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No. 37

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:00 p.m., Deputy Speaker Ferdinand L. Hernandez called the session to order.

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

PRAYER

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Everybody will please rise for a minute of silent prayer.

Everybody rose for the silent prayer.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Please remain standing for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody remained standing for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Please remain standing.

Success is never an accident. It is a result of hard work and right decisions. Champions are not persons who never fail but persons who never quit. A tribute to a man Filipinos love—"24 Kobe Memorabilia from Speaker Alan Peter "Compañero" S. Cayetano."

May we ask our colleagues to observe a 24-second moment of silence while saying a prayer for the other families who lost a family member in the tragedy and in memory of Kobe and Gianna Bryant.

The tribute to Kobe is located at the back of the Session Hall where the hallway of the Speaker's entrance is.

Everybody observed a 24-second moment of silence.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we defer the calling of the roll.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I also move that we defer the approval of the Journal of the previous session.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we take up the Reference of Business and request that the Secretary General be directed to read the same.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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 Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following House Bills on First Reading, Communications and Committee Reports which were referred to the appropriate Committees hereunder indicated:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 6037, entitled:

"AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING A TEN PERCENT BUDGETARY ALLOCATION OF BARANGAYS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS, PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES, AND SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS,

AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE THE PERTINENT PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE' AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Quimbo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 6038, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING MANDATORY SOCIAL PENSION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7432, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NOS. 9257 AND 9994, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'EXPANDED SENIOR CITIZENS ACT OF 2010' ”

By Representative Quimbo
TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON SENIOR CITIZENS

House Bill No. 6039, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING BANKING INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE FINANCING SYSTEM FOR AGRICULTURAL, FISHERIES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Salceda
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 6040, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MECHANISM TO ENABLE POOR FILIPINO FAMILIES TO HAVE AT LEAST ONE COLLEGE GRADUATE BY INSTITUTIONALIZING THE EXPANDED STUDENT GRANTS-IN-AID PROGRAM FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION (ESGP-PA) AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 6041, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING A COMPREHENSIVE RENAL REPLACEMENT THERAPY (RRT) FOR PATIENTS WITH END STAGE RENAL DISEASE IN NATIONAL, REGIONAL, AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, INCREASING THE PHILHEALTH PACKAGE RATE FOR RENAL REPLACEMENT THERAPY OF MEMBERS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 6042, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A GRANT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE SCREENINGS FOR GLAUCOMA TO INDIVIDUALS DETERMINED TO BE AT HIGH RISK FOR GLAUCOMA”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 6043, entitled:

“AN ACT CREATING THE SOLAR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CENTER AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY

House Bill No. 6044, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTING THE FORMER PRISONER'S EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 6045, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR SECURITY OF TENURE FOR ALL JOB ORDER AND CONTRACT OF SERVICE WORKERS OF THE GOVERNMENT WHO HAVE RENDERED THE PRESCRIBED YEARS OF SERVICE IN THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 6046, entitled:

“AN ACT TO PROMOTE AGRI-TOURISM IN THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

House Bill No. 6047, entitled:

“AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING THE YOUNG FARMERS PROGRAM, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

House Bill No. 6048, entitled:

“AN ACT PRESERVING THE INDIGENOUS GAMES OF THE PHILIPPINES”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 6049, entitled:

“AN ACT INCORPORATING THE VALUE OF RESPONSIBLE, FAIR USAGE AND ENJOYMENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CURRICULA NATIONWIDE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Vargas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 6050, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR FINANCIAL RELIEF TO VICTIMS OF CALAMITIES”

By Representative Olivarez
TO THE COMMITTEE ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated December 18, 2019 of Atty. Rufino M. Margate, Jr., Secretary General, Federation of Philippine Industries, Inc., furnishing the House of Representatives a copy of the FPI Annual Report for 2018-2019.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Letter dated January 9, 2020 of Maria Gleda E. Lim, State Auditor V, Supervising Auditor, Audit Groups CGS I and II-Water Districts and Other CGS Stand Alone Agencies, Regional Office No. VI, Commission on Audit, furnishing the House of Representatives with copies of the following reports on the Mambusao Water District, Mambusao, Capiz:

1. Management Letter for CYs 2008-2012 and 2015-2018; and
 2. Annual Audit Report for CYs 2013 and 2014.
- TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Email dated January 14, 2020 of Arsenia M. Sacdalan from the National Electrification Administration, submitting their Fund Utilization Report as of December 31, 2019.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letters dated 20 January 2020 of Janice G. Ayson-Zales, Deputy Director, Office of the General Counsel and

Legal Services, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), furnishing the House of Representatives with duly certified and authenticated BSP issuances, to wit:

1. Circular Letter No. CL-2020-002 dated 8 January 2020;
2. Circular Letter No. CL-2020-003 dated 8 January 2020;
3. Circular Letter No. CL-2020-004 dated 8 January 2020;
4. Circular Letter No. CL-2020-005 dated 8 January 2020; and
5. Circular Letter No. CL-2020-006 dated 10 January 2020.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

Report on Fund Utilization and Status of Program/ Project Implementation for the Quarter ended October to December 2019 (Fourth Quarter) of the Province of Zamboanga del Sur on the Local Government Support Fund – KALSADA Projects 2016, CMGP 2017, and CMGP 2019, attested by Hon. Victor J. Yu, Provincial Governor.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Report of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 205), re H.B. No. 6087, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER IN THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MINDANAO (USM), LOCATED IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KABACAN, PROVINCE OF COTABATO, TO BE KNOWN AS THE USM-KABACAN, COTABATO TESDA TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 3118

Sponsors: Representatives Go (Mark), Ungab and Tejada

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Higher and Technical Education and the Committee on Appropriations (Committee Report No. 206), re H.B. No. 6088, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER IN THE CITY OF CALBAYOG, PROVINCE OF SAMAR, TO

BE KNOWN AS THE CALBAYOG CITY TESDA TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT CENTER, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bill No. 3232

Sponsors: Representatives Go (Mark), Ungab and Sarmiento

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on People’s Participation (Committee Report No. 207), re H.B. No. 6091, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION FROM LIABILITY TO VOLUNTEERS FOR ACTS OR OMISSIONS COMMITTED IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES DURING EMERGENCY SITUATION”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 1643, 2003, 2036, 2856, 3474, 3852, 4967 and 5200

Sponsors: Representatives Robes, Sy-Alvarado, Nieto, Herrera-Dy and Bañas-Nogralas

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

Report of the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms (Committee Report No. 208), re H.B. No. 6095, entitled:

“AN ACT INCREASING THE AMOUNT OF AUTHORIZED ELECTION CAMPAIGN EXPENSES OF CANDIDATES AND POLITICAL PARTIES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 13 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7166, ENTITLED, ‘AN ACT PROVIDING FOR SYNCHRONIZED NATIONAL AND LOCAL ELECTIONS AND FOR ELECTORAL REFORMS, AUTHORIZING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’”

recommending its approval in substitution of House Bills Numbered 1318, 1479, 3731, 3838, 4091, 4191 and 5187

Sponsors: Representatives Ferrer (Juliet), Oaminal and Pimentel

TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

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

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 3:10 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

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

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5888 ON SECOND READING

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 5888, contained in Committee Report No. 181, as reported out by the Committees on Public Works and Highways, and Appropriations

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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 only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 5888, entitled: AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE THIRD DISTRICT ENGINEERING OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF M’LANG, PROVINCE OF COTABATO, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

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

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of sponsorship and debate.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, may we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Public Works and Highways, Hon. Eleandro Jesus F. Madrona, to give his sponsorship speech.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

Representative Madrona is hereby recognized.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

REP. MADRONA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt the Explanatory Note of House Bill No. 5888 as my sponsorship speech on the measure.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to interpellate on or speak against the measure, I move that we close the period of sponsorship and debate.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we open the period of amendments.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, there being no Member who wishes to introduce Committee or individual amendment, I move that we close the period of amendments.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve House Bill No. 5888, under Committee Report No. 181, on Second Reading.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

VIVA VOCE VOTING

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). There is a motion for the approval of House Bill No. 5888 on Second Reading.

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

SEVERAL MEMBERS. *Aye*.

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

APPROVAL OF H.B. NO. 5888 ON SECOND READING

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

House Bill No. 5888 is hereby approved on Second Reading.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 3:24 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:28 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

QUESTION HOUR

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Article VI, Section 22 of the 1987 Constitution, and Rule XVII, Section 124 of the Rules of the House of Representatives of the Eighteenth Congress, and pursuant to the motion duly approved in the plenary on January 28, 2020, which requested Department of Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III to appear before the House of Representatives under the Question Hour to answer questions from the Members of the House of Representatives on the threat of the novel coronavirus in the country, and on the precautionary measures being undertaken by the Department of Health on this issue, I move that we open the Question Hour.

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

The Question Hour is hereby declared.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session to allow Secretary Duque, including his technical staff, access to the designated seats in the plenary.

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

It was 3:29 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:29 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Department of Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III to deliver his opening statement.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Secretary Duque is hereby recognized. Please proceed.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SEC. DUQUE

SEC. DUQUE. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and the Majority Floor Leader. I would like to thank you on behalf of the Department of Health for this opportunity to present to you the latest information and update vis-à-vis the novel coronavirus which is technically termed as the 2019-nCoV.

My presentation will follow the outline as presented: The introduction to coronaviruses and in particular, the novel coronavirus—2019-nCoV; the 2019-nCoV global situation, Mr. Speaker; 2019-nCoV Philippine situation; following thereafter, the virulence of the 2019-nCoV infection; and last but not the least, the actions taken by your Department of Health and the advice to the public.

Coronaviruses, Your Honors, refer to a large family of viruses belonging to the family Coronaviridae, and they were named after the crown-like spikes on their surfaces. *(Slide presentation)* As you can see on the slide, ito iyon pong nakikita natin doon na mga spikes sa taas, thus, earning for itself the name coronavirus. These are zoonotic viruses, meaning, they are transmitted between animals and people. These viruses cause illnesses ranging from the common cold, which some of us here must have experienced once or more times in our lives, and this can lead as well to more severe diseases like the MERS-CoV or the Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or the SARS-CoV.

Your Honors, the patients who contracted the more serious coronavirus were shown to exhibit respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties and in extreme cases, CoV infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory infection, kidney failure and to the extreme, even death.

On December 31, 2019, the WHO was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. In January 7 of this year, Chinese authorities confirmed that they, indeed, have identified a new type of coronavirus. The novel coronavirus is a new strain that has

not been previously identified in humans. As of January 27, 2020, the World Health Organization has confirmed human-to-human transmission largely in Wuhan City and some other places in China; however, there was not enough information yet to draw a definitive conclusion about the intensity of the human-to-human transmission, full clinical features and the original source of the outbreak. While the development of a vaccine for the nCoV is currently underway, it may take several months to years before it can be made available to the public for use. For those who are ill, no definitive treatment can be given yet, only supportive care and symptomatic treatment are still advised as with any viral infection.

Next. As of 28 January, the total count of cases is 4,593, with China 4,537 reporting the highest number of cases, and there are confirmed cases in Thailand—you can see it there on the right side of your screen—Singapore, Australia, Japan, Malaysia, France, Germany, Korea, USA, Vietnam, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Canada. There are about 54 in total number of cases outside of the whole of China. There are 106 deaths recorded out of the 5,000 or rather, the 4,593 cases, hence, a case fatality ratio of 2.3 percent. All recorded deaths are, so far, from China.

Next. In terms of risk level, China has been classified as very high-risk. The Western Pacific Region is considered high-risk while global-risk has been classified as high from moderate just two days ago. So, this gives us an idea of how quickly this virus seems to be mutating and the transmission rate is increasing by the day.

Your Honors, there are 55 novel coronavirus-related health events that were reported to the Epidemiology Bureau of the DOH. A total of 27 of the 50 are categorized as patient under investigation or PUI. All have a history of travel to Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. Of the reported PUIs, four have been cleared and discharged; while the five-year-old suspected case who tested negative, thankfully, after the Melbourne, Australia International Reference Laboratory released its test, yielded, again, a negative. So far, there are zero confirmed cases of nCoV in our country.

This map shows the distribution of PUIs reported in the Philippines. You can see the breakdown as flashed on the screen, and to put into perspective the nCoV against other pathogenic coronaviruses that cause severe illnesses, I would like to refer you to the comparison table between the SARS-CoV, the MERS-CoV and the nCoV.

Until recently, human coronaviruses received relatively little attention due to their mild forms in humans. This however changed in 2002 when cases of severe atypical pneumonia were described in Guangdong, China, thus, causing worldwide concern as diseases spread via international travel to more than two dozen countries. The new disease became known as the severe acute respiratory syndrome or SARS and a beta-HCoV named SARS-CoV was identified as the

causative agent. Ultimately, Your Honors, classic public health measures brought the SARS pandemic to an end, but not before 8,098 individuals—as you can see there—were infected, and 774 died with a case fatality rate of 10 percent, the second highest next to the MERS-CoV which posted a 36 percent case fatality ratio.

Which brings me to this—in 2012, another highly pathogenic CoV plagued the world when the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome was recognized and MERS-CoV was identified in the sputum of a Middle Eastern man who died from respiratory failure, but unlike SARS-CoV which rapidly spread across the globe and was contained and eliminated in relatively short order, MERS has smoldered, characterized by sporadic zoonotic transmission and limited chains of human spread.

Your Honors, according to the World Health Organization, as of November 2019, MERS-CoV has caused a total of 2,494 cases and 858 deaths, the majority of which were in Saudi Arabia. The natural reservoir of MERS-CoV is presumed to be bats, yet human transmission events have primarily been attributed to an intermediate host, the dromedary camel. While MERS has not caused the international panic seen with SARS, the emergence of this second highly pathogenic zoonotic HCoV illustrates the threat posed by this viral family. In 2017, the WHO placed SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV on its Priority Pathogen List, hoping to galvanize research and the development of countermeasures against CoVs.

With the emergence of the 2019-nCoV, Your Honors, we currently see similarities with SARS-CoV such as its symptomatology and epidemiology; however, in terms of virulence at this early stage of the disease outbreak, we see a comparatively lower case fatality rate at 2.3 percent—again, it is there on the screen for your better appreciation, Mr. Speaker. We are vigilantly watching out for further developments on the knowledge regarding this novel coronavirus and we expect iterative changes as the days pass by. Corollary, in the following table, we see the comparative virulence of the Seasonal Influenza Virus, or the common flu, against the 2019-nCoV.

Gleaning from the reports of the WHO and the CDC, we see that the global case fatality rate of nCoV against the seasonal flu at around the same time or period rather, from December 2019 to January 2020, is comparatively lower than that of the latter, figuring at 2.3 percent versus 4.7 percent aggregated from all serotypes. Iyon lang po, madali ang sinasabi dito, na kung ihahambing po natin sa seasonal flu, same time, period from December 2019 to January 2020, and compared to this emerging novel coronavirus, we will still see a relatively lower case fatality ratio.

