker, Gng. Isponsor, sa kongkretong pagpapatupad ng iba't ibang mga programa ng ating ahensiya.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, going to my next topic or next issues, sa general summary po ng budget ng DSWD, napansin ko po rito, 2019, 2020, tumaas po iyong budget ng Office of the Secretary—from P138 billion to P156 billion in 2020. So, mayroon pong itinaas na P18 billion. So, puwede po bang malaman, Mr. Speaker, what constitutes the increase in the budget of the Office of the Secretary?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. The justification for the increase in the budget of the DSWD, especially those lodged in the Office of the Secretary, is the share of for example, the social pension for indigent senior citizens, the 4Ps which has increased in the value of the fixed grant given to each beneficiary.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, ...

REP. LIMKAICHONG. And also for the Supplementary Feeding Program.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). ... bakit po ito nasa Office of the Secretary? Hindi po ba mayroon tayong separate na talagang mag-aasikaso po ng programang ito? In fact, Mr. Speaker, Gng. Isponsor, kung titingnan po natin iyong budget, iyong assistance to persons with disability, bumaba po ito ng P26 million. Comprehensive project for street children, bumaba po ito ng P81,000. Services to distressed overseas Filipinos, may P160 na pagbawas. Iyong services to displaced persons, may P124. Iyong recovery and reintegration, P58 million;

disaster response and rehabilitation, bumaba din po ito ng P4 billion; reducing vulnerabilities of children from hunger and malnutrition in ARMM or Bangsamoro, bumaba rin po ito ng P375,000.

So, ito po, iyong katulad ng sinasabi ng ating butihing Sponsor, kung tinutukoy niya iyong assistance natin sa mga senior citizen, from this P18 billion na variance or difference, magkano po iyong pinatutungkulan nating budget para po doon sa senior citizens at bakit napunta po ito sa Office of the Secretary?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the Office of the Secretary is the one handling majority of the programs of the DSWD and the rest of the budget goes to the attached agencies, kaya po malaki iyong budget ng Office of the Secretary.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. But it has several programs attached to the Office of the Secretary.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Thank you, Gng. Isponsor. Mr. Speaker, malaki po iyong inilaki ng budget para sa 4Ps—P19 billion sa kabuuang dagdag. Pero sa mga binanggit ko pong mga programa under the Office of the Secretary na bumaba halos lahat ng budget, maaari po bang maipaliwanag ito ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor kung bakit po itong mga direct assistance natin doon sa talagang may immediate na mga pangangailangan ay bumaba po?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, nagkaroon tayo ng institutionalization ng 4Ps, Republic Act No. 11310, kaya po tumaas iyong budget sa 4Ps, especially that which accounts for almost 70 percent of the budget of the Office of the Secretary.

Nagkaroon po ng increase sa educational grants and also P600 for the rice in cash subsidy and Unconditional Cash Transfer grant of P200 for 2018 and P300 for the year 2019 and year 2020.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, Mr. Speaker, kagalang-galang na Sponsor, parang sinasabi natin dito na karamihan po ng mga tinapayas natin o na-cut natin sa mga budget na para doon sa iba pang mga programa ng DSWD ay inilalaan natin lahat doon sa Unconditional Cash Transfer at iyong sa 4Ps natin.

Mayroon na po bang—dahil ang 4Ps po, Mr. Speaker, Gng. Isponsor, ay more than ano na po, 10 years na, mayroon na po bang pag-aaral ang ating ahensiya kaugnay noong—dahil ito naman ay stopgap lang naman ito, hindi po ba, iyong ating Pantawid Pamilya? Pero nga dahil tayo sa Kongreso, inaprubahan natin na maging batas ito, na ma-institutionalize ang 4Ps, ibig sabihin natin, na-institutionalize na rin natin

ang poverty. So, mayroon po bang pag-aaral ang ating ahensiya kaugnay noong unang mga paglalaan natin ng budget dito 10 years ago or hanggang ngayon? Mayroon po ba tayong study kaugnay na may nakatawid na ba? Ano na ba iyong nangyari dito sa ating pondong inilaan dito sa 4Ps?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, contrary sa sinabi po ni Congresswoman France, this is not a stopgap. Unang-una, iyong 4Ps is investing in human capital, especially through education and health ng mga bata aged zero to 18. This is a long-term investment of the government. And sinasabi ninyo na impact po, the Conditional Cash Transfer or 4Ps has profound impact on poverty alleviation.

