

Committee Daily Bulletin



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COMMITTEE MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Basic Education and Culture	HB 986	Rep. Fortun	Declaring the Balangay, otherwise known as the Butuan boat, as the national boat of the Philippines	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ramon "Red" Durano VI (5th District, Cebu), approved HB 986 with amendment and the corresponding Committee Report. A bill with similar subject matter was approved on Third Reading during the 16 th Congress.
	HB 1561	Deputy Speaker Garcia-Albano	Declaring the Waling-Waling as the national flower of the Philippines	The Committee approved the bill and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 4606	Rep. Leachon	Declaring the Tamaraw as the national land animal of the Philippines	The Committee approved the bill and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 2764	Rep. Erice	Declaring San Roque Parish in Caloocan City as a national landmark and shrine for history, freedom, and independence, calling for its preservation and improvement, providing funds therefor	The Committee approved HB 2764 with amendment and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 5017	Rep. Go (M.)	Declaring Kennon Road in the City of Baguio and Province of Benguet as a national heritage zone and appropriating funds for its restoration, rehabilitation, conservation, and development	The Committee approved the bill and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 4219	Rep. Papandayan	Establishing the Bayang Historical Park and Convention Center in the Municipality of Bayang, Lanao del Sur, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved HB 4219 and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 5518	Rep. De Venecia	Establishing the Edades and Bernal Museum in the City of Dagupan, Province of Pangasinan, and appropriating funds therefor	The Committee approved the bill with amendments and the corresponding Committee Report.
	HB 2139	Rep. Bataoil	Declaring every 19th day of June as "Araw ng Pagsulat," a special working holiday	The Committee agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to study the bill further.
Games and Amusements	HBs 6111 & 6514	Rep. Pineda and Speaker Alvarez	Rationalizing and consolidating government regulations relating to all games of chance under the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), Games and Amusement Board (GAB), Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), and special economic zones, creating for the purpose the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Authority (PAGA)	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Gus Tambunting (2 nd District, Parañaque City), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to fine-tune the bills. The TWG will be chaired by Rep. Romeo Acop (2 nd District, Antipolo City). Rep. Rodel Batocabe (Party-List, AKO BICOL) suggested a thorough review of the proposal

Continuation... Games and Amusements				<p>creating the Philippine Amusements and Gaming Authority (PAGA), a corporate body which shall regulate and consolidate all regulatory functions relating to all games of chance in the country. He pointed out that a central regulatory body need not be a corporate body.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Romero “Miro” Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) suggested that the Games and Amusement Board (GAB) be excluded from among the government agencies that will be put under the supervision of the proposed PAGA, explaining that it does not operate any game of chance.</p> <p>Supporting the statement of Deputy Speaker Quimbo, GAB Chair Abraham Kahlil Mitra instead requested