While the data show us the facts, Your Honors, we at the DOH are not letting our guards down. In response to the threat of the 2019-nCoV, the DOH has: 1. established a dedicated task force on 2019-nCoV; 2. issued interim guidelines on the same; 3. heightened

the border screening or surveillance through thermal scanning and use of the Health Declaration Card or Checklist. Ito po iyong Yellow Forms na ibinibigay sa pumapasok na mga pasahero; 4. mandated the use of decision table in evaluating sick passengers; 5. directed triaging at the arrival area on sick passengers; and 6. ensured laboratory and hospital preparedness.

We have established the 2019-nCoV surveillance for daily updates. Ngayon po, araw-araw na kami nagbibigay ng mga pinakahuling evidence-based and science-based reports to the media and the general public. Of course, last but not the least, we have intensified risk communication in all communications or media platforms, including the social media. Moreover, personal protective equipment are available at the Bureau of Quarantine, Centers for Health Development and the DOH hospitals. The DOH is also closely monitoring individuals who manifested signs of respiratory infection and has had a history of travel in China, and is coordinating with the WHO in China Center for Disease Control for updates.

The DOH reiterates that the public must practice frequent handwashing, avoid unprotected contact with farm or wild animals; practice proper cough etiquette by maintaining at least a one-meter distance and covering the mouth when sneezing with a tissue or using the crook of the elbow; avoid close contact with people showing cold or flu-like symptoms; and ensure that the food that is eaten is well-cooked dahil hindi puwedeng mahilaw-hilaw, lalo na mayroon rin po tayong African swine flu. Travelers with symptoms of respiratory illness, either during or after travel, are urged to seek medical attention immediately. All health facilities are mandated to enhance standard infection prevention and control practices, especially in our emergency/triage departments.

Lastly, again I emphasize, we must always be ready—better ready than sorry.

Again, on behalf of the DOH, I would like to thank you, Mr. Speaker and the distinguished Members of the House of Representatives. Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat.

We are now ready to answer the questions from the floor. Thank you.

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

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, in view of the limited time that we have and the importance of the subject matter, I move that we limit the time for questioning of each Member to five minutes.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. REMULLA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Chairperson of the Committee on Health, Hon. Angelina “Helen” D.L. Tan M.D., for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Angelina “Helen” Tan is hereby recognized.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon, colleagues and the honorable Secretary.

Just to summarize the points I made during my privilege speech yesterday, please allow me to ask the following clarificatory questions to the Secretary. The first question is, as I understand it, the novel coronavirus is genetically distinct from the common human coronaviruses which cause seasonal acute respiratory illness. It is also genetically distinct from the two newer human coronavirus, the MERS-CoV and the SARS-CoV. May I know if we have the capability to do the definitive testing for the 2019 novel coronavirus because as I understand it, the current testing is being done in Australia. If so, do we have the resources to procure whatever is necessary and how soon can we start testing on our own?

SEC. DUQUE. Okay. Thank you, Mme. Chairman of the Committee on Health. The Japanese counterpart of the RITM today has just brought with them a primer—the team brought the RNA Primer which is needed to help us identify whether in the novel coronavirus suspected cases—once their throat or nasal pharyngeal swabs are submitted to the RITM for testing in accordance with the RNA Primer, in about 48 hours, we shall be able to set up our own capability to detect if it is novel coronavirus and thus, we no longer need to send these swabs for confirmatory testing to Melbourne, Australia.

So, yes, the answer to that is yes.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Are we planning to have that equipment or whatever agents that they are using to test for coronavirus, placed here in the RITM or in other facilities or government hospitals?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Mme. Chairman. For the first round of testing, we are adequately supplied but we will have to find out the volume of the supply that has been brought by the Japanese contingent to help us precisely do the testing and confirm it ourselves as this will cut the turnaround time by 50 percent.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker, honorable Secretary. There are news that came out, I think, an hour ago in different media outlets on the death of a patient under investigation in San Lazaro. Can you update us because some of the reports are deceiving, as

they are saying that this is the first case of death in the Philippines of a Chinese national?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Mr. Speaker. The case that has been reported, though inaccurately, by I think or I believe the CNN, this patient satisfied the criteria for a person under investigation, which criteria I had presented on the screen, and the latest result of the tests done by both RITM and the San Lazaro Hospital—which is also a Reference Laboratory or which has a Reference Laboratory capability similar to RITM—it was found to be positive for staph aureas and while the San Lazaro Reference Laboratory yielded a positive for HIV-AIDS virus for the two testings that were conducted.

Having said that, we are still awaiting the test that will be run by the RITM, given that we have a new RNA primer and the new reagents now so that we can say for sure and conclusively whether this could be a co-infection or there is absolutely no coronavirus as one of the possible causes.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Just to allay the fears of our countrymen, you are confirming that this is not a coronavirus-related death.

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, I underscore that there is nothing in the preliminary test results that would show that such death is caused by the novel coronavirus.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you so much for that, Mr. Secretary. My next question—just in case that the nCoV enters the country, considering the speed by which it spreads across different populations, do we have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the influx of patients? Another question—is mandatory reporting for these cases in place?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes. The answer to the first question, Mme. Chairman, is that the capacity of all the DOH-retained hospitals and medical centers has been leveled up. That was the initial instruction or directive of the DOH Execom to all our regional directors. The same directive was cascaded to all our medical center chiefs to, in fact, specifically set aside a number of isolation rooms. Okay, so, that is now very much in place.

Insofar as the infrastructure is concerned, from the level of border surveillance, which is the mandate of the Bureau of Quarantine, this has been very much put in place and also, this has been heightened, in fact, to include the reinstatement of the Health Declaration Card or the Yellow Form and the issuance of the interim guidelines which may change from day-to-day as we are updated by the WHO. We are nimble to the information stream that goes through the DOH and we make the necessary adjustments.

Mme. Chairman, we have also put in place other

surveillance systems like the community surveillance. This is not just about the border surveillance but also the surveillance within the communities, kasi baka po makalusot ito at mapunta sa mga komunidad, e maigi na iyong may kakayahan na po tayo at ang gumagawa po niyan ay ang ating Epidemiology Bureau. Mayroon din po tayong surveillance unit officers at sila po ang nakatutok diyan and they are in constant coordination with our frontline Bureau of Quarantine officers.

Then we have our risk communication and community engagement for public health advisories. I think that you have come across some of them and we are also leveling this up so that the public will be able to benefit from evidence-based and science-based information to neutralize whatever infodemics or the epidemic of false or fake news that are being propagated unwittingly by individuals who are perhaps not aware or are sufficiently informed of the latest data with regard to the nCoV, Mme. Chairman.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Mr. Speaker, just a last question in the interest of time and to give way to our colleagues here. I was informed that yesterday, you had that high-level inter-agency meeting and one of the concerns raised was the restrictions on the plight and the repatriation of our OFWs in China. Can you share with us what transpired in that high-level meeting?

SEC. DUQUE. The high-level meeting, Mr. Speaker, Mme. Chairman, was pursuant to the authority in Executive Order No. 168 issued by then President Aquino in 2014, and this referred to the Emerging Infectious Disease Task Force which consisted of different representatives. In fact, for the Cabinet level representatives, of course, the DOH is heading the task force. We also have the DOJ because the Bureau of Immigration is there; the DOTr; the Philippine Coast Guard being the operating unit of the agency; the Department of Tourism; the DOLE; and the DILG.

We convened yesterday and arrived at a resolution to do the following:

Number one is to facilitate the voluntary return of Filipinos who are currently in Wuhan City, China, those who have manifested their desire to be repatriated to the Philippines. We said that we will prepare for that and so, there will be chartered flights. The Civil Aeronautics Board and the CAAP are preparing for this by contracting the chartered flights precisely to bring in the 50 or so Filipinos who have manifested their desire to be repatriated, plus the conditionality that should they come back to the Philippines, they will be all collectively subjected to quarantine measures para lang po nakakasiguro tayo na sa pagbalik nila, hindi sila makapanghawa naman sa ating kapwa Pilipino dito. That is, of course, one content of the resolution.

Second is the commitment that the DOH will provide continuous flow of evidence-based information as public health advisories. Right now, the dilemma there is the communications barrier as the language barrier is really making it very difficult for our people to understand the local health authority's advisories and so, we intend to complement this through telemedicine, which is also being put in place. As we are talking, the telemedicine infrastructure is being prepared, Mr. Speaker. These are the two more important DOH-related content of the resolution passed by the task force.

Thank you, Mme. Chairman.

REP. TAN (A.D.L.). Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, the honorable Secretary, for giving time to our invitation to him to come here and update us on the issue or status of the novel coronavirus. Maraming, maraming salamat po sa inyong pagdalo sa hapong ito.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SEC. DUQUE. Ganoon din po, maraming salamat po sa inyo at sa pagkakataong ibinibigay ninyo sa Department of Health upang makapagpaliwanag hinggil po sa namamayagpag na novel coronavirus sa atin. Maraming salamat po sa ngalan ng DOH.

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

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Loren Legarda from the Lone District of Antique for her interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Deputy Speaker Loren Legarda is hereby recognized.

REP. LEGARDA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, just a few questions.

SEC. DUQUE. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LEGARDA. May the honorable Sec. Francisco Duque yield to a few questions.

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. LEGARDA. Thank you. The other day, I communicated with Sec. Teddy Locsin upon the impression or I thought that it would be the designation or the task of the Department of Foreign Affairs to decide on whether we should close our airports and seaports temporarily, during this health crisis, to any Chinese mainland tourists. He texted me that he has shared or delegated the authority to the DOH through Secretary Duque.

Mr. Speaker, may I confirm if this is indeed accurate, and second, if it is your task to do so, are you inclined, at the soonest possible time, to ban first the entry of any mainland Chinese tourist while the virus is still not contained in mainland China? Just that basic question, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Speaker.

SEC. DUQUE. Thank you very much, Mme. Representative.

The situation remains fluid, and certainly the task force of the DOH on the novel coronavirus meets every now and then—and in fact, very frequently—so as to be guided by the recommendations from the WHO. They bridge the DOH to the health authorities in Wuhan City, in particular, the Hubei Province and the whole of China for that matter. Certainly, that is one of the possible options that we are looking at but not at this very moment.

REP. LEGARDA. Okay.

SEC. DUQUE. The reason being, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker, is we have to be very careful also on the possible repercussions of doing this in light of the fact that the confirmed cases of coronavirus are not limited to China but, in fact, to several countries now, as I had shown on the slides. If we will do this, then the concerned country, China in this case, might question why we are not doing the same to all the other countries that have reported confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus.

So, it is a very tricky, a very difficult issue that you have raised but certainly we commit to take this into consideration as we move on in making the necessary adjustments or revisions in our guidelines, Your Honor.

REP. LEGARDA. Mr. Secretary, in my understanding then, only flights from Wuhan to the Philippines have been banned. Is that correct, Mr. Secretary?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Your Honor, I believe that this is an international airport in Wuhan. So, I think there are many other provinces, and the Chinese nationals would need to go to one of the major international airports. So, now, at least, for Wuhan, there has been a lockdown and the Chinese government has already restricted travel to and from Wuhan City, and I think even Hubei at this point but subject to validation.

REP. LEGARDA. Since we are a heavily populated country and we are clearly incapable of handling such a health crisis should it happen in the Philippines, would it not be prudent, Mr. Secretary, to be proactive and ban temporarily any mainland Chinese tourist in any airport or port, not just Wuhan, since the coronavirus has spread to other cities in China?

Again, let me not be misconstrued as I just value too much the health of the Filipino people, our 108 million people, and we are heavily populated at *dikit-dikit* ang mga siyudad po natin, and we do not have the resources or perhaps the medical know-how, as we even have to send some of our tests to Australia. So, would it not be prudent for us to do that—take for example, Subic, where the residents protested against the entry of a cruise ship bearing the mainland Chinese residents who may or may not be inflicted with the coronavirus.

So, this is actually not my personal belief, but I had been asked, as an elected Representative not only of my province but even by other Representatives who may be shy to manifest this or other people, and they are asking, “What are you in Congress doing?” So, I asked Secretary Locsin and I can show you the text of Secretary Teddy where he said, “Loren, I agree with you, you may be right.” So, I tried to call you the other night but I understand you are very busy, we cannot communicate with each other, thus, I am putting it on record the possibility of just temporarily closing to the mainland because it has spread there. I am not saying that, all others, whether one or two victims, that we should close our tourism to those areas, but should we not close it?

I recall that there is a Wuhan-Caticlan flight which was operating until last Wednesday, and your very efficient DOH personnel had to look for the Wuhan individuals who were already in Boracay vacationing and they had to be retrieved from Boracay and returned back to Wuhan. Please correct me if my information is inaccurate. So, do we still need to do that, to allow some Chinese from Wuhan who may have gone to Shanghai or Beijing and infected some people there, to come to the Philippines because we have not closed our doors and then, look for them in our provinces and then send them back? Would it not be more efficient that we simply just say “no” in the meantime until the situation has been contained in mainland China?

Just a question, Mr. Secretary, and I know it is very tricky. I realize there are political and diplomatic repercussions but for me, the health of the Filipino people, especially those who may not have the resources to buy masks and for them to stay away from each other—if that is at stake, then we must do everything to protect our people, Secretary, Mr. Speaker.

SEC. DUQUE. Thank you, Mme. Representative. First of all, I share with you your concern for the health of the Filipino people. That is the mandate of the DOH and in terms of the preparedness of the DOH to deal with this challenge, as I have said, we have scaled up, we have leveled up our border surveillance. Our quarantine officers are well-equipped to make sure that patients who will be classified as persons under investigation will be isolated.

REP. LEGARDA. Thank you.

SEC. DUQUE. Consequently, they will be subjected to further evaluation and the specimens, the collection thereof will be sent to the Reference Lab of the RITM, which is the primary laboratory that does the testing.

The second level would be the Regional Epidemiology Surveillance Unit and the mechanism is also in place. So, we have leveled up across the different spectrum of the health system that will respond in the event that the novel coronavirus or nCoV enters the country. Let me reassure you, Your Honor, that we will always put in mind or bear in mind, this very well-meaning recommendation that you have so eloquently articulated and certainly, we will think of it and we will always consider this in the next task force meeting, Your Honor.

REP. LEGARDA. Thank you, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Speaker.

My last question, Mr. Speaker, is, I have read reports in the news that some of the blood tests had been sent to Australia and I would imagine that our private hospitals or the DOH—is it the RITM that does the processing of the results of the blood tests? Are the Philippine authorities on health under the DOH—and do we have the equipment and personnel to assess immediately whether it is coronavirus or are the technology and the equipment not available in the Philippines under the DOH or the RITM or any agency of the DOH and if so, what is needed so that in the NEP of 2021, which you are doing now, kindly put all the trainings for your personnel, all the equipment needed under the DOH, under the RITM. Is that correct—RITM?