The poverty incidence in 2009 was 26.3 percent of the population and 25.2 percent in 2012. But from 2013 to 2015, poverty incidence declined by 3.6 points or almost 21.6 percent. So, the faster decline in poverty incidence compared to years 2009 to 2012, which merely had a 1.6 point, was attributed to the 4Ps. Kaya tumaas po despite the fact na nagkaroon po tayo ng mga typhoon, El Niño, higher food prices, inflation and slow agricultural production. So, nagkaroon talaga siya ng positive impact especially dito sa alleviation ng poverty.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Salamat po, Gng. Isponsor, pero ang hinahanap po natin dito iyong evaluation natin doon sa more than four million na beneficiaries natin dito sa 4Ps na ito. At kung totoo po iyong sinasabi natin, ang hinahanap ko po, Mr. Speaker, Gng. Isponsor, ay iyong evaluation per se dito sa four million na ito. Mayroong iba't ibang programa like education, health, livelihood, at iba't iba pa. So, mayroon po bang komprehensibong assessment, evaluation, study na dito iyong ahensiya? Kung mayroon po, Mr. Speaker, maaari po bang bigyan ang Kinatawang ito ng ganoong pag-aaral at assessment?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker, malaki po ang impact noong highlights, sabihin nating highlights ng programa for education.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). In the interest of time, Mr. Speaker, may we ask the distinguished Sponsor to just submit to this Representative the assessment report.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, mayroon po ditong COA report on the anomalies in the 4Ps—iyong 4Ps natin mula 2016 to 2018. The COA conducted duplicate tests on nine sample payrolls of the DSWD and found 209 names that received at least P3.57 million in benefits. In its audit report, the COA said duplicate

names existed in the payrolls from all regions mostly in the ARMM— anomalies—Region I, Caraga. So, ano po ba iyong nagawa dito noong ating ahensiya, Mr. Speaker, at bakit po ito nangyayari? Napanagot ba iyong mga personnel na nagpabaya dito sa ganitong responsibilidad nila?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, to ensure that the right beneficiaries are receiving the cash grant or the conditional cash grant, the DSWD really has gone a long way in improving its monitoring mechanism. The DSWD has a frequent updating system ...

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Oo.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. ... on 4Ps that: 1) captures the most recent information about the household; 2) suspends those who willingly do not comply with the requirements; 3) removes those who are no longer eligible; and 4) covers households not yet served by 4Ps. Kaya po nagkaroon tayo ng mga correction and updating of household data. Mayroon din po tayong suspension of households na hindi na eligible. Mayroon ding delisting of households. And we are also trying to reach the target of the coverage of the 4Ps which is at 4.4 million households. So, all these mechanisms have translated to minimal COA findings and an audit order memorandum. So, there is really a reduction of the duplication of data inconsistencies of 4Ps.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, mayroon din po dito—hindi ba halos 50,000 beneficiaries ng 4Ps ang tinanggal sa listahan ng DSWD? Binabanggit ng ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, iyong mga violations, pero ang pangunahin po nating objective nitong 4Ps na ito ay maitawid ang ating mga mamamayan mula sa kahirapan, hindi iyong dahil sa sila ay nag-violate dito sa mga regulations na ito.

So, ano po ba iyong ginawang interventions? Ganoon na lang ba, ide-delist natin? Mananatili pa rin itong 7,000 or mga ilang tinanggal natin sa kahirapan. So, ano po ang kapalit nito na intervention na gagawin po ng DSWD?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Ni-recall naman po, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, iyong na-delist and, of course, dadaan sila sa proseso. Those who were delisted but can still qualify for the next round, then they are back, nagkaroon na tayo ngayon ng enumerations, hindi ba? This is the Listahan 3, which can accommodate additional 4Ps members.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, iyon nga po, problematic po talaga in terms of iyong mga anomalya, korapsyon itong hindi maayos na monitoring ng ating mga beneficiaries dito sa 4Ps na ito.

Ang laki-laki po ng pondo na inilalaan natin dito sa 4Ps na ito samantalang iyong mga programa po na talagang mandated na gawin po ng DSWD ay binabawasan ng pondo, at maraming mga budget cuts, mga programa po na talagang pang-sustain, at programa po na talagang hindi lang dole-out ang maitutulong nito doon sa ating mga mamamayan dahil alam naman natin na gagawan nila ng anomalya ito.

So, sana po ang DSWD ay maging tapat doon sa kanyang mandato na talagang magamit ang ating Ahensiya para doon sa poverty alleviation ng ating mga mamamayan. Iyon lang po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Salamat po.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to our interpellator.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Maraming salamat din po sa inyo.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Solomon R. Chungalao from the Lone District of Ifugao for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Gentleman from Ifugao is hereby recognized. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the honorable Sponsor.

My concern is not with the DSWD but with the NCIP which is attached to the DSWD. If the honorable Sponsor would like to answer—it is more of a manifestation. We would like to know from the NCIP, what is the minimum requirement for an ancestral domain claim that will be filed with their office?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. LIMKAICHONG. May we request for a minute of suspension, Mr. Speaker, so I can turn over the floor to honorable Cong. Junie E. Cua.

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

It was 9:04 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:04 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is resumed. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CASTELO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Junie Cua.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Sponsor, the Gentleman from Quirino, is hereby recognized.