SEC. DUQUE. All right.

REP. LEGARDA. That is the one that is doing it, right? Is there any other agency that is equipped with that and why are we sending the results to Australia yet to confirm or verify if it is coronavirus? Are we incapable of knowing the results here in our medical facilities, Mr. Speaker?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mme. Representative, the testing capability was not available until today because Japan, as I had said earlier, has brought a primer—the contingent from Japan, which is the RITM counterpart, has arrived this morning with the RNA primer and the reagents needed to identify the novel coronavirus in persons under investigation. By Friday, as assured by the Executive Director of the RITM, the set-up will be ready and the RITM will be testing the specimens submitted to them and so, in that way, an international confirmatory testing will no longer be necessary.

REP. LEGARDA. When will we know? Last question: When will we know whether the 27 is just a case of flu or coronavirus, Mr. Secretary, Mr. Speaker?

SEC. DUQUE. Pardon me.

REP. LEGARDA. How do we confirm whether the 27 people under investigation are actually...

SEC. DUQUE. Yes. The specimens—these are as throat swabs, oropharyngeal, nasopharyngeal swabs—and part of the testing protocol is to automatically send these specimens to the RITM and they will do an initial testing. It is a little bit technical—my apologies. The RITM initially runs the FTD 33 test and this is a test for several viruses, bacteria and some other microbes. Unfortunately, that initial testing capability cannot identify specifically the novel coronavirus. It can identify the human coronavirus which is nonspecific and that should trigger, therefore, a higher level of testing which is going to be more definitive for the novel coronavirus. Like what I have said, Mr. Speaker, this will now be available by Friday but we will, of course, certainly, submit to you—I have already been given an indicative budget that will support us now in looking for a more effective response to this emerging infectious disease.

REP. LEGARDA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Secretary.

Thank you.

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

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr. of BUHAY Party-List.

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

REP. ATIENZA. Maraming salamat po. Mr. Secretary, thank you for acceding to come here and help us be informed on this more accurately so that our people would also be informed at hindi sila matatakot na lamang na wala kaming kasagutan.

My first question is, as you presented it and as we know it, the symptoms of the coronavirus strain today are very similar to that of the ordinary flu. Is that right or wrong?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Is there any difference between the

two so that we can immediately identify na coronavirus iyan kaya dapat pag-ingatan natin. I had a child who got sick with flu in the past week. Siyempre, kabadong-kabado ang lahat ng mga pamilya. Ako, hindi ako natakot at ang sabi ko ay flu iyan e di flu nga, and your figure showed that. So, is there any discernible difference between the symptoms of ordinary flu and of the coronavirus?

SEC. DUQUE. Doon po sa mga katulad natin na maayos po ang ating kalusugan, iyon pong ating kakayahang labanan ito—kasi kahit na po iyong ordinaryong coronavirus, sa atin ay kaya natin iyan kasi after a few days, mawawala, self-limiting ito, pero sa may mga coexisting medical condition tulad ng diabetes, hypertension, cancer—ang mga iyan po, kahit na iyong mga hindi mabigat na coronavirus, ay makapagdudulot ng seryoso o grabeng kumplikasyon. Sa ngayon, tama po kayo na almost lahat ng signs and symptoms are similar except that meron pong severe acute respiratory infection propensity ito pong novel coronavirus as evidenced by the cases that have been managed in the different hospitals in Wuhan City.

REP. ATIENZA. So, at this point, wala pong unmistakable and unquestionable symptom that we should look for in a suspected coronavirus.

SEC. DUQUE. Wala po.

REP. ATIENZA. Wala.

SEC. DUQUE. Wala pong malinaw na...

REP. ATIENZA. So, iyong flu at iyong coronavirus, the symptoms are almost the same.

SEC. DUQUE. Opo, based on what we have projected on the slide, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Iyan po ay importante para ang ating mga mamamayan ay hindi matakot, hindi ma-stress, at hindi sila matatarantang bumili ng mask na ngayon ay out of stock na. Some people are making a lot of money, incidentally, on this particular situation.

According to your figures, during the period from 2019 up to 2020, out of 44,000 cases of flu, 7,000 died. Tama po ba iyong naalala kong figure?

SEC. DUQUE. Tama po kayo. I am just double-checking.

REP. ATIENZA. Iyong figure natin sa coronavirus, kulang-kulang na 5,000, 106 lang ang namatay so far. Tama rin po iyon?

SEC. DUQUE. Tama po iyon.

REP. ATIENZA. Samakatuwid, ang laki ng threat o banta sa buhay ng trangkaso, iyong kilala nating flu, influenza or you may want to call it any other name kasi seven percent out of 44,000 who got it died in the process. Those who are suspected or maybe, in some quarters, affirmed to be coronavirus victims, 106 lang ang namatay and so, why are we so rattled about this issue? Why are we so heated up? Why is the Philippines, for that matter, ni wala tayo not even one case confirmed today, bakit tayo natataranta? Bakit natin tinataranta ang ating mga tao?

I would not blame the Department of Health as they are quietly doing their job to guard against the spread of suspected virus. Seeing and hearing nothing else on television except this particular issue—well, our poor are dying of ordinary trangkaso, tuberculosis, cancer at iyan ang problema ng mga mahihirap. Iyan ang ating dapat pag-usapan, sa palagay ko, ngayon sa Kongreso, halimbawa, kung ano ang kailangan para ang TB ay hindi na po kumitil ng buhay ng Pilipino.

Sa coronavirus—mag-ingat na lang tayo. Dapat itinuturo talaga iyong proper sanitation at hindi naman dahil sa mayroon lamang banta. Tama po ba iyong aking assumption? Kaya, Mr. Secretary, please help us explain this to our people.

SEC. DUQUE. Opo. Tama po ang inyo pong pagkakaintindi ng sitwasyon na ito. Ang problema lang po kasi ay bago nga po ito and so, hanggang ngayon, even the WHO sees too many blind spots about this virus. As this is novel, we do not know to what extent the mutation of this virus will reach and so, it is better that we are prepared. We prepare for the worst and hope for the best, so to speak.

So, iyon lang po kaya po tinututukan natin ito. Katuwang po natin ang World Health Organization na siya po ang nagmamatyag kung ano ba iyong mga development patungkol sa virus na ito at hindi lamang po sa loob ng China kung hindi pati sa labas ng China, sa marami na pong mga bansa, at sana po sa atin, ito ay hindi makapasok. Katulad po ng MERS-CoV, noon nagkaroon man, kakaunti in 2014 and 2015. Ang SARS naman, nagkaroon din tayo in 2003 but it was an imported SARS, no community transmission.

REP. ATIENZA. Salamat po sa inyong sagot. Ako ay nagmumungkahi lang sapagkat kayo ay kilala ko nang personal. Maganda siguro ay dagdagan ninyo ang inyong mga advisory. Ang Pilipino ay malakas ang katawan. Hindi tayo tinamaan ng SARS. Hindi tayo tinamaan noong MERS-CoV. Maraming sakit na hindi dumadapo dito sa atin pero iyong sakit na nandito na ay iyon ang ating pag-ingatan. Puwede naman pag-ingatan iyong TB. Puwede naman pag-ingatan iyong mga ibang sakit na pumapatay ng tao.

Siguro ay dadagdagan lang ninyo na magkaroon kayo ng tiwala na hindi ito papatay sa inyo ngayon o bukas, sapagkat hindi pa natin alam ito. Hanggang sa ngayon, wala pa nga kayong maisagot kay Congressman Atienza e at para po naman pumanatag ang ating bayan, ang ating mga tahanan, na kapag nagkaroon ng trangkaso ang isang miyembro ng pamilya, hindi po tayo natataranta katulad ko ngayon dahil maraming mga pangyayari na hindi pa natin maipaliwanag. One day a vaccine, maybe soon, will be discovered and people will again spend billions of pesos all over the world. We may all be stampeded by some people here, by some institutional greed, dahil hindi natin talaga alam kung ano ang puno at dulo ng lahat ng ito. Puwedeng gawa ito ng tao, puwede itong gawa ng mga makapangyarihang bansa, at biktima tayong lahat.

Thank you for your presence.

SEC. DUQUE. Salamat din po.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognized the honorable Sr. Dep. Minority Leader Janette L. Garin from the First District of Iloilo.

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

REP. GARIN (J.). Maraming salamat po, Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, and, of course, the DOH family and the RITM family under the able leadership of Secretary Duque. Magandang hapon po sa lahat.

SEC. DUQUE. Good afternoon, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). Honorable Secretary, earlier, I heard a colleague who was somehow afraid and, correct me if I am wrong, but I heard the words “nakakatakot” because we are incapable, we do not have the experts, we do not have the know-how, and we probably are not equipped to answer the situation that China is facing now. Do you confirm or deny the statement?

SEC. DUQUE. Your Honor, we are ready as the infrastructure and the technical capability are available in the RITM and its subnational laboratories. So I think, at this point, there is no doubt as to the capability of the DOH to mount an effective response to this emerging coronavirus.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished

Secretary, would you agree with me if we boast and say that, in fact, not only in the Philippines, but in research centers all over the world and even in the World Health Organization, there are a lot of Filipino experts and Filipino scientists? Totoo po ba ito o hindi?

SEC. DUQUE. Opo, totoo po iyan, and we stand proud of our people in that regard.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. Uulitin ko lang po—hindi po tayo dapat mabahala dahil hindi po incapable ang Pilipinas. Marami po tayong eksperto, marami po ang may know-how, and we are fully equipped. We have been through SARS and that was a lot scarier because during SARS, wala pong alam ang mga tao dito at wala tayong gamit. When we had MERS-CoV, we were partially equipped. When we had Ebola, we were almost fully equipped. After Ebola, the nCoV 2019 is now here, but we actually have the RITM whose laboratory is already a Biological Safety Laboratory Level 3 laboratory. Ang ibig po nating sabihin, nandiyan na po iyong mga ospital, nandiyan po iyong mga gamit, nandiyan po iyong mga tao. Everytime walang outbreak, walang emerging infectious disease, sarado po iyon, pero kapag mayroong sakit na nangyayari, all it takes to trigger it is one push of a finger of the Secretary of Health. Am I right, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Secretary?

SEC. DUQUE. Certainly, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, sinasabi ninyo po na lahat ito are in place? Kailangan lang is a push button. When you do the command, when you call a command conference, everybody moves and they are continuously trained and continuously updated. Tama po ba?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Your Honor. That is the reason we had this command conference today and we are constantly in close coordination with all of our regional offices and DOH-retained hospitals and medical centers.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, kalimitan po kapag mayroong sakit na ganito, ang agad-agad na sinasabi ay, the Department of Health transforms into a swan. May the honorable Secretary expound on this.

SEC. DUQUE. Ano ba iyong swan?

REP. GARIN (J.). Swan.

SEC. DUQUE. I am not aware of the literal or the figurative language for swan.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes, okay. Mr. Speaker, honorable Secretary, the reason the Philippines has been called a swan is that everytime there is an emerging infectious disease, the whole DOH family would appear to be so calm at the outside but severely paddling below because we are extremely prepared.

SEC. DUQUE. Yes.

REP. GARIN (J.). Kaya minsan kaya po ganoon ang nilalabas ay, while all the experts will prepare sa baba, paddling for survival and preparation, preempting every move and every transmission, hindi naman po puwede na bawat galaw nila ay sasabihin nila sa tao, lalo na kapag sila ay hindi kasama doon sa pag-aaral dahil baka sila ay matakot. Tama po ba ito?

SEC. DUQUE. Tama po. I think that is a way of characterizing the DOH. We are very hardworking, we are professional civil servants quietly doing our jobs. We are dedicated, we are committed and technically proficient.

REP. GARIN (J.). So, ibig sabihin, Mr. Speaker, honorable Secretary, marami ang ginagawa sa ilalim na hindi nakikita sa taas because the preparation is done silently but efficiently?

SEC. DUQUE. Tama po kayo, Your Honor.

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

Mr. Speaker, allow me to commend Secretary Duque and the DOH family for seeking the guidance of the World Health Organization. To reiterate, the WHO is the authority, it has the convening power, it has a global coordinating mandate when it comes to health and supposedly, is objective in its decision-making. So, the updates on situations like this, the guidance, direction and response are best taken from the World Health Organization in Geneva, not from the regional or the country level, to ensure the integrity of information and to avoid fake news. As we understand—you are nodding and I know you are very much aware of this—even the World Health Organization approach is to have one coordinated response to the situation: one message, one action, one decision. Would you affirm this, Mr. Secretary, distinguished Speaker?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, certainly, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). Dagdag po, Mr. Speaker, kanina may mga hinaing at natatakot iyong iba na baka daw po dahil binawasan ang budget ng Department of Health ay hindi magawan ng ospital, hindi malagyan ng mga laboratoryo, at hindi natin masugpo ang sitwasyon na ito. However, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Secretary, as I

was part of your family before and I was with the RITM family when we pushed, initiated, bidded out and started the construction of the RITM Biosafety Laboratory Level 3. Does the Secretary confirm this?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Your Honor. It continues to operate.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished honorable Secretary, puwede po bang malaman ng ating mga Kongresista at ng sambayanang Pilipino, ano po ba ang ibig sabihin ng Biosafety Laboratory Level 3?

SEC. DUQUE. It is a bit technical, Your Honor, Mr. Speaker. I will just ...

REP. GARIN (J.). Would you like me to put it in layman's terms?

SEC. DUQUE. Sure. As you have very much been part of the RITM family, you are in a much authoritative position to characterize Biosafety Laboratory Level 3.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, a Biosafety Laboratory Level 3, such as the Research Institute of Tropical Medicine, is actually an extreme level of preparation para kapag mayroong mga virus o may mga sakit na hindi pa kilala ay mayroon tayong kakayahan na makilala at sugpuin ito, at mayroon tayong kakayahan na gumapang at umaksiyon agad. Iyon po ang ibig sabihin nayan.

This laboratory was not present during the time of SARS, MERS CoV and Ebola pero ito ang naging basehan. Ano po ba ang ibig sabihin nito? Kailangan ba itong dagdagan? Marami po ang nananawagan, Mr. Secretary, na baka puwedeng dagdagan iyong BSL 3. The problem here is that it is a very expensive laboratory to maintain. We do not need a budget to create another laboratory because it might end up as a white elephant.

The reason, honorable Speaker, distinguished colleagues, bakit kailangan pang ipadala sa Australia at tayo ay naghahintay ng resulta, it is not because we are not capable. We are capable as Filipinos and we have more experts than other countries. However, kailangan po ng control. Kailangan ng control dahil ito ay bagong virus and the control ay madaling ginagawa at pinapadala sa mga bansa na may kakayanan. That is why when the control arrived last night or this morning, we can already establish it in 48 hours. That is how prepared we are. That is how prepared Secretary Duque and the DOH family is. Do you affirm this, Mr. Secretary?

Ang hinihintay natin is not really a machine na iniisip natin magko-construct, it is the control because, when you test for something, mayroon ka palaging

control. Tingnan ninyo iyong laboratory results ninyo, ang cholesterol level ay mayroong control, mayroong result. Kung wala kang control, hindi mo masasabi kung talaga bang tama o hindi ang iyong resulta. Tama po ba ito, Mr. Secretary?

SEC. DUQUE. Tama po kayo. In fact, I just would like to add very briefly that, certainly, it is very expensive to maintain the operation of a Biosafety Lab Level 3. In fact, I was told that we will need three million pesos a month at the minimum just to keep this.

REP. GARIN (J.). Can you please repeat, Mr. Secretary. How much is it?

SEC. DUQUE. It is three million pesos a month.

REP. GARIN (J.). Only for the maintenance?

SEC. DUQUE. That is the minimum. While it is not being put to full use, we need to maintain it because the climate control, the filtration, mechanisms—it has to be ensured that they are functional. So this is what it is. You are right, Mme. Representative.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Another issue that has been flooding the media, and we hear a lot of people na parang nangangapa sila, na natatakot sila kung bakit iyong WHO ay hindi agad-agad nagdeklara ng public health emergency of international concern. Will the honorable Secretary, Mr. Speaker, educate the public on what declaration of a public health emergency of international concern means? What are its implications?

SEC. DUQUE. It is a matter of fact that the WHO, which convened Thursday of last week, is deciding whether it would declare a public health emergency of international concern with respect to the novel coronavirus. With the data presented to them, they concluded, at least for that particular meeting, that it would not be prudent to declare a global health emergency because of the following information or data that were gathered or collected from the ground: number one, they are saying that of all the infected cases reported, majority were of the mild form of the coronavirus clinical manifestation; number two, that less than, I think only about 21 percent have manifested severe clinical symptoms; and that consistently, the case fatality rate has just been hovering between two and 3.5 percent. So, they will convene depending on, again, how quickly this virus continues to mutate and to what extent it will do so. Nobody knows for sure but again, they are prepared to convene 10 days from the last time of their meeting.

REP. GARIN (J.). In other words, Mr. Speaker, honorable Secretary, what you are saying is that declarations made by WHO for diseases that are classified as a public health emergency of international concern are based on the International Health Regulations of 2005. Mr. Speaker, distinguished colleagues, idagdag ko na lang po, ano po ba ang ibig sabihin nito? Ang ibig pong sabihin nito is, when they declare, it will be a trigger for all countries, whether affected or not, to spend money and contribute. Meaning to say, iyong declaration does not have anything to do with something na hindi inaasikaso. Hindi ito dini-declare kasi hindi tayo dapat magsasayang ng pera kung hindi namang kailangan. Is that right, Mr. Secretary?

SEC. DUQUE. Precisely, Mme. Representative.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Secretary, has the index case for the novel coronavirus been identified?

SEC. DUQUE. In the Philippines?

REP. GARIN (J.). No, in China, in Wuhan, the index case.

SEC. DUQUE. No, I do not think so. The beginning case where it came from?

REP. GARIN (J.). I mean, the index case actually is iyong pinakaunang kaso, it is usually established by the WHO.

SEC. DUQUE. That is right.

REP. GARIN (J.). It is usually established by WHO. Of course, the WHO courses the information through you, and the identification of the index case is actually very important kasi kung maraming natatakot pero kung anuman ang index case, at least na-hurdle mo na ang step one. So, we would like to know if an index case has already been identified from WHO.

SEC. DUQUE. That is not clear, Your Honor. It is the ...

REP. GARIN (J.). The index case, like if we talk about Ebola, it was the child, iyong unang napasukan from animal to human. So, in this case, has the index case been identified?

SEC. DUQUE. There has been no report based on the information given to me by our experts, the EB and the RITM.

REP. GARIN (J.). Has it been identified, Sir?

SEC. DUQUE. Wala pa hong index case identified by China to the WHO.

REP. GARIN (J.). Okay, so there is no index case yet.

SEC. DUQUE. Wala pa.

REP. GARIN (J.). Okay. Mali ang sinasabi na iyong index case e nandoodon sa market? Wala iyon?

SEC. DUQUE. Wala.

REP. GARIN (J.). Hindi pa iyon.

SEC. DUQUE. Wala.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Honorable Mr. Secretary, have there been asymptomatic cases? Ibig sabihin, may mga pasyente po ba na walang sintomas pero nagpositibo? I am not referring to the cases in the Philippines, but I am referring to the global situation para po mapanatag iyong kalooban ng ating mga kababayan.

SEC. DUQUE. That is not clear, Your Honor, that is why we are awaiting news. In fact, the latest communication from the WHO is that, although they have received reports of people who might possibly be infectious despite them not being symptomatic—and this is a cause for concern—however, the WHO says at the latest that there is no science to prove at this point that there has been a case proved to be positive and yet asymptomatic. So, we are awaiting...

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes. Let me categorically state it, honorable Secretary. Ang kinakatakutan po ng mga tao e kasi lumabas iyong salita na maski walang sintomas, puwede ka nang makapanghawa. That is where this fear is emanating from kaya nag-suspend ng mga pasok. I believe this is coming from the case in Germany where the confirmed case of the disease actually was a patient from China who is asymptomatic. Tama po ba iyon?

SEC. DUQUE. There has been that report, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). Mr. Speaker, distinguished Secretary, natatakot ang tao na baka daw iyong mga walang sintomas e nakakapanghawa, kaya dito nag-start ang lahat ng panic. Can the honorable Secretary categorically delineate theory versus proven science with regard to asymptomatic transmission?

SEC. DUQUE. I categorically state that the WHO has not found scientific evidence to support such a theory or hypothesis.

REP. GARIN (J.). Thank you, Your Honor.

SEC. DUQUE. So, we have to wait as the situation is still fluid, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes.

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Mme. Representative.

REP. GARIN (J.). That is a very important response, honorable Secretary. Ang ibig po sabihin ni Secretary Duque ay may mga pagdududa kasi sa science po, iyan ang theory. Kapagka may nahawa, nagpositibo, ang pinanggalingan ay walang sintomas, by theory you are expecting asymptomatic transmission, na walang sintomas pero nakakahawa ka. That still remains a theory. If that is duplicated—because this is only one case in Germany—if this is duplicated in other countries, then that is the time na dapat mag-panic tayo. So, honorable Secretary, may we request you that you reiterate all these lines, in layman's terms, para mawala ang takot.

Last question, Your Honor, honorable Secretary. Earlier I was at CNN and the anchor told me that the DOH and some officers advised that the people wear masks. Once and for all to stop the confusion, are you recommending the usage of surgical masks in the Philippines or not?

SEC. DUQUE. No, we never said that. Your Honor, what we are saying is, if you have symptoms of cough, colds, if you have fever, it is safe or it is very considerate for one who feels these symptoms that he cover up with a surgical mask. As you can see, I came here and I have been going around mask-less. So, that is it. We never said that, Your Honor.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes. Ibig sabihin, hindi epektibo iyong surgical mask—kaya nga surgical mask ay dahil ginagamit iyan sa loob ng operating room.

Mr. Secretary, I know I am running out of time but for public health purposes, may you apprise the honorable Members of Congress and the general public, if you are using a surgical mask, what is the maximum number of hours that you can use it and how do you dispose of it?

SEC. DUQUE. Well, the surgical mask can be used to the limit of about eight hours a day and then after that, once it is soiled and has been saturated, you have to dispose of it properly.

REP. GARIN (J.). What is the risk of using surgical mask vis-à-vis the transmission of novel coronavirus?

SEC. DUQUE. Assuming you have the novel

coronavirus, the correct or appropriate mask is the N95, not the surgical mask.

REP. GARIN (J.). Yes. Thank you for that, honorable Secretary, but what is the risk? Ano po ba ang danger na kapag tayo ay nagsuot ng surgical mask, tapos, may novel coronavirus, ano ang delikado doon, Mr. Speaker? We are running out of time, so let me answer the question.

Napakahirap po kapag ikaw ay naka-surgical mask na wala namang epekto against the novel coronavirus because you have a tendency to keep on touching the mask. So, kung nahawakan mo iyong novel coronavirus, halimbawa, bumahing si Congressman Remulla, kunwari may virus siya, tapos, nahawakan ko dahil adjust ako nang adjust ng mask, mahahawa ako.

SEC. DUQUE. Yes.

REP. GARIN (J.). You create a venue by which you keep on touching your face unprotected because the mask does not have protection with unclean hands.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ay, sorry, last request na lang. Honorable Secretary, earlier, the DOH had press conferences. It pains us to see that hospitals are being mentioned. Moving forward, can we have the assurance that from now on, no hospital, even PUI or other suspected patients, should be announced?

SEC. DUQUE. Sorry. Pardon me, again, Mme. Representative.

REP. GARIN (J.). Can you give us the assurance that anybody in the Department or anybody involved in press conferences should refrain from mentioning the name of hospitals where the patients are?

SEC. DUQUE. Yes, Ma'am.

REP. GARIN (J.). Earlier, there was a conference that—not today, I think it was the previous day—and San Lazaro Hospital was mentioned. So, sumunod iyong ibang mga generators of fake news and they kept on mentioning the hospitals, to the detriment of public health, because by protocol, for any patient who is being managed, the hospitals are never mentioned because it does more harm than good.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, honorable Secretary.

SEC. DUQUE. Thank you, Mme. Representative.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we

recognize Hon. France L. Castro of the BAYAN MUNA Party-List.

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

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Salamat, Mr. Speaker. Mga practical question lang ito, Secretary Duque, para mas maintindihan ng ating mga mamamayan.

Kung sinasabi natin kanina na iyong flu, iyong fever, iyong cough, iyong panghihina ng katawan, iyong difficulty of breathing, ito iyong common na mga symptoms, ang tanong, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Secretary, ano iyong kakaiba—halimbawa, mayroon ako ng lahat ng ito, magdedetermina ba ito na pumunta na po ako doon sa respective na ospital sinasabi ninyo? Ano iyong pagkakaiba nito doon sa common flu at saka iyong MERS-CoV at iba pa po?

Isa lang po para maintindihan nila.

SEC. DUQUE. Salamat po, Ma'am. Batay po sa mga kasong pinangasiwaan sa mga ospital sa Wuhan, China, ang coronavirus, maliban po sa ubo, sipon at lagnat, ito po ay puwedeng magdulot ng kakapusan sa paghinga o sa hirap na paghihinga o difficulty of breathing. Sunod po rito ay posibleng humantong sa pneumonia at sa severe acute respiratory infection. Puwede pong magkaroon ng komplikasyon din po sa kidneys o sa bato kaya puwede pong mamatay din ang pasyente. Lalo na po, ang napansin nila ay kadalasan po, ito iyong mga may coexisting medical conditions tulad ng cancer.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, kapag naramdaman na po ito, ito na po iyong time na iyong isang tao ay puwede nang pumunta sa ospital?

SEC. DUQUE. Sana huwag na po hintayin na humantong pa sa ganoon.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kaya nga po. Ano nga po iyong sinasabi nating time na dapat?

SEC. DUQUE. Well, iyong time ho, kapag nagkakaroon na ho ng paghirap ng paghinga o shortness of breath, dapat sila po ay dinadala na sa ospital.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. Sige. Sinasabi natin, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Secretary, na dapat handa tayo, and to prevent the spread of the disease, dapat ready and handa po ang DOH. So, sinasabi natin may dalawang ospital lang. Paano kung mayroong infected na tao galing sa Mindanao o Visayas? You also said here na umiwas daw po sa mga farm animals pero alam naman natin 80 percent ay nasa agrikultura at ang ating ospital ay iyong RITM lang at saka iyong San Lazaro. So, capacitated ba iyong mga rural hospitals natin doon sa Mindanao

at Visayas just in case na nandoon na iyong virus o magkaroon tayo ng person affected na doon?

SEC. DUQUE. Mayroon po tayong subnational laboratories. Ito po iyong anim na emerging and reemerging infectious disease referral hospitals and five subnational laboratories na sa kasalukuyan po dahil dumating nga po iyong primer para sa novel corona-virus at andoon po ito sa RITM. Kami ay kukuha pa ng sapat na bilang para mabigyan o ma-distribute ito sa mga subnational laboratories.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, mayroon na po. Kumpleto po tayo sa Mindanao at saka sa Visayas?

SEC. DUQUE. Kasama po ang Mindanao dito.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Kasi bukas na bukas po iyong ating mga port.

SEC. DUQUE. Dalawa po sa Mindanao, Mme. Representative.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, so, mayroon po ba tayong enough na budget para diyan?

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Hernandez relinquished the Chair to Speaker Alan Peter "Compañero" S. Cayetano.

SEC. DUQUE. So far, mayroon pa po.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). By the way, magkano po ba iyong ginastos natin doon sa Australia sa pagpapatest?

SEC. DUQUE. Maliit lang ho iyon. We can give you the cost on how much was it—hindi, ang tanong ninyo po ay kung magkano ang ginastos sa Australia para doon sa reference laboratory?

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Opo.

SEC. DUQUE. Wala ho kaming datos right now, but it is not really substantial, Your Honor.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay.

SEC. DUQUE. However, ang sub-allotment na ibinigay natin sa mga referral labs and hospitals, ang total po ay P5 million.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay. So, ina-assure ninyo po. Magkano po ba ang total budget natin para dito sa mga infectious disease kasi hindi lang naman itong coronavirus iyong pinaghahandaan natin, so, iyong total

po para sa budget natin ng 2020? Sapat po ba ito doon sa preparedness, prevention and readiness?

SEC. DUQUE. Ito pong readiness or the preparations, the budgetary support is about P45 million, ito ang requirement.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). So, okay na po ito.

SEC. DUQUE. Okay na po.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Sapat na po ito.

SEC. DUQUE. Sana.

REP. CASTRO (F.L.). Okay, so, iyon lang po, Mr. Speaker. Thank you po, Mr. Secretary. Mahalaga lang po dito iyong preparedness natin at saka iyong prevention.

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, there being no other Member who wishes to ask questions to the Secretary, I move that we close the Question Hour.

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

Mr. Secretary, on behalf of the Eighteenth Congress and the Representatives of the people, we want to thank you for coming here during Question Hour. It is very enlightening to hear from you that we have a DOH that is very proactive. It is our pleasure that this is a joint initiative of the Executive and the Legislative departments, so, please let us know whether it is the budget requirement or any legislation or even the use of our individual influence in our district that may help you. I would like to thank the men and women of the Department of Health for the work the DOH is doing. The DOH undersecretaries and assistant secretaries are also here today and you also have our prayers. We know that some of these things are too unpredictable as there are too many variables, too many moving parts, but through God's grace, through your hard work and prayers, we can keep the country safe.