REP. CUA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In response to the question of the Gentleman from Ifugao, the minimum requirement for an application for an ancestral domain claim is very simple: it requires, since time immemorial, continuous presence up to the present. This is provided in the IPRA. Continuous possession may be interrupted for reasons provided in the law as well, and to cite a few, if there is a war, if there is a calamity, if there is a government project or for reason of deceit or stealth. So, these are some of the exceptions allowed in the IPRA, but to reiterate, the minimum requirement is, since time immemorial, continuous presence up to the present. In fact, the leading case on this minimum requirement is the case of Cariño. Cariño was an Igorot who had 130-plus hectares of pastureland, which has been held since time immemorial, even before the coming of the Spaniards or even before the coming of the Americans. This was handed down from generations to generations. During the US occupation or the American occupation, when the Regalian Doctrine was adopted—meaning, all lands belong to the State—Mr. Cariño tried to apply for the registration of the titles of his land. The Registration Office refused to register them because all lands belong to the State and it became public domain. So, Cariño filed a case which went all the way up to the Supreme Court of the United States, and the Court said, “No, this is part of a native title because this was occupied by Cariño since time immemorial, continuously up to the time of registration.” So, continuously up to the present is a requirement in the application for ancestral claim, Your Honor.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a second follow-up question, perhaps, the Sponsor could answer, in an application for CADT, who bears the burden of proof?

REP. CUA. Well, the burden of proof, of course, is on the applicant because there is no presumption of a native title when an applicant applies for a CADT.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Thank you.

REP. CUA. So, they should be able to prove it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. CHUNGALAO. Mr. Speaker, and one last manifestation. May we ask the NCIP to come out with,

in black and white, the definition of ancestral claim domain, plus the answers to our questions a while ago, in black and white, to the Committee so that we will be guided accordingly.

REP. CUA. Thank you.

REP. CHUNGALAO. That would be all, Mr. Speaker, if the honorable Sponsor will comply to that.

REP. CUA. Thank you. We will comply, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you, Gentleman from Ifugao. The distinguished Sponsor will take note of the request of the Gentleman from Ifugao.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Cong. Janette Garin from the First District of Iloilo for her interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The Lady from the province of Iloilo is hereby recognized.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished colleague.

A pleasant good evening to the DSWD family as well as its attached agencies. I am privileged that I have here my colleagues and my mentors who all are one in saying that poverty should be eradicated.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may I inquire as to the risks that the members and officials of the DSWD family are facing in their day-to-day work?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, there is always a risk in everything, wherever we are, wherever we go, and even in the workplace, there is always a risk, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mayroon na po ba, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, na nasaksak, nabaril o nasagasaan na social worker or an official, for that matter, in the course of performing their official duties?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, we do not have the accurate data, but I am sure there are instances, although, I would say, they are not accurate, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). But there are pending cases.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. We do not have an inkling.

REP. GARIN (J.). I remember ...

REP. LIMKAICHONG. It could be accidents or...

REP. GARIN (J.). ... a very good performing social worker who was stabbed while on duty. May I further ask, Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, do we have DSWD officials, career officials, for that matter, even appointed officials who have pending cases simply as a matter of performing their job?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, we do or they do.

REP. GARIN (J.). Do we have officials and employees who are currently or have previously faced criminal and administrative charges because of alleged ghost projects?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Well, there are pending cases with the Ombudsman, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker. There are 33 DSWD personnel with Ombudsman cases—31 personnel of the 33 are separated from service while 2 personnel are still employed with the DSWD pending their cases.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, are these related to ghost projects?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, some of these cases are related to ghost projects.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, having worked with the DSWD for a long time, in my heart and in my mind, I would never believe that any career official in the DSWD family will tolerate this practice. Is the distinguished Sponsor in agreement to my statement?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Paano po ba sila nadadamay? Paano po ba sila nadadamay, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor? Why are they being dragged into these cases? Are they signatories? Are they recipients? Are they proponents or is it a mere obligation? Iyon pong dinaanan ka ng papel at ikaw ay, sad to say, nadamay?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. These are people whose cases were filed when they were performing their jobs, Mr. Speaker, so this can be shown or this report is in the COA findings and the current administration does not have the complete list of reasons, but true, Mr. Speaker, they are still pending with the court.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, basically, what happens is

that, in the course of performing their jobs—marami po ba, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang trabaho ng DSWD family?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, in fact, hindi lang naman siguro sa DSWD lang, kahit sa ibang ahensya, mayroon ding similar cases.

REP. GARIN (J.). If you compare the work of the Department of Social Welfare and Development to those of other government agencies, masasabi po ba nating karaniwan po silang nagpupuyat, nag-overtime, pumupunta sa mga kung saan-saang lugar dahil kailangan po nilang gampanan ang kanilang tungkulin?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, will you describe as callous and heartless the real officials who are responsible for these cases who are now hiding in the cloak of the DSWD blaming and telling the courts na kasalanan po iyan ng Departamento kasi sila naman po ang implementing agency.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, we are not in a position to divulge or comment on this since these are all pending in court.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you very much, distinguished Sponsor, honorable Speaker, distinguished colleague for that comment. Ang sa akin lang po is, kung malaman po natin iyon pong kanila bang mga pagkadamay sa napakaraming kaso na ito—some are in the Sandiganbayan, some are in the Office of the Ombudsman, papalabas pa lang po iyong iba, and, as you have mentioned, 33 DSWD officials have already been removed from service, either terminated or they opted for early retirement. Others are still there facing a lot of cases, and some are still forthcoming. I hope they will not have more cases. Ito po ba, sa pangkaraniwan, ay iyong kasalanan nila ay pumirma sila sa memorandum of agreement between the DSWD and the other offices concerned in the implementation, like the bogus NGOs involved?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, I think, it happened in the past.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague, the reason I am bringing this up to the attention of this honorable Body is kawawa naman po ang DSWD. Takbuhan natin sila kung nangangailangan ang mga taumbayan—livelihood man, panglibing, pangkain—name it, they have it. It is one of the most abused agencies if we talk about overtime and

underpayment, subalit ang pinakamasakit po at hindi lang po natin alam, ang dami po sa kanila na ngayon ay hindi alam kung saan kukuha ng pambayad ng abogado. Iyon namang mga may kaso na at nag-post ng bail ay tila pinabayaan noong mga totoong kasabwat at gumawa ng karumal-dumal na krimen ng panlalapastangan ng pera ng taumbayan.

Will the distinguished Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, agree to these?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, and it is so sad and I also share the sentiment of Deputy Minority Leader Janette Garin.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, that the honorable Sponsor agrees with us na napakakawawa po talaga ng DSWD. Takbuhan kung may pangangailangan at kung nakuha na ng iba ang kanilang pangangailangan—ang pinakamasama pa, kung ang ahensya ay ginagamit para pampataba ng bulsa ng ibang opisyal, ngayon ay tila hindi lang po sila iniwan, kung hindi, pinagbibintangan pa at itinuturo pa na kasalanan nila dahil sila ay implementing agency.

Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, what happened has already happened. Masakit mang sabihin, kilala po natin ang ibang gumawa ng ganito sa ating mga kawawang career officials. Now that the problem is there, what help can the Department give or what would you propose so that these affected DSWD personnel and officials and their families will be helped, in terms of legal fees—what do you call that—money for bail, cash bond or bail bond? Ano po ang puwede nating gawin?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, at the moment, although these DSWD personnel have their own lawyers. The DSWD has provided technical assistance to the personnel with Ombudsman cases. The personnel are awaiting DBM approval of claims under the Legal Defense Fund, so they are being assisted in claiming this Legal Defense Fund. On that note also, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, this is really timely that you brought up this issue because it is of national importance that we also look into the welfare of these personnel.

So, it could be a bill that we can support. Congress can support a bill, probably, creating a legal insurance fund for government officials and employees which is being done in other countries, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). That is very welcome, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. In fact, I know it is not the proper time that we have—of course, 303 or 306 Congressmen—if our distinguished colleagues here will be amenable, we, in the Minority, are all willing to possibly give at least P2,500 each from our own pockets, let us pool this together, and donate this to the DWSD

career officials who are now facing a lot of cases simply because they did their job.

I will be tackling that in another forum. Alam ko naman po na marami po sa mga Kongresista ang hindi manghihinayang na tulungan iyong ating DSWD family dahil sa ngayon ay kailangang kailangan nila tayo, at iyon po ang masakit, kapag kailangan natin sila, ang dali po nilang lapitan. At ngayon po na sila ay medyo nadudurog sa sangkatutak nang kaso, nawala na po iyong mga nagbenepisyo sa kanila. I hope not everybody but apparently some of those, baka nga mayroon po diyan sa DSWD family na naging cause ng ganitong problema na ngayon ay nandidiyan naman po, parinig-rinig lang po, tulungan ninyo naman iyong mga taong nadamay nang dahil sa inyo.

On the part of Congress, and I know the honorable Speaker will also be very amenable that all of us will contribute the amount, depende po sa inyo, but if we will combine ourselves, at least, kahit papaano po ay maibsan at mabigyan po ng pambayad ng abogado at pambayad sa korte at pang-bail ng ating kaawa-awang opisyaes ng Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Moving forward, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, I learned that there are already a lot of attached agencies to the Department of Social Welfare and Development. May I please hear, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the mandate of the Council for the Welfare of Children?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn over the floor to the person in charge, Hon. Peter John D. Calderon.

REP. CALDERON. All right.

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

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize Hon. Peter John D. Calderon. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, the other Sponsor is hereby recognized.

REP. CALDERON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the CWC is to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of all laws relative to children; formulate and integrate national policies and long-range programs, monitor and evaluate the implementation of these policies and all programs and measures for children; and advocate and mobilize resources for the promotion and protection of children's rights, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

May I know if the Council for the Welfare of Children has any grants, subsidy or partnership with other government organizations, NGOs or even donor countries?

REP. CALDERON. Mr. Speaker, Yes, the CWC has some assistance from UNICEF, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Magkano po ito, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague?

REP. CALDERON. Mr. Speaker, the assistance from UNICEF depends on the proposals that are submitted by CWC to UNICEF, and for Fiscal Year 2018, something like P4 million, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). P4 million?

REP. CALDERON. P4 million.

REP. GARIN (J.). P4 million, iyan po iyong what year, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleague?