So, Mr. Secretary, thank you very much po.

SEC. DUQUE. Ours is the gratitude and appreciation to the House of Representatives for this opportunity for us to present to you the latest information and update on the novel coronavirus and rest assured, Sir, we will do our job to the best of our abilities; and in case we need additional budget, I will be the first one to visit you.

Thank you, Sir.

THE SPEAKER. Thank you, Sir.
The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ROMUALDEZ (F.). Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the session so that we can greet and thank our good Secretary and the Department of Health officials.

THE SPEAKER. The session is suspended.

It was 4:49 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:56 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.

ROLL CALL

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we call the roll of Members.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Secretary General is ordered to call the roll.

*The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is reflected in Journal No. 37, dated January 29, 2020.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. Mr. Speaker, the roll call shows that 218 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). With 218 Members present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. ALONTE. Mr. Speaker, I move that we approve Journal No. 35, dated January 27, 2020.

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

REP. ALONTE. Mr. Speaker, we move to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Sarah Jane I. Elago of KABATAAN Party-List: the Grade 12 students from La Salle College Antipolo led by Teacher Reina B. Jara.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The guests of Representative Elago, please stand to be acknowledged. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. ALONTE. Mr. Speaker, we also move to acknowledge the presence of the guests of Hon. Lolita “Karen” T. Javier. Her guests are from the province of Leyte, Ms. Eugenia Polidario, Ms. Evelyn Lusico and Mr. Eugene Ramos.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The guests of Honorable Javier, please stand to be acknowledged. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 423

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 423, contained in Committee Report No. 132, as reported out by the Committee on Cooperatives Development.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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 only the title of the measure.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 423, entitled: RESOLUTION COMMENDING BAAO PARISH MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE FOR ITS EXEMPLARY PERFORMANCE AND LASTING COMMITMENT AS A PARTNER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 423

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt

* See ANNEX (printed separately)

** Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

House Resolution No. 423 under Committee Report No. 132.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 423 is adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 425

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 425, contained in Committee Report No. 134, as reported out by the Committee on Cooperatives Development.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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 only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 425, entitled: RESOLUTION COMMENDING BARBAZA MULTI-PURPOSE COOPERATIVE FOR ITS OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP AS A COOPERATIVE AND FOR ITS SIGNIFICANT ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION TO COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT.

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 425

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 425.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 425 is adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 424

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 424, contained in Committee Report No. 135, as reported out by Committee on Cooperatives Development.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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 only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 424, entitled: RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE MINDANAO ALLIANCE OF SELF-HELP SOCIETIES-SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES EDUCATIONAL COOPERATIVE CENTER (MASS-SPECC) COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CENTER FOR SPEARHEADING ECONOMIC PROGRESS AND ALLEVIATING POVERTY IN MINDANAO.

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 424

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 424 under Committee Report No. 135.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 424 is hereby adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 510

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 510, contained in Committee Report No. 136, as reported out by the Committee on Cooperatives Development.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 510, entitled: RESOLUTION COMMENDING STA. CRUZ SAVINGS AND DEVELOPMENT COOPERATIVE FOR ITS REMARKABLE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 510

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 510 under Committee Report No. 136. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 510 is hereby adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 630

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 630, contained in Committee Report No. 168, as reported out by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 630, entitled: RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH A CONSULAR OFFICE IN THE CITY OF CALBAYOG, PROVINCE OF SAMAR.

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 630

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 630 under Committee Report No. 168. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 630 is hereby adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 631

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 631, contained in Committee

Report No. 169, as reported out by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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 only the title of the measure.*

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 631, entitled: RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH A CONSULAR OFFICE IN THE CITY OF SAN JOSE DEL MONTE, PROVINCE OF BULACAN.

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 631

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 631 under Committee Report No. 169. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 631 is hereby adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 632

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 632, contained in Committee Report No. 170, as reported out by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 632, entitled: RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH A CONSULAR OFFICE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF BUGALLON, PROVINCE OF PANGASINAN.

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

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

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 632

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 632, under Committee Report No. 170.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 632 is hereby adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 633

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 633, contained in Committee Report No. 171, as reported out by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the said measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 633, entitled: RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH A CONSULAR OFFICE IN THE CITY OF KIDAPAWAN, PROVINCE OF COTABATO.

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 633

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 633, under Committee Report No. 171.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 633 is hereby adopted.

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 634

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider House Resolution No. 634, contained in Committee Report No. 172, as reported out by the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the said measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 634, entitled: RESOLUTION URGING THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO ESTABLISH A CONSULAR OFFICE IN THE CITY OF VIGAN, PROVINCE OF ILOCOS SUR.

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 634

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we adopt House Resolution No. 634, under Committee Report No. 172.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

House Resolution No. 634 is hereby adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5989

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 5989, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 5989, entitled: AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF DISASTER RESILIENCE, DEFINING ITS MANDATE, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

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

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary situation is that the measure is still in the period of sponsorship and debate. I move that we recognize the Chairwoman of the Committee on Disaster Management, the honorable Rep. Lucy Torres-Gomez, to continue her sponsorship speech on the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Lucy Torres-Gomez is hereby recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. TORRES-GOMEZ

REP. TORRES-GOMEZ. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, esteemed colleagues, good afternoon. Now, more than ever, our country's circumstances have made it resoundingly clear that we need to expedite the passing of this House Bill establishing the Department of Disaster Resilience (DDR). I commend what has been done by the NDRRMC, the local DRR offices, the LGUs, DSWD, DOH, the private sector and others, in responding to the Taal crisis and providing relief to hundreds of thousands affected and displaced. I certainly do not mean to undermine their achievements, but we have to recognize that our current system carries with it its structural silos that create natural limitations to the disaster risk reduction, response, relief, recovery and rehabilitation processes. Our status quo is functionally fragmented with various functions under the theme of disaster resilience housed under different departments. On top of this, the overall responsibility for management of disaster resilience does not fall under one single Cabinet Secretary.

The Taal eruption is yet another illustration of the effects of fragmentation. The most obvious is the seeming lack of evacuation capacity, not to mention the quality of temporary accommodations. As of yesterday evening, the affected persons and internally displaced persons or IDPs continue to increase despite the Phivolcs reclassification of the Taal areas to Alert Levels 3 and 4. More than half of the roughly 300,000 IDPs are seeking shelter outside of the evacuation centers. There is also a lot of variance in the information on IDPs as many are probably undocumented and untracked. Also, the information is gathered by many different groups yielding different numbers, so it is difficult to know which figures to base major decisions on. On top of this, there are health and sanitation issues that will cause more damage the longer IDPs have to stay in evacuation centers.

The proposed Department of Disaster Resilience presents a Department that carries the responsibility and mandate to lead, manage, direct and implement all programs pertaining to disaster resilience, from risk reduction to response, relief, recovery and rehabilitation. The DDR will absorb key disaster risk management functions from the

DND and DSWD, namely the disaster risk management functions of the Office of Civil Defense, Disaster Response Assistance and Management Bureau and the National Resource and Logistics Management Bureau. The DDR will converge with the Climate Change Commission and will have joint supervision over the following key units: PAGASA, Phivolcs of the DOST, Geo-Hazard Assessment and Engineering Geology Section of the Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Health Emergency Management Bureau of the DOH and the Bureau of Fire Protection of the DILG. These integrations will hopefully be the preliminary phase to a wholistic approach to one of the biggest threats to our safety and to our country's economic growth.

With the DDR, we would be able to easily establish frameworks for disaster relief, response, recovery and rehabilitation. This means we do not have to reinvent the wheel all over again each time there is a disaster. We do not have to ask anymore who is in charge of which task. This means that each step will have a standard operating procedure. The DDR will also put more emphasis on risk reduction. This means that we will employ scientific research and urban design in making communities less vulnerable to natural disasters.

I urge all of you, fellow Representatives and fellow Filipinos, let us all join hands in creating the Department of Disaster Resilience. Let us deliver what our country needs most at this time.

Thank you very much.

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

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5989

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5989.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 5989 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832 *Continuation*

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 5832, under Committee Report No. 142, and that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Bill No. 5832, entitled: AN ACT CREATING THE DEPARTMENT OF FILIPINOS OVERSEAS AND FOREIGN EMPLOYMENT, DEFINING ITS MANDATE, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

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

REP. PALMA. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary situation is that the measure is still in the period of sponsorship and debate. To answer the questions of our colleagues, I move that we recognize the Chairman of the Committee on Government Reorganization, Hon. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” A. Mariño, to continue his sponsorship of the measure.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The Chairman of the Committee on Government Reorganization, Honorable Mariño, is recognized to continue his sponsorship of the measure.

REP. PALMA. To continue with the interpellation, Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize Hon. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate of the BAYAN MUNA Party-List to interpellate our Sponsor.

I so move, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). Hon. Carlos Zarate is hereby recognized.

REP. ZARATE. Maraming salamat, G. Ispiker.

Puwede ho bang magtanong sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor tungkol sa panukalang batas na kasalukuyan nating pinagdedebatehan?

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, isa pong karangalan ang marinig ang mga suhestiyon ng ating kasama, Honorable Zarate.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po G. Ispiker at G. Isponsor.

Bilang pangunahin at panimulang tanong po, puwede ho bang mailatag natin sa Kapulungang ito kung ano po ba iyong prinsipyo o dahilan bakit kailangang magbuo o gumawa ng isang bagong departamento para sa mga Pilipinong naghahanap-buhay at nasa ibayong bansa o nasa ibang bansa, G. Ispiker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, unang-una, ito

po ang kahilingan ng napakaraming OFWs at alam naman po natin na matagal na itong nire-request pero hindi lamang pumasa noong mga nakaraang Kongreso, ngunit ngayon ay tinatalakay natin sa Eighteenth Congress. Ito ay nakarating din sa ating Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte at siya na mismo ang nagbanggit sa SONA na ito ay kinakailangan at panahon na para maipasa upang mapangalagaan naman natin ang 10 million Filipinos overseas.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po, G. Isponsor.

Nabanggit po ninyo na kahilingan ito at bilang panghuli, para mapangalagaan ang kalagayan ng ating mga kababayan na nasa ibayong bansa.

Ang sunod ko pong katanungan, G. Isponsor, Mr. Speaker. Wala po bang ahensiya o pamahalaan ngayon na binibigyan ng poder na pangalagaan ang sitwasyon o kabuhayan ng ating mga kababayan na nasa ibayong bansa, o naghahanap-buhay sa ibayong bansa, G. Ispiker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, marami po ang ahensiya ang na-create sa mga nakaraang panahon at iyon nga po ang nagiging problema, marami na sila. Kinakailangan pong ma-reorganize natin ito at maisama sa isang departamento lamang para hindi nalilito ang ating mga kababayan kung saan sila hihingi ng tulong at kung papaano sila hihingi ng tulong. Kaya po ginagawa ang departamentong ito ay para mas maintindihan at mas maganda iyong coordination dahil sa ngayon kasi ay iba't iba ang ahensiya and bureaus. Kapag po ang mga ito ay under ng isang departamento, mas maganda kasi hindi madu-duplicate iyong programs para sa ating mga kababayan.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, G. Isponsor. Sinabi po ninyo na napakaraming ahensiya kaya dapat ang mga ahensiyang ito ay kailangang nasa ilalim ng isang departamento lamang. Hindi po ba sa kasalukuyan, ang kalakhan ng mga ahensiyang ito ay nasa ilalim naman ng isang departamento? Pangunahin diyan ay ang Departamento para sa Trabaho or Department of Labor and Employment, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. Yes, Mr. Speaker, mayroon pong nasa Department of Labor pero siyempre po, ang dapat siguro mina-manage ng DOLE ay iyong local workers po natin. Kaya nga po hinihiwalay natin iyong parte nila sa overseas workers.

REP. ZARATE. Inaamin ninyo naman po na sa kasalukuyan, ang kalakhan ng mga ahensiyang ito ay nasa isang departamento, ang Department of Labor and Employment. Sa tingin ng Kinatawag ito, nararapat lang dahil ang usapin naman dito, kahit na tinanggal na iyong sa titulo ng panukalang batas na dati ay tinawag na Department of Overseas Filipino Workers, na ngayon

tinatawag na Department of Filipino Overseas and Foreign Employment, ang mga functions ng different agencies na ito ay ginagampanan naman sa ilalim ng Department of Labor and Employment.

Sunod ko pong katanungan, G. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, nabanggit ninyo kanina na kahilingan ito ng OFWs. Ibig po bang sabihin, sa kasalukuyan, ang Department of Labor at ang kaniyang attached agencies are not functioning as they should function to protect the interest of our overseas Filipino workers, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Hindi naman po ganoon, Mr. Speaker. Ang kahilingan pong ito ay para lang mas ma-improve natin iyong mga serbisyo ng mga ahensiyang ito na kapag pinagsama-sama natin sa isang ahensiya ay mas less po ang problema ng ating OFWs kung sila ay may lalapitan. Maganda po na isa lamang and then, they will coordinate. Dati po kasi, coordination ang nangyayari sa bawat iba't-ibang ahensiya pero kung iisa po iyong departamento ay mas direkta po iyong mga instructions, for example, ng Secretary ng departamento. Hindi na po mangyayari iyong coordination dahil kung minsan po ay buhay ang kailangang sagipin at iyong time element po ay napaka-importante, lalong-lalo na sa ngayon na mayroon tayo, halimbawa, na ire-rescue na OFWs sa China. Diyan po ang kinakailangan ay mabilis ang desisyon at dapat isa lamang ahensiya ang nagde-decide. Kapag po coordination, alam naman natin na hindi direct ang supervision kapag coordination lamang, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po, G. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

Lilinawin ko lang po, at inamin naman ninyo, na ang problema ngayon ay usapin pala ng coordination ng mga ahensiya. Sa tingin ng Kinatawag ito, kung ang usapin ay coordination, hindi kailangang magbalangkas ng panibagong batas at magdagdag ng bagong layer of bureaucracy, ng isang tungtungan na naman ng burukrasya dahil sinabi po ninyo na nagpa-function naman ang mga ahensiya at ang kailangan lang ay ayusin ang koordinasyon ng iba't ibang ahensiya na nasa ilalim naman ngayon ng Department of Labor and Employment. Malinaw po iyan.

Ang sinasabi ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor ay kahilingan kasi ito. Ako po ay hindi naniniwala na ganoon ang kahilingan ng ating overseas Filipino workers dahil ang mas gusto pa nila ay kailangang ayusin ang serbisyo sa panahon na kailangang-kailangan nila ang ayuda o tulong ng pamahalaan, na nandiyan ang ating mga opisyal ng pamahalaan na tutulong sa kanila, at hindi gumawa ng isa pang departamento, ng isang layer of bureaucracy kagaya nitong pinapanukala natin ngayon.

Pupunta po ako doon sa nabanggit ninyo. Binanggit ninyo ang isang halimbawa, ang sitwasyon ngayon na nagkakaroon ng problema sa ating mga manggagawa sa Tsina. Sinabi ninyo kung mayroong bagong

departamento ay mas madali ang pagtulong sa kanila. I beg to disagree because that problem is not just a problem of one department. The good Sponsor knows very well that even if there is a new department or even if it is now within the Department of Labor, kahit na may bagong departamento on overseas Filipinos, sa usapin ng ating mga OFW sa China—we will take that as an example— ay may pakialam pa rin ang Department of Foreign Affairs. So, again, nagdadagdag lang tayo ng layer kasi hindi naman puwedeng alisin ang Department of Foreign Affairs diyan sa usapin ng OFWs.

Incidentally, may I inquire, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor, kung mayroon po ba tayong istatistiko o datos, kung ilan ba ang mga kababayan nating Pilipino ang umaalis sa bansa araw-araw para maghanap ng hanapbuhay sa ibang bansa, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, siguro po, ang estimate po ay nasa 5,000 per day.

REP. ZARATE. Almost 6,000 daily. Tama po ba, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MARIÑO. Maybe 6,000, yes.

REP. ZARATE. An average of 6,000 Filipino workers are going abroad to seek employment.

REP. MARIÑO. That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Ano po kaya ang tingin ninyo ang naging dahilan diyan, G. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, dahil kung maalala ko noong aking first term dito sa Kongreso, napag-usapan rin ang overseas Filipino workers, the phenomenon of our kababayans going abroad at that time na nasa average of 3,000 Filipinos everyday and now, seven years after, we have a situation where 6,000 Filipinos are going out of the country everyday seeking employment abroad. When President Duterte first stepped in Malacañang, sabi niya, ang pangunahin niyang sosolusyunan talaga ay ang problema ng kawalan ng trabaho kaya nandiyan iyong itinutulak niya ang ambisyosong Build, Build, Build project.

In fact, I remember at one time, noong magkagulo sa Gitnang Silangan, sinabi niya, “Umuwi na kayo rito dahil mayroon nang mga employment.” Yet as we speak now, we have 6,000 Filipinos going abroad everyday dahil gusto nilang magtrabaho o maghanap ng hanapbuhay.

May I inquire from the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, ano kaya ang dahilan bakit ganoon pa rin na tumataas ang istatistiko at numero ng ating mga kababayan na lumalabas sa bansa.

REP. MARIÑO. Mr. Speaker, iba't iba po ang dahilan ng ating mga kababayan, at iyan naman ay

isang karapatan ng bawat isa to seek an opportunity elsewhere. Ang kagandahan nga po, kapag na-create ang departamentong ito, mayroon nang tututok sa mga programa para makabalik ang ating mga kababayan at magkaroon ng trabaho sa ating bansa.

Sa ngayon po ay hindi po malinaw kung papaano at ano iyong mga programa na nakahanda para sa kanila pero kung magkakaroon po tayo ng isang departamento—again, this is not another layer of bureaucracy kasi pinagsasama-sama lang natin ang existing bureaus and agencies sa isang departamento, so we did not add another layer. Pati nga po iyong budget nila, iyon din ang napapaloob sa departamentong ito at nadagdagan pa ng mga assistance to nationals ng five billion pesos. Mayroon din po tayo dito makukuhang, hopefully sa exemption sa foreign remittances on documentary taxes, na humigit-kumulang na P15 billion.

Kapag na-create po ang departamentong ito, mas maganda iyong mga programa, mas marami ang pondo. Siyempre po, iba't iba ang dahilan ng ating mga kababayan pero ang kailangan lang ay may tumutok doon sa mga job matching para sila ay makabalik. This department will also look at our Filipino migrants na tina-tap din natin. Mayroon pong isang undersecretary na nakatutok diyan upang sila ay makapag-invest at makabalik sa atin sa Pilipinas.

Hindi naman po lahat ng overseas workers ay kargo ng departamentong ito. Marami rin po ang ginagawa nating programa na mas nakakatulong ang migrants na nasa ibang bansa. Ang focus po ng departamentong ito ay isang agency lang talaga ang tututok. Sa pag-alis pa lamang ay bini-brief na sila kung ano ang kanilang mai-expect sa ibang bansa at siyempre, integrated din po iyong mga programa para sa pagbalik nila dito. Alam din nila kung ano ang kanilang puwedeng asahan dahil bago sila bumalik o bago matapos ang kontrata nila, dapat mayroon nang nakahanda na programa.

Kapag po iba't iba iyong bureaus, hindi naman agad-agad nalalaman iyong programa ng isang ahensiya dahil mayroong kani-kaniyang programa ang mga ahensiya. For example, kung ang problema po ay ligal, iba ang ahensiya na tumututok diyan o kaya, ang problema naman ay hanapbuhay, iba ring ahensiya ang tumutulong diyan. Kung iisa lang po iyong departamento, alam na agad ng ahensiyang iyon ang pag-alis, pagbalik, ang problema, pero iisa po ang kausap nila. That is the very essence and purpose of this department, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po, G. Isponsor.

Iyong mga nabanggit ninyo ay hindi na rin bago dahil ginagawa na iyan sa kasalukuyan ng iba't ibang ahensiya na sinasabi ninyo. In fact, inamin rin ninyo kanina na ang problema lang naman talaga is coordination, and I believe that, even without the creation ng bagong departamento, kung coordination

lang ang problema, puwedeng masolusyunan iyan. I also agree na, totoo, na karapatan naman ng bawat isa kung gusto niyang lumabas ng bansa pero ang sagot po sa aking katanungan, very clear na walang oportunidad sa ating bansa sa ngayon na makapaghanapbuhay sila ng nakabubuhay. Kaya po, pataas nang pataas ang numero at istatistiko ng lumalabas na mga kababayan natin sa ibang bansa, at pumupunta sila kahit na sa mga lugar na mayroong kaguluhan kagaya nang mga bansa sa Gitnang Silangan. Hindi po ito dahil gusto lang nilang pumunta at magtrabaho doon pero dahil dito mismo sa ating bansa ay walang oportunidad at iyon po ang malinaw.

Kaya po nilalatag natin ito dahil ang pag-create ng agency na ito or this department, as already correctly presented and stated here by my colleagues previously, will only strengthen at mas itutulak pa nito iyong labor export policy ng ating pamahalaan na nagsimula nga noong mga ilang dekada na ang nakaraan. Inamin ninyo na rin po sa Kapulungang ito noong nakaraan na napakalaki taun-taon, halos one-third of our GDP, one-third of our national budget, ay nanggagaling sa remittances na nagmumula sa ating overseas Filipinos. Iyon po ang malinaw. Kahit po ilang departamento pa ang ating i-create, if there is no policy of really creating jobs in our country, if there is no policy of, for example, iyong nabanggit na namin dito ay thorough-going agrarian reform program, if there is no policy on national industrialization, iyong sinasabi po ninyo that this department will help job matching pagbalik nila rito, it will not solve the issue of exporting our labor sa ibang bansa, Mr. Sponsor, Mr. Speaker.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Hernandez relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Evelina G. Escudero.

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, siyempre, hindi naman po natin dine-deny na may kakulangan ng mga oportunidad dito sa ating bansa, but that is beside the point. Hindi naman po dahil may kakulangan, hindi na tayo dapat mag-create ng isang ahensiya na alam naman nating makakatulong sa napakadaming Pilipino.

This is my personal feeling about our overseas workers. Alam po natin ang gobyerno, hindi naman policy nito para sila ay paalisin. Sa akin po, ito ay personal choice ng ating mga kababayan at iyan ay nire respeto natin. Hindi naman po lahat ng nagtrabaho sa ibang bansa ay puro sad story. Marami din ang success stories at maraming buhay na rin ang nabago dahil sila ay nabigyan ng opportunity na magtrabaho sa ibang bansa. They learned certain skills and then when they came back to the Philippines, they applied these skills, nakapagnegosyo po sila. There are also successful engineers, at marami na rin po akong narinig na success stories. Bakit ko po ito sinasabi? Hindi naman po masama na ang mamamayan natin ay

nagtrabaho abroad, wala pong masama diyan. In fact, other countries are encouraging their citizens to work abroad so that they can learn all the global practices that are being done abroad and when they come back to their own country, mas lalo po silang nai-inspire, mas lalo silang nakakaisip ng ibang opportunities.

Personally, I do not see it a bad policy na, kung sakaling mayroon tayong polisiya, payagan natin o paalisin ang ating mga kababayan para magtrabaho, hindi ito makakasama. In fact, mas makakatulong pa po ito sa ating bansa dahil hindi na natin kargo iyong milyon-milyong Pilipino na walang trabaho. Kung hindi po sila aalis dito, lalong magiging scarce ang resources ng ating gobyerno, hindi po sila makakapag-aral, hindi sila matututo, wala silang skills na maa-acquire, then we will not get out of the cycle. The opportunity abroad is one way to get out of the cycle of poverty.

Sa akin po lang iyon because I experienced working abroad. I am not saying that that is the policy of the government. The government obviously wants Filipinos to have jobs here in the Philippines but my personal opinion is there is nothing wrong with having a job opportunity elsewhere. Iyon po ang aking pananaw, Mme. Speaker, at Kagalang-galang na Zarate.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po, G. Isponsor. Lilinawin po natin na talaga naman hong hindi masama ang magtrabaho sa ibang bansa ano. Ang sinasabi lang po natin dito, at salamat po at inaamin ninyo, na ang creation ng Departamentong ito ay isang pamamaraan para maiwasan ng pamahalaan na karguhin ang kaniyang responsibilidad na buhayin ang kaniyang mamamayan at ipasa sila doon sa ibang bansa ano. Umalis kayo, pumunta kayo sa ibang bansa para makaahon kayo sa kahirapan. Salamat po sa pag-amin na ito pala iyong purpose ng departamentong ito, ano.

Ang sinasabi po natin dito, kung mayroong mga oportunidad sana sa ating bansa, at ito ay aking personal na alam dahil mayroon ho akong mga relatives din na nasa ibang bansa, mas pipiliin nila na maghanapbuhay dito sa ating bansa na kasama ang kanilang pamilya. Hindi ko naman sinasabi na walang success story but hard to say that for these 6,000 Filipinos going abroad everyday, majority diyan kung mayroong oportunidad sila ay ayaw nilang umalis sa bansa. Iyon po dapat ang ating solusyonan na sa pangmatagalan, ang ating mga kababayan ay hindi na sila aalis sa ating bansa, hindi na kailangan umaalis dahil mayroong maraming oportunidad ng hanapbuhay sa ating sariling bansa—may job opportunity na nakabubuhay din.

Nitong nakaraan, ipinangangalandakan ng administrasyon na ang Duterte legacy created millions of job opportunities, employment, pero noong na-fact check ho iyan, this employment ay hindi naman pangmatagalan. They cited, even incorrectly, that this

employment or these jobs were generated by the Build, Build, Build pero kung titingnan mo, sumobra pa ang kanilang estimates doon sa report ng PSA na jobs created by the construction industry.

So, iyon po ang gusto nating pinupunto rito, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Kung magpapatuloy na ang policy natin ay ganyan, gaya ng nabanggit ninyo kanina, na ayaw nang karguhin ng pamahalaan iyong problema ng kahirapan at itutulak na lang ang ating mga kababayan abroad, darating ho ang panahon na baka maubos ang ating mga kababayan because we choose to have a policy of exporting our labor rather than mag-create ng employment dito sa ating bansa.

Incidentally, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, puwede ho bang mailatag ninyo sa Kapulungang ito—nitong nakaraang taon po or in the past three years of the administration, ilan ho ba ang na-create nating trabaho kumpara sa available manpower po natin, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Can my friend repeat the question—ilan po ang?

REP. ZARATE. Ang job creation in the past three years, for example.

REP. MARIÑO. Job creation po dito sa ating bansa?

REP. ZARATE. Dito sa ating bansa—locally, domestically. Gusto ko pong dugtungan para po makumpleto iyong sagot ninyo dahil nakita ko rin dito sa ating panukalang batas na parang may sunset provision, that this Department, after 10 years, there will be a review whether this Department will still continue or not ano. Ang ibig pong sabihin niyan, kung nasolusyonan—iyon ang premise diyan—sa loob ng 10 taon, iyong problema ng kawalan ng trabaho, this Department *ipso facto* ay mawawala na siya. Tama po ba iyong pagkakaintindi ko, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MARIÑO. Well, Mme. Speaker, the sunset provision is designed nga po, kasi hindi po natin alam hanggang kailan pa kailangang magtrabaho ng ating mga kababayan abroad. I mean, the times could change anytime at puwede pong within five years, puwedeng 10 years, depende po iyan sa mga pangyayari.

Halimbawa po, for instance, nagkaroon nga po ng magandang oportunidad dito sa ating bansa at siyempre by supply and demand ay mangangailangan po tayo ng mga workers. Ang maganda po nito, marami tayong puwedeng pabalikin na workers na mayroon nang experience at na-train na rin po sila. Hindi po katulad, halimbawa, ng ibang bansa, ang Japan. Sila po ngayon ay bumaba iyong population kaya naghahanap po sila ng mga workers. Wala po silang makuha dahil kakaunti

lang po at tumatanda na po iyong population nila. They have to hire foreigners to work in their own country. Ang maganda po rito sa atin, kapag nangyari po iyong may pangangailangan tayong mga worker, hindi po natin kailangan mag-employ ng foreign workers dahil marami na po tayo na nagtrabaho sa ibang bansa, na marunong na at babalik na rin po dito.

That is the purpose of the sunset provision. I mean, we can change it and it does not have to be after 10 years. Kapag sa loob po ng limang taon ay mayroon na pong jobs available dito, so, this will be just a matter of job matching. Ito na nga po iyong isang trabaho ng departamento na ito. Ima-match po natin at pipilitin po natin na makita nila iyong opportunities dito.

Siyempre, pagka po kayo ay nasa abroad, hindi ninyo po agad malalaman kung ano iyong mga available na trabaho dito sa Pilipinas because you are busy working. Ang pagtatrabaho po sa abroad ay eight hours, they get 15 minutes break before lunch, kaya wala na pong panahon para maghanap pa ng ibang trabaho. Kaya nga lamang po ngayon ay mayroon nang mga bagong teknolohiya, mayroong internet, they can check the websites. Ang government po natin communicates with them through those websites and so, nakikita po iyong opportunities.

So, iyon po ang kagandahan ng departamento na ito. It will look at the situation of our OFWs, not only iyong sa mga programa pagbalik but hinihikayat po sila na magbalik dito. That is why there is a sunset provision because the department will do everything in its power to make sure that they get jobs here and not abroad. Again, marami rin po sa ating mga kababayan ang okay lang magtrabaho sa abroad because nakakausap din naman po nila iyong pamilya nila through their phones, through their live videos. So, iba po iyong sitwasyon noon at iba rin po iyong sitwasyon ngayon based on the new technology. So, anything can change.