REP. CALDERON. That is for 2018, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, mayroon naman pong mga organisasyon na nagbibigay ng pondo sa ating Council for the Welfare of Children?

REP. CALDERON. It is UNICEF only, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker distinguished Sponsor, sa mandato ng CWC, nakasaad po doon ay liaising and coordinating with other government offices, even implementing and enforcing laws, and formulating and integrating national policy-making.

In other words, it is basically a policy-making body. Am I right, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. CALDERON. Yes, that is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Marami pa po sana akong tanong subalit gusto ko pong pagbigyan ang aking mga ibang kasamahan but, is the honorable Secretary, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, aware that the Executive Director of the CWC, every budget session, has been going around na parang apparently and allegedly on a door-to-door campaign in the offices of the Congressmen, asking for augmentation?

REP. CALDERON. Mr. Speaker, the Secretary is not aware.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, the honorable Secretary is not aware, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Sa akin naman po ay wala naman pong kaso iyon, but if you have audit findings, wherein funds are being allegedly misused at nandidito nga po, nakasaad po sa isang news item na mayroong halagang P1 million daw na ibinigay sa isang reporter na sana ay pondo, at ngayon nga ay na-disallow ng COA at sa pagkakarinig ko ay ibalik naman iyong pera, although we know that once released, ay mali na po iyon.

I can dig further into the audit findings, like overstocking of office supplies, failure to locate equipment, unliquidated transfers or iyon pong mga fund transfer na tila ay tumatagal. Ang punto lang po dito, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, is we would respect any officer who would work for the welfare of his or her office and one of that is asking for fund augmentation. However, I also believe, as a legislator, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that when you do this, it will actually be tantamount to removing the funds from other programs of the DSWD. Am I right, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. CALDERON. Yes, that is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, kung binabawasan po natin iyong ibang ahensya ng DSWD at mapupunta lang po ito doon sa mga events ay wala naman pong napupuntahan para sa ating mga kabataan, ay tila po sayang ang pera ng gobyerno. Will the honorable Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, agree with me on this?

REP. CALDERON. Yes, Mr. Speaker. I agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may I respectfully inform the honorable Secretary to call the attention of the Executive Director of the Council for the Welfare of Children. Okay naman po na magpadagdag, pero kung iyon pong ilang araw, or how many weeks, you are in Congress lobbying on a door-to-door basis, not only during this year but also the previous years, and forgetting na magkano ba ang makukuha mo doon, because wala naman pong pork barrel at bawal po iyong mga insertion at dito po sa Kongreso, pinaninindigan po namin na hindi dapat galawin ni Juan ang para kay Maria. These matters should instead be discussed within the Department, not in Congress, not lobbying before any Congressman and wasting the time of the CWC, because when you lobby here, you forget your work in your office. Remember there is DILG, DOH, DSWD, local government units, the European Union, USAID, all other UN agencies, ang dami pong puwedeng pagkuhanan ng pondo kung kabataan ang pinag-uusapan, but when you stir the

chemistry in DSWD and try to grab what is due for the other programs, then, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I believe it is now for the Secretary to act on that.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, may I appeal that in the subsequent budget hearings, all these matters be settled before DBM and internally, para naman po hindi nagagamit iyong ganoon na pagla-lobby sa mga bagay na hindi naman dapat pag-aksayahan ng panahon, and Legislators will instead focus on looking at the other programs that could really redound to a better performance of the other agencies.

With the indulgence of my colleagues, allow me to pose the last question. This is not from us. This is from our colleague who belongs to the Majority.

I was informed that our good colleague here was able to facilitate a program with regard with the rehabilitation of centers, around P2.3 billion. This was, of course, when she was still a Senator.

May I inquire, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, what is the status of this? And her follow-up question is, how much is needed to finish this? Because instead of advocacies, seminars, travels, media hubs of the CWC ED, eh baka po mas dapat ay pondohan natin iyong pagtatapos ng mga rehabilitation centers.

REP. CALDERON. Mr. Speaker, as of July 31, 2019, the DSWD has completed 99 percent procurement for the infrastructure projects and minor repairs, 100 percent for machineries and equipment and for furniture and fixtures, 69 percent of the construction, while the 27 percent is still ongoing, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Is funding needed, or not any more, Mr. Speaker?

REP. CALDERON. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we still need P1.5 billion more, Mr. Speaker.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. We will look forward to the proposal of our colleague here who is a former Senator insofar as having this P1.5 billion deficit for completion funded.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished colleagues.

REP. CALDERON. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you to the Lady from Iloilo.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BAGATSING. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Eufemia “Ka Femia” C. Cullamat from BAYAN MUNA Party-List for her interpellation.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Our distinguished colleague from BAYAN MUNA is hereby recognized.

REP. CULLAMAT. Maraming salamant, G. Ispiker.

Maiksing manifestation lang ito para sa NCIP po.

Papahintulutan ba ako ng ating Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

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

REP. CULLAMAT. Okay.