Katulad po niyan, halimbawa sa China, ilang daang tao po iyong pauwiin? That could change the numbers. Ngayon po, may 6,000 na umaalis pero baka po ngayon ay wala nang aalis. Wala po munang pupunta sa China. Wala pong pupunta doon sa mga lugar na mayroong coronavirus. So, anytime, the numbers can change, Mme. Speaker. Hindi naman po ngayon nangangahulugan na 6,000 kada araw, I mean, tomorrow baka po 1,000 na lang.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. Ang problema po, kung bukas 1,000 na lang, ano po ang magiging trabaho noong 5,000 na hindi na aalis bukas?

REP. MARIÑO. Iyon na nga po ang ...

REP. ZARATE. Iyon po ang tinatanong ko. Sa pagkakaalam po ba ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, sinabi ninyo kanina, this proposed new department will

do all within its power para matugunan iyong problema ng ating mga kababayan tulad ng job matching, et cetera. Sa pagkakaalam ninyo, aside sa patakaran na mag-create ng isang departamento ngayon, ano po ba ang patakaran pa ng Ehekutibo o ng gobyerno, in general, doon po sa sinasabi ninyong sunset provision para ang ating mga kababayan ay mananatili na sa ating bayan at hindi na sila lalabas dahil makakahanap sila ng trabaho rito? Kaya ko po tinanong kanina kung ilan iyong job creation in the last three years and the projection of this administration in its remaining years as far as creating jobs for our people, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. Well, I will get the data, Mme. Speaker, but siyempre, hindi naman po iyon—I have the data, Mme. Speaker. In 2017, the number of jobs created is 743,000; and in 2018, there were 826,000 jobs created, Mme. Speaker. So, ang sinasabi ko lamang po ay iyong departamento ay makakatulong sa pag-create din ng trabaho o pagma-match ng mga trabaho ng ating mga OFW.

For the Executive Department, they have their own way on how to execute that this department will be created faster than iyong mga dati pong mga departamentong naki-create. So, kung nanggaling naman po sa ating mahal na Presidente iyong mismong kagustuhan na ma-create ang departamento na ito, ako po ay naniniwala na sa loob ng lalong madaling panahon ay may pag-asang ma-create ang departamento na ito once the measure is approved here in the House of Representatives and also in the Senate.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat, G. Isponsor. Mahalaga po ito kaya ko po itinanong kung ano ang mga patakaran or policies, or whether these are still in the process of being implemented or are already being implemented by the Executive para ho masagot iyong kawalan ng trabaho. Tooto po na ang ating function as legislators ay magbalangkas ng batas pero sa pagbalangkas ho natin ng batas kagaya nito, gagawa tayo ng batas para gumawa ng isang departamento pero dapat nakabatay din sa kongkretong kalagayan. Ang mahalaga ay naglagay tayo rito ng sunset provision dahil sabi nga natin na baka magbago ang ihip ng hangin at hindi ho natin alam in the next five years, baka matugunan na iyong problema ng kawalan ng trabaho. If we look at statistics, kaya tinanong ko po iyong job creation, in the last three years of the administration from 2016 until at least last year, ang average number of jobs created ng administration ay nasa 81,000 lang every year. So, if we have 81,000 ang naidagdag mong trabaho at halos milyon iyong walang trabaho ay talagang ang magiging patakaran mo rito ay i-encourage mo na lumabas iyong ating mga kababayan at maghanap ng trabaho abroad kahit na doon sa mga lugar na mayroong

kaguluhan dahil, gaya po ng nabanggit ninyo kanina, hindi kayang tustusan ng gobyerno iyong problema ng kawalan ng trabaho o kawalan ng hanapbuhay ng ating mga kababayan. So, for example, ito po ay opisyal na istatistiko between 2016 to 2018. In 2016, ang employed ho natin ay nasa 41 million. In 2018, it is 41.2 million or there is only an average increase of 163,000 jobs newly created, at kung babatayan po ninyo ito sa nakaraang ilang administrasyon, napakababa nito, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Halimbawa, sa loob ng first Aquino administration noong 1987 to 1992, statistics showed na ang na-create na hanapbuhay rito ay 810,000. During the Ramos administration from 1993 to 1998, 489,000 jobs were created. Under the Estrada administration, for three years, 842,000 jobs were created. In the Arroyo administration, from 2002 to 2010, 764,000 jobs were created. In the second Aquino administration, 827,000 jobs were created according to the PSA. So, iyon pong record, kung pagbabatayan natin ang record ng kasalukuyang administrasyon sa nakaraang tatlong taon, ay way below the annual average of jobs created.

Kaya ito ang nakikita natin na kaya kailangang magbuo ng isang bagong departamento, at tama rin iyong sinabi ninyo, ay para madali ang koordinasyon ng pag-e-export pa ng ating mga kababayan doon sa ibang bansa dahil ayaw nang karguhin ng gobyerno iyong responsibilidad na bigyan ng nakabubuhay na sahod at pangmatagalang hanapbuhay ang ating mga kababayan. Iyon po ang nakikita natin dito, G. Isponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, siguro po ay iba lang ang aking pananaw dahil I am very optimistic that magbabago ang sitwasyon dito sa ating bansa regardless of the job opportunities here in our country. Ito pong pag-create ng departamento na ito ay clamor ng overseas Filipinos at sila ay pinapakinggan po natin dahil ito po ay trabaho natin bilang public servants. Ito po ang clamor nila at sila po ang may gusto na ma-create ang departamento na ito upang sila ay mapangalagaan natin. Sila rin naman po ay gustong bumalik dito sa ating bansa. Hindi po nila ito hinihiling para sila ay lalong magtrabaho sa ibang bansa. Sila po mismo ang pumunta rito and, in fact, with the technical working group, madami po dito ang pumunta upang manawagan na ma-create ito. Nakaabot pa nga po ito sa ating Presidente at tayo naman pong mga lingkod-bayan ay dapat narinig natin ito matagal na. Tayo naman po ay mayroong mga constituent na overseas workers at sinasabi po nila, "Sinong tumutulong sa amin? Sino ang aming lalapitan?" Dapat po matagal nating na-create ang departamento na ito.

Iyon nga lang po ay nakaabot pa, Mme. Speaker, sa ating Presidente at iyong Presidente na mismo ang naghikayat sa atin na mag-create ng departamento na

ito. Hindi lamang naman po ito dahil may sitwasyon na walang trabaho dito. Aminin man natin o hindi, madami pong Filipinos ang nasa abroad and not all of them have sad stories. Marami po doon ay very optimistic na sila ay makakabalik dito. Kaya nga po sila ay nagka-clamor para sa departamento na ito para malaman nila kung anong mga programa ang puwede nilang balikan kapag sila ay bumalik after working abroad for two years, five years, and even 10 years. Kung wala po ang departamento na ito ay mananatili pong hindi maliwanag sa kanila ang kanilang mga babalikan dito at mas lalo pong dadami iyong mananatili abroad. Kaya nga po sila ay nagka-clamor ng departamento ay para ho sila ay makabalik sa lalong madaling panahon dahil gusto po nilang makasama ang kanilang mga pamilya.

So, I beg to disagree sa concept ng ating kasamahan. Ako po siyempre ay very optimistic na magbabago ang ating ekonomiya although siyempre, siguro iyong numbers do not show this right now but those are only for workers. Hindi po natin binibilang diyan iyong mga negosyo na naki-create dahil sa mga nag-i-invest iyong mga pamilya ng ating overseas workers—nag-i-invest po ang kanilang mga pamilya dito kaya naki-create iyong other opportunities. That has a multiplier effect, Mme. Speaker. Hindi naman po natin puwedeng tingnan na job creation lamang. Marami po dito ay investments na puwedeng balikan ng ating Filipinos overseas. Marami po dito, kapag bumabalik sila, ay malaki ang kontribusyon sa ating ekonomiya. So, hindi po lahat ay dahil mayroon tayong polisiya na pagpapaalis sa ating mga kababayan. Hindi po tunay iyon.

Ang sinasabi po natin ay mayroon tayong mga kababayan na nasa abroad at kailangan po natin silang pangalagaan kaya natin kini-create ang departamento na ito. Gusto rin natin na sila ay makabalik dito na mayroon silang aasahan na magagandang mga programa. So, iyon po ay aking pananaw, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat G. Isponsor, Mme. Speaker. Salamat sa iyong sagot. While I admire your optimism, I regretfully do not share your optimism. As shown by the numbers, this anemic job growth in the past three years is very ominous. Kung iyon lang ang nagagawang trabaho—an average of 81,000—ay talagang palamuti lang itong sunset provision dito dahil this is just parang an act of token to show na ang pamahalaan ay may planong tapusin na ang pag-e-export ng ating labor. Nonetheless, it is very clear that policy will not change because iyon pa rin ang tinutumbok ng ating pamahalaan.

I will now go to another point, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Very clear, earlier, you mentioned na ang problema naman talaga kalakhan ay coordination. I share your sentiment that iyon talaga ang clamor ng

ating mga overseas Filipinos at ina-articulate nila iyong kawalan ng tulong kapag sila ay nangangailangan o nagkakaproblema abroad.

So, in this proposed Bill, may I inquire, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, if, granting that a new department will be created as proposed, sa usapin na ngayon na deployment ng ating kababayan abroad, sino na ang may pangunahing poder sa panahon, halimbawa, ng may problema ang ating mga kababayan dahil pumutok ang giyera sa Gitnang Silangan?

REP. MARIÑO. Kung sakali pong ma-create ang departamento na ito?

REP. ZARATE. Yes.

REP. MARIÑO. Ito pong Secretary ang mangangasiwa ng polisiya pero in coordination with, of course, the Department of Foreign Affairs and other agencies. Mas maganda na po na hindi na po siya masyadong maraming coordination para makakapag-decide po iyong Secretary kung ano talaga iyong gagawin because it is within the discretion of the Secretary.

REP. ZARATE. Ang ibig ninyo pong sabihin that is not happening now? For example, Secretary Bello cannot decide on his own, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Kanina po, nakinig ako dito kay Secretary Duque at saka sa tanong na kung sino ba ang nagde-decide. I wanted to ask nga po earlier, how is the decision-making process kapagka may ganoong sitwasyon? Is it the Secretary of DOH who decides? Is it the Secretary of Foreign Affairs? So, mayroon pong kalituhan.

REP. ZARATE. That is precisely my ...

REP. MARIÑO. Kasi po ang departamento na ito, may isa pong Secretary at siya po ang head kaya madali lang po iyong desisyon. Tatanungin lamang po siguro iyong Secretary of Health, “Ano ba iyong mga parameters natin? Kailan tayo magde-decide kung ibabalik dito iyong mga OFWs or hindi? Ano iyong mga safeguards para hindi sila makakahawa?”

So, my understanding is, if there is this department, then there is a clear delineation of responsibilities at mas madali po ang desisyon kapagka ganoon.

REP. ZARATE. Salamat po. Sa kasalukuyan, sino po ba ang nagde-decide? Halimbawa, noong sumabog ang digmaan sa Gitnang Silangan at kailangang pauwiin ang ating mga kababayan dito na nagtatrabaho doon, sino po ang nag-decide, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Ang alam ko po, ang ating Presidente ay nag-assign sa ating Secretary of DENR, if I am not mistaken, Secretary Cimatu. Iyon nga po, dahil wala po tayong Secretary ng Department of Overseas Employment, kinakailangan pa pong mag-assign sa another Secretary ang responsibility para i-repatriate iyong ating mga kasamahan doon sa Middle East. Hindi po siya set in stone, na dapat mayroon talagang Secretary na mangangasiwa kapagka may ganoong mga sitwasyon. Mahirap po iyong ia-assign natin iyong Secretary ng DENR, mawawala po siya doon sa trabaho niya as Secretary of DENR. That is precisely the purpose of this department, para mayroon na pong mangangasiwa.

REP. ZARATE. So, kapag naitatag po ang departamentong ito, walang special envoy na katulad ni Secretary Cimatu just for the expatriation of our overseas Filipino workers?

REP. MARIÑO. Yes.

REP. ZARATE. Tama po ba iyon, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Sa tingin ko po, tama iyon, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Puwede po bang mabanggit ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor kung saan po nakatitik o nakalagay iyan sa ating panukalang batas na wala na ho iyong ganoon?

REP. MARIÑO. Hindi man po nakalagay dito iyon sa batas as that is the prerogative of the President.

REP. ZARATE. Exactly, Mr. Sponsor.

REP. MARIÑO. Ang sinasabi ko naman po ay kapag mayroon pong ganitong departamento, natural lamang na iyong secretary ng departamentong ito ang siyang bibigyan ng delegation, ide-delegate ang trabaho na iyon, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Well, hindi ko ho nakikita iyong pagkakaiba dahil sa ngayon, talagang sa mga usapin ng trabaho ng ating mga kababayan sa ibayong bansa ay nasa poder iyan ni Secretary Bello. Bumabiyahen siya sa ibang bansa, again, in coordination with the Department of Foreign Affairs at dito sa panukalang batas na ito ay wala ring pagbabago, pero sabi ninyo, it will simplify and make things easy. Kung papansinin ninyo and malinaw naman dito sa Section 14 ng panukalang batas, itong ginagawa ngayon ni Secretary Bello ay gagawin rin ng panibagong secretary, then again, in coordination with the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, dahil kahit na

mayroong bagong departamento ay hindi ho automatic na iyong departamentong iyon na lang o ang kalihim ng departamentong iyon ang mayroong discretion, mayroong poder, lalo at ito ay foreign relations. Tama po ba iyon, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Tama po. Anything that involves foreign relations needs the advice of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Depende po sa bansa na may issue, siyempre po, ang Ambassador po or Consul General ang siyang kinokonsulta at siya po iyong head ng delegation sa mga usapin na mayroong foreign issues or diplomatic issues.

REP. ZARATE. Exactly. Just the same, the situation now under the Department of Labor; ganoon din po ang nangyayari, wala siyang pagkakaiba.

Now, I will go to another item, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. Sabi ninyo kanina we have to create this department para iyong coordination ay mas maayos at nasa isang tao na lang iyong parang bastonero na nagmamando sa buong departamento, hindi kagaya ngayon. Puwede po bang mailinaw ng kagalang-galang na Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, in particular, bakit po ang kagawaran o ang Overseas Workers Welfare Administration is, like its function now, just an attached agency of DOLE, at dito rin sa inyong panukalang batas, ganoon din ang kaniyang papel at hindi naman talaga siya buong-buong parte ng itatatag na bagong departamento, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. MARIÑO. Well, matagal po iyan, Mme. Speaker, na na-discuss during the TWG at ang na-discuss po doon ay, because of the private nature of the funds of OWWA, iyon po ay nanggagaling sa mga members na 25 dollars per membership kaya private po iyong funds na mina-manage noong OWWA, we cannot mix them with the public funds right away but there is a provision here that we can review after two years of this department's existence, of the functions of the OWWA and the private nature of the funds. So, mayroon pong nakalagay dito na ito po will be reviewed after two years of existence. Iyon lang po talaga. May private component po kasi iyong funds kaya po hindi agad siya nai-attach. Kung ia-attach po iyan agad dito, mas maraming magiging problema at hindi po natin matatapos ang departamentong ito.