Ang NCIP ay inaasahan namin bilang sa mga katutubo, ito iyong inaasahan namin na magpoprotekta sa aming karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya at sa aming lupang ninuno, ngunit batay sa aming karanasan, hindi naman nailigtas ang mga lupang ninuno sa pamamagitan ng presensya ng mga militar. Ang pinoprotektahan lamang nila ay ang malaking minahan. Karanasan namin ito.

Noong 2008, noong panahon ni Pangulong Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, nang bumisita siya sa Davao, sinabi niya na ang AFP at PNP ay siyang Investment Defense Force o mga elementong tagapagtanggol ng mga minahan at negosyong sumisira sa aming lupang ninuno.

Ayon sa United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 30, hindi maaaring kumilos ang mga militar sa teritoryo ng mga IP maliban lamang kung ito ay pinahintulutan at pinagkasunduan kasama ang mga katutubong apektado. Ang Estado naman ay dapat kumokonsulta sa mga katutubo tuwing magpapadala ng militar sa aming mga lugar.

Kinikilala ang karapatan ng mga katutubo sa buong daigdig, pero nanghihimasok ang mga militar sa ngalan ng interes ng kanilang mga among dambuhalang negosyante at higanteng minahan.

Kaming mga katutubo ay walang ibang pakay kundi protektahan ang aming lupang ninuno, gayundin ang lahat ng mga buhay, nabubuhay dito, tao, halaman at hayop. Nais naming kilalanin ng Estado ang aming karapatan sa sariling pagpapasya. Nais naming mapanatili para sa susunod na henerasyon ang aming mga lupang ninuno.

Ipinipilit ng mga militar na magkampo sa aming mga komunidad kahit ipinapahayag pa namin sa mga dayalogo na ayaw naming magkampo sila sa komunidad mismo. Hindi lamang nila kami ginawang target practice, ginagawa rin nila kaming human shield. Kung nais ng mga militar ng digmaan, dalhin nila ito sa mga lugar na walang sibilyang mapapahamak. Igalang naman nila ang aming karapatan, ang aming mga buhay, seguridad at ari-arian.

Gayundin ay ipinipilit sa aming mga Lumad ang mga programang panlipunan na hindi naman ikinonsulta

sa amin. Ang mga militar pa nga ang nagpapatakbo. Ito ay tahasang paglabag sa aming karapatan na ginagarantiyahan ng mga lokal at internasyunal na batas, at mga internasyunal na kasunduan at deklarasyon hinggil sa karapatang pantao at karapatan ng mga katutubo. Anong ginagawa ng NCIP upang masiguro ang karapatan naming mga katutubo?

Mula 2016, mayroon nang 54 na mga Lumad na biktima ng extra-judicial killings. Sila ay mga Lumad leader, elder at mga tagapagtanggol ng aming lupaing ninuno. Kamakailan lamang ay pinatay ang mga Lumad na humaharap sa pagmimina sa Bukidnon, sina Bai Lea Tumbalang at Datu Mario Agsab. Anong ginagawa ng NCIP dito?

Halos araw-araw ay may nabalitaan tayong pinatay, dinahas at iligal na inaresto. Dahil nga sa mga karahasang ito laban sa amin na mga Lumad at sa walang tigil na mga atake sa aming karapatang pantao ay napilitan kaming magbakwit. Ito lamang ang mga palaging nangyayari tuwing may mga nakaambang malaking proyekto at bantag pagmina sa aming mga lupang ninuno.

Sinimulan na nila ang mga proyekto kahit wala pang mga Free, Prior, and Informed Consent mula sa mga apektadong katutubo. Napakarami pang mga katutubo ang maaapektuhan, dadahasin, papatayin, iligal na arestuhin at mawawalan ng lupang ninuno at kabuhayan dahil sa mga banta ng mga proyekto sa ilalim ng Build, Build, Build Program ng ating Pangulo.

Sa mga nakaraang araw ay tinalakay ang budget ng mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan. Noong ipasara ng DepEd ang mga paaralang Lumad, ano ang ginawa ng NCIP? Noong pinatay ng mga militar ang aming mga lider sa Lianga noong September 1, ano ang ginawa ng NCIP? Tila nagkampi-kampi yata ang mga ahensiya ng pamahalaan upang dahasin kaming mga katutubo at hubaran kami ng karapatan sa aming lupang ninuno.

Maraming salamat po, G. Ispiker, G. Isponsor. Ipinapahayag ko po ito dahil ito talaga iyong karanasan namin, sa halip na mayroon tayong ahensyang NCIP.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Maraming salamat po. Maraming salamat po Ka Femia. Sadyang nakatatak ang inyong talumpati sa aming kaisipan.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CHANGE OF REFERRAL OF H.B. NO. 4553

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move for the change of referral of the following measure: House Bill No. 4553, entitled: AN ACT AMENDING ARTICLE 70 OF ACT NO. 3815, AS AMENDED, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE REVISED PENAL CODE, from the Committee on Revision of Laws to the Committee on Justice.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize Hon. Arlene D. Brosas of GABRIELA Party-List.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The distinguished Lady from GABRIELA Party-List is hereby recognized.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, diretso na po ako sa tanong ko tungkol po ito sa 4Ps at iyong tinatawag na Code 25.