REP. ZARATE. So, that is another point na gusto nating i-raise. Hindi totoo na kapag nag-create ka ng bagong department, nasolusyunan mo iyong problema dahil, gaya nito, talagang matagal na ring usapin iyong OWWA dahil sa totoo lang, ang mga overseas Filipino workers naman din talaga ang bumubuhay sa sarili nila dahil doon sa kanilang kontribusyon. Bago sila umalis, mayroon silang binabayaran, at kung for whatever

reason ay wala na silang hanapbuhay sa ibang bansa, pagbalik nila ay doon sila hihingi ng tulong mula sa pondong kanilang ibinigay. Hindi ho ito pondo ng pamahalaan.

So, again, hindi nasolusyonan iyong problema na sinasabi ninyo. Hindi inaako ng gobyerno at ng Estado iyong kanilang responsibilidad. That is why the OWWA, in this proposed department, is still an attached agency dahil ayaw ng gobyerno, ayaw ng pamahalaan na i-subsidize iyong problema ng mga overseas Filipino workers. Gusto lang niyang kumuha nang kumuha through remittances. Bubuhayin ang ating bansa pero kapag wala nang trabaho iyong ating mga overseas Filipinos, iyong ating mga bagong bayani, pagbalik nila rito sa bansa, doon pa rin kukuha sa pondong kanilang itinatag dahil wala hong counterpart fund from the government to answer whatever contingency kung mawalan ng trabaho ang ating mga kababayan. So, ayaw ko mang sabihin, parang piniprito natin ang ating mga overseas Filipino workers sa sarili nilang mantika dahil sa kaayusang ganito.

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, iyon pong sa OWWA ay private funds at iyong mga tulong po noon ay para sa mga members. Marami po tayong overseas workers na hindi members ng OWWA. So, kaya nga po natin kini-create ang departamento na ito, tayo ay maglalagay ng pondo para naman po lahat ng nangangailangan ng tulong ay mabigyan ng tulong, hindi lamang iyong mga members ng OWWA. Maglalagay po ng pondo dito, initially, assistance to nationals na P5 billion, at mayroon pa hong puwedeng kuhanan ng pondo na P15 billion. Paano po iyong mga hindi members noong OWWA?

So, iyon po ay ang purpose ng departamento na ito. Kung wala po ang departamento na ito, iyon na lamang pong mga members ang makikinabang. Paano po iyong hindi members? So, ito po iyong purpose kaya kini-create din ang departamento na ito, para ma-address din po natin iyong mga hindi members ng OWWA. May pondo po tayong nakalaan at iyong mga programa ay mayroon din silang aasahan, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. At any rate, sinabi ninyo nga po kanina na matagal na ring usapin iyan at even up to now ay hindi na-resolve.

I will go to another issue. Sinabi ninyo kanina na wala namang mababago rito in terms of budgetary requirement as we will just pool together the budget of the different departments. May I inquire from the good Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, granting na naitatag na natin ang departamentong ito, mayroon po bang mga kawani na mawawalan ng trabaho or madi-displace, sa pag-aaral po ninyo bilang Sponsor ng panukalang batas na ito?

REP. MARIÑO. Ang alam ko po ay wala naman pong mawawalan ng trabaho dahil the agencies will be subsumed by this department. Mababago lamang po siguro iyong mga items, mga job description, pero under the existing Civil Service Law, the employees are provided the proper protection. Unless, of course, they opt to retire or they opt to not continue, nasa kanila po iyon, pero hindi po sila maaalis dahil sa creation ng departamento na ito.

REP. ZARATE. Well, naitanong ko lang iyan dahil dito kasi sa panukalang batas na ito, iyong Section 21, there is an anticipation of employees being separated—ang nabanggit po rito, those who will be separated from service within six months as a result of the organization and reorganization. So, ibig pong sabihin, this is not just a simple coming together of different agencies. Kahit na doon sa staffing pattern ay mayroong pagbabago iyan. Kaya iyon po ang tinanong ko. Sa inyo hong pag-aaral—hindi naman siguro nilagay lang ito rito na walang pag-aaral—ilan hong mga kawani ang posibleng maapektuhan nito? Wala ho akong tanong doon sa whether they will receive the corresponding separation pay but my question is, will they be separated from employment? Is there a study on that, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Well, ang pagkakaalam ko po, Mme. Speaker, wala namang mawawalan ng trabaho unless there is a redundancy of the job.

REP. ZARATE. That is precisely it.

REP. MARIÑO. Sa pag-aaral nga po pala ay kulang pa iyong tao. Malamang po magkaroon pa ng other opportunities for people to be promoted, either lateral or vertical, dahil sa mas malaki po iyong ahensiya. Ang sinasabi naman po dito na separation pay ay, if they opt to retire and if they are qualified to get the retirement benefits under the existing laws. Iyon naman pong ayaw nang mag-continue at lumipat doon sa departamento, iyon po ay pinapayagan. Ayon po sa ibinigay sa aking datos, magiging kulang pa iyong mga tao dahil nga po sa madadagdagan iyong mga pangangailangan, dadagdagan ang mga serbisyo, so there are other job opportunities, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Sige po. Sa kasalukuyan, ilan ang mga kawani sa different agencies na ito at ilan pa ang kailangan kapag naitayo ang departamentong ito?

REP. MARIÑO. Wala po akong eksaktong numbers sa ngayon. I will try to get the data. Ang alam ko lamang po ay ang budget ng bawat departamento at ito po ay makikita sa GAA. Ang budget lamang po—ang datos, number of personnel, for example, ang officers po ng OUMWA, which is the Office of the Undersecretary

for Migrant Workers Affairs, ay 11; regular plantilla is 25; sa Legal Assistance Fund, 21. So 68 po ang total doon sa OUMWA. Doon naman po sa Commission on Filipinos Overseas, lahat po iyon ay maa-absorb. Sa POLO, DOLE, Labor Attaché, 59; admin staff, 162; International Labor Bureau, 35. Ito po ay malalaman natin kapag pinagsama na po lahat sa departamento ang mga ito at na-identify po natin iyong mga gaps na kailangan pang lagyan ng personnel.

Sa ngayon po ay wala akong datos kung ilan ang madadagdag pero ayon lamang sa pag-aaral, ito ay magkukulang pa. Siguro, ina-anticipate na rin po natin na mayroong mga mag-re-retire dito sa mga ahensiya na ito bago pa rin ma-create iyong bagong departamento, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ZARATE. Thank you, Mr. Sponsor. Iyon nga po ang napansinkorito, iyong issue na iyan sa usapin ng staffing.

Panghuli po, nabanggit ko na rin ito kanina na ang tawag ko nga rito ay isang “act of tokenism” just to show na iyong ating labor export policy ay babaguhin na natin. Mandatory review, 10 years o 10, five, five—after 10 years, kung hindi pa natugunan iyong problema, in another five years ulit, ire-review. Then, in another five years ulit, ire-review. Tama po ba iyon, Mr. Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. MARIÑO. Mme. Speaker, nakalagay po dito ay 10 years. Depende po iyan sa Kongreso dahil puwede naman pong baguhin ng Kongreso. If the next Congress will change it within five years, maaari pong magbago. Again, it depends on the situation. I cannot say definitely that it will be 10 years, Mme. Speaker. Ang nakalagay dito ay 10 years but it does not prevent Congress from changing any law or provision for that matter.

REP. ZARATE. Ang nakalagay po rito:

Ten (10) years from the creation of this Department, the Congressional Oversight Committee may choose to abolish the department should circumstances prove that there is no more need for its existence.

Mayroong kasunod na sentence,

The relevance and practicality of maintaining the Department shall be reviewed every five years after the 10-year mandatory review.

So, there is a mandatory 10 years and after that, every five years, and every five years and every five years. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

REP. MARIÑO. Tama po iyon, Mme. Speaker, dahil depende po iyan sa pangangailangan noong ating mga Filipinos overseas.

REP. ZARATE. So, it is very clear, hindi naman talaga ito sunset provision dahil *ad infinitum*. It can be reviewed by Congress dahil kapag hindi nasolusyonan ang problema, review lang ng review nang review at walang definite na after this period, tapos na. Tama po ba iyon, Mme. Speaker, Mr. Sponsor?

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

REP. ZARATE. Tapos na ba ako? I will just wind up, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). All right.

REP. ZARATE. So, bilang pagtatapos po siguro ng aking interpellation, muli, nire-reiterate ko iyong nailatag na rin ng aking mga kasamahan dito—ang pagtatatag ng isang bagong departamento will not actually solve the various problems being raised by our overseas Filipinos. Hindi ho mawawala iyong cruelty noong mga employers abroad. Hindi ho mawawala iyong pagsasamantala ng mga recruiters and other problems, lalong-lalo na sa problema ng hanapbuhay at pagtatrabaho sa ibang bansa, at mas lalong hindi nito matutugunan iyong kagustuhan ng ating mamamayan na sana ay manatili na lang ang ating mga kababayan sa ating bansa at dito na maghanapbuhay. Sa katotohanan, na inamin na rin ninyo at naipakita na rin natin sa mga numero at istatistika, wala hong ganoong patakaran sa kasalukuyan na gagawa ng oportunidad na magkaroon nang pangmatagalang hanapbuhay dito sa ating bansa at makatanggap nang nakabubuhay na sahod ang ating mga kababayan.

As I have mentioned earlier, with 81,000 as the average jobs creation in the last three years, that will not suffice dahil millions ang walang trabaho. So, iyon po ang aming matalas na pagpuna at pagtutol sa naging tugon sa problema ng ating mga kababayan. Ang katugunan ay hindi nasasapol iyong ugat ng problema—bakit lumalabas ang ating mga kababayan at pumupunta sa ibang bansa para mabuhay kahit na sa mga conflicted area. Hindi tinugunan iyong kawalan ng oportunidad na trabaho, bagkus, ipinagpapatuloy ang patakaran noong mga nakaraang administrasyon, just to export our labor dahil kailangan sila sa abroad at para mabuhay ang ating mga kababayan. Ang mahalaga, inamin ninyo kanina, ay para hindi na sila maging kargo, hindi na sila maging problema ng pamahalaan kaya doon na sila sa ibang bansa magtatrabaho. That is the policy being laid down and being strengthened by this proposed Bill on the creation of the Department of Filipinos Overseas and Foreign Employment.

With that, I will end my interpellation. Maraming salamat po sa oportunidad na makapagtalakayan sa ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor.

Maraming salamat, Mme. Speaker.

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

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 5832

REP. FARINAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 5832.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 5832 is hereby suspended.

REP. MARIÑO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Majority Leader.

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

REP. FARINAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize the honorable Minority Leader, Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Minority Leader, Rep. Bienvenido M. Abante Jr. is now recognized.

REP. ABANTE. Mme. Speaker, Your Honors, I just would like to make a manifestation on my desire to be coauthor of the following bills, Mme. Speaker:

House Bill No. 5829, entitled: AN ACT INSTITUTIONALIZING VALUES EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM BY INCORPORATING “GOOD MANNERS AND RIGHT CONDUCT” AS A SUBJECT IN KINDERGARTEN UP TO THE GRADE 3 LEVEL; and

House Bill No. 5869, entitled: AN ACT DEFINING ELECTRONIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN, PROVIDING PROTECTIVE MEASURES, AND PRESCRIBING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS THEREOF, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9262, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE “ANTI-VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN ACT OF 2004.”

Mme. Speaker, thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The manifestation of the Gentleman is noted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that

the honorable Minority Leader be added as coauthor in the two bills previously mentioned.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the additional Reference of Business.

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

The Secretary General is requested to read the Additional Reference of Business.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

Upon direction of the Chair, the Secretary General read the following House Resolution on First Reading which was referred to the appropriate Committee hereunder indicated:

RESOLUTION

House Resolution No. 677, entitled:

“RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE AUGUSTO ‘BOBOY’ SYJUCO, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF ILOILO DURING THE ELEVENTH, TWELFTH AND FIFTEENTH CONGRESSES”

By Representatives Cayetano (Alan Peter), Romualdez (Ferdinand) and Abante
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

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

CONSIDERATION OF H. RES. NO. 677

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move for the consideration of House Resolution No. 677.

May I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

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

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

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. House Resolution No. 677, entitled: RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE PROFOUND CONDOLENCES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES TO THE FAMILY OF HONORABLE AUGUSTO “BOBOY” SYJUCO, FORMER REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECOND LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT OF ILOILO DURING THE ELEVENTH, TWELFTH AND FIFTEENTH CONGRESSES.

ADOPTION OF H. RES. NO. 677

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move for the adoption of House Resolution No. 677.

I so move.

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

House Resolution No. 677 is adopted.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, may I move for the election of the following Members to various Committees:

Rep. Fariñas (Ria) read the names of the House Members elected to the various Committees, per Journal No. 37, dated January 29, 2020.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As member:

Rep. Shernee A. Tan

COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND INDUSTRY

As member:

Rep. Shernee A. Tan

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

As member:

Rep. Shernee A. Tan

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

As member:

Rep. Shernee A. Tan

* Copies of the bill were distributed to the members earlier. Section 53, Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that “[a] bill or joint resolution on Second Reading shall be read in full unless copies thereof have been distributed to the Members.”

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY

As member:
Rep. Jose “Bong” J. Teves Jr.

COMMITTEE ON GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS

As member:
Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

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

All those Members mentioned are now elected to the said Committees.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

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

It was 6:28 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:29 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

The Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the guests of Deputy Speaker Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. and Rep. Sarah Jane I. Elago. We have with us Agape Christian School Teachers: Ms. Pamela Grace Punzalan, Ms. Kimberley Guintos, Ms. Alma San Mateo, Mr. John Clifford Sibayan; and from Calantas Elementary School, Mrs. Teresita Sibayan, Ms. Evelyn Lalas and Ms. Estrella Cura.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). The guests of Deputy Speaker Aurelio “Dong” D. Gonzales Jr. and Rep. Sarah Jane I. Elago, please stand up. Welcome to the House of Representatives. (*Applause*)

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. FARIÑAS, RIA. Mme. Speaker, I move that we adjourn the session until three o’clock in the afternoon of Monday, February 3, 2020.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Escudero). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the session is adjourned until Monday, February 3, 2020, at three o’clock in the afternoon.

It was 6:30 p.m.