Mayroon pong mga beneficiaries na hindi nakatatanggap ng payout, ang iba ay natatanggal pa. Honorable Sponsor, kailan po ba ito nagsimula ang Code 25 na ito at ipinapatupad ba ito nationwide? Ano-ano ang batayan na mapasama sa Code 25 at ano ang epekto nito sa mga beneficiaries? Sila ba ay permanenteng matatanggal? Can you please make it short kasi po iyong time ay ano lang, ilang minuto.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker. This memorandum has been recalled so it is moot and academic, so wala iyan, naka-suspend iyan.

REP. BROSAS. Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor, dito po sa mga sinabi ninyo, may report na po ba ang DSWD dito? Gusto po sana naming makakuha ng report ng mga tinanggal noong nakaraan noong ipanapatupad pa ang Code 25 dahil ito po ang mga hinihingi ng mga nanay sa ating mga areas.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Considering that it was recalled, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, so walang natatanggal?

REP. BROSAS. Walang natanggal. Okay. Klaro po iyon, Mr. Speaker, G. Isponsor. Saan po napupunta ang perang nakalaan sa beneficiary ng Code 25—kung saka-sakaling hindi ibibigay sa kanila ang payout?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, wala ngang natanggal eh, so moot and academic iyong memorandum na iyon. So, it would still continue. These beneficiaries that were supposedly delisted will continue to receive the grants.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you honorable Sponsor. Now, between the agreement of the DA and the DSWD sa Department of Agriculture po, mayroon pong sinasabi na mayroong rice subsidy under the 4Ps.

Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor, nakipagkasundo ba kayo sa DA at saan po kukunin? Kasi ang sinabi po ni Secretary Dar dito ay, “We are also working with DSWD to convert the 6,000 Unconditional Cash Transfer. We hope that the money could be used to purchase palay P28-billion rice subsidy under the 4Ps.” Totoo po ba ito? Saan po—para mas maging malinaw, saan po kukunin ang P28 billion na ito? Ibabawas po ba ito sa perang nakalaan sa cash grants?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the DSWD has an exploratory meeting with the Department of Agriculture regarding the proposal to look into the possibility of using the rice subsidy under Pantawid to buy rice from local farmers. However, Mr. Speaker, this is still under discussion right now, but for the meantime, it is the in cash rice subsidy that is going to be implemented not in kind, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Okay. Mr. Speaker, itinatanong po natin ito dahil based sa expenditure program for CCT ng 4Ps ay zero o walang nakalaan para sa rice subsidies. Kaya po natin itinatanong, dahil kung in kind, sinasabi ninyong in kind rice subsidies po ba ito?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Iyong P600 po intended for rice subsidy, but not in kind, in cash po siya.

REP. BROSAS. In cash—next po na tanong ko sa PAMANA, sa pondo po ng Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan, puwede po bang pahingi na lang ng kopya ng listahan ng mga lugar kung saan ini-implement ang mga projects na ito?

Tapos ano ang role ng DSWD dito, specific programs po sa ilalim nito? Ano ang mga requirement para maka-avail ng projects sa ilalim ng programa ng PAMANA dahil, I understand, P960,917,000 po ang nandito—ay P960 million, rather?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, we will provide the data at the soonest possible time, Mr. Speaker.

REP. BROSAS. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor.

Ang pinaka-last po, iyong tungkol po doon sa mga loan agreements. You gave me the list, but you did not give me the actual loan contract. Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor. Hihingin ko po ulit ang kontrata. Listing lang po iyong naibigay sa amin at hindi iyong actual contract.

Maraming salamat, Mr. Speaker, honorable Sponsor.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, and ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you very much.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. ... we will provide you the list as well.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you very much, distinguished Lady from GABRIELA Party-List.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize the distinguished Minority Leader Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, the honorable Minority Leader is hereby recognized.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader and thank you, Mme. Sponsor.

Just a short manifestation, Mr. Speaker.

During the budget Committee hearing on September 3, 2019, the DSWD requested for a total of P1,666,557,314 for two PAMANA-Funded Programs in the Department as follows: 1.) P960,916,892 for the Peace and Development Fund; and 2.) P705,640,422 for the DSWD/LGU-led Livelihood Fund or Sustainable Livelihood and Social Protection Packages. In the National Expenditure Program 2020, however, only the Peace and Development Fund of P960,916,892 was included, hence, this manifestation.

This Representation is aware of and fully supports the Six-Point Peace and Development Agenda of the government. I realize that the government has already invested much in these peace processes. All of us want lasting peace with all stakeholders. To maintain the momentum of this great task of attaining the elusive lasting peace in our country, Mr. Speaker, I realize that to maintain momentum and to show good faith, we must sustain our efforts and honor those agreements already in place.

With this in mind, and to carry out the directive of the President on the matter, I support and move for the inclusion in the Year 2020 of the budget for the DSWD/LGU-led Livelihood component of the PAMANA Program in the amount of P705,640,422.

Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, that is only my manifestation.

Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Thank you very much, distinguished Minority Leader.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker,

I move to suspend the session until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

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

It was 9:49 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 9:52 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my previous motion to suspend session until 1:00 p.m. tomorrow. Instead, Mr. Speaker, I move to recognize the Hon. Ferdinand R. Gaité, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Yes, the Honorable Gaité is hereby recognized.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker. Diretso na po ako sa mga katanungan hinggil sa ating ahensyang DSWD.

Kamakailan lang po noong Mayo, na-institutionalize ang 4Ps, pero ang tanong ko po, mananatili pa rin pong contractualized ang ating mga empleyado? Puwede ho bang makahingi ng commitment sa DSWD na sa pangangailangang napakarami ng ating ahensya, ano po ang gagawing kongkretong hakbang ng DSWD na sa kasalukuyan, 3,000 lamang ang mga regular na empleyado habang ang mahigit o almost 20,000 employees are non-regular, and out of almost 19,000 employees, only 16,000 are non-regular workers.

Ano ho ba ang commitment ng DSWD para matulungan ang ating mga government workers na supposedly ang 4Ps, a national poverty reduction program to improve the health, nutrition, education and aspects of their lives and yet we cannot even help our workers in the DSWD, Your Honors, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, the DSWD has a pending request with the DBM, the Department of Budget and Management, to open 3,194 plantilla positions intended for the 4Ps employees, and this is to augment the already existing 3,000 positions in the Department. This request is currently being reviewed and evaluated by the DBM, and the results would be released within this month hopefully.

REP. GAITE. Tinitingnan ko po iyong inyong budget, may P4.5 billion na allocated for Personnel Services, pero may nakalagay na Cost of Service na P1.6 billion. Kung humihingi rin lang kayo ng pondo, bakit hindi pa sa direksyon na gawing regular ang mga employment ng mga manggagawang ito, Mme. Sponsor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Sorry, Mr. Speaker, can you please repeat ...

REP. GAITE. Mayroon pong P4.5 billion na allocation for Personnel Services under the the 4Ps, pero may P1.6 billion din na allocation for Cost of Service. Puwede ho bang ipaliwanag, bakit hindi pa natin i-request na itong items na ito ay gawing regular sa halip na pagpapanatili ng kontraktual na mga manggagawa sa naturang ahensya, Mme. Sponsor, Your Honor?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, there is a pending request with the Department of Budget and Management.

REP. GAITE. Ang hinihiling po natin sana, ang isang commitment na totoo, mahirap makipag-usap sa DBM, pero mayroon bang turnkey approach, meaning, for this year ba, ilan ang ating target na ma-regularize? After a few more years, hanggang ilan? Hanggang matapos iyong laking bilang ng ating manggagawa na matagal na sa service, pero hanggang ngayon ay contractual pa rin, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Yes, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, at present, ang timeline na ito, gusto natin maipasok na regular, iyong 3,194 plantilla positions, and subsequently, we would also request that the Department continue to request for additional personnel.

REP. GAITE. Bilang panghuling tanong, ano po iyong time frame na itong bilang na binabanggit na kailangan para maipatupad iyong 4Ps? Mayroon ho ba kayong target na within three years, five years, or whatever? Mayroon ho ba kayong plano na by a certain period, iyong mga manggagawang institutionalized sa programa ay hindi na ho contractualized, Mme. Speaker?

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Ang DSWD po, sabihin natin, at may plano sila, but of course, all of these will depend on the DBM.

REP. GAITE. Maraming salamat po, at sana po, sa kapakanan ng serbisyo na isinusulong ng DSWD, at gayundin, para sa kapakanan ng ating mga kawani at manggagawa at sa libo-libong mga kawani sa loob

ng DSWD, sana po, para sa interes ng serbisyo publiko ay magkaroon ng kongkretong programa para iyong ating mga libo-libong mga government workers ay ma-enjoy ang matagal nilang inaasam na security of tenure.

Maraming salamat, mabuhay po kayong lahat.

REP. LIMKAICHONG. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). Maraming salamat po, Honorable Gaité. The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, may I again recognize the honorable and distinguished Minority Leader, Hon. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The honorable and distinguished and admirable Minority Leader is hereby recognized.

REP. ABANTE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sana raw po ay ma-consider din iyong IP student sa listahan.

Anyway, there being no more questions to be asked by the Minority, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Mr. Speaker, I so move. *(Applause)*

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

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, on the part of the Majority, we join the Minority Leader on the same motion.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). There is a motion to terminate the consideration of the budget of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, including all its attached agencies.

Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the motion is approved.

The consideration of the budget of the Department of Social Welfare and Development and all its attached agencies is hereby terminated.

The Majority Leader is recognized. *(Applause)*

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MACAPAGAL ARROYO. Mr. Speaker, once again, I move that we suspend the session until tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon of Thursday, September 19, 2019, and this time, I will not withdraw my motion anymore.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Estrella). The session is suspended until one o'clock p.m. tomorrow.

It was 9:59 p.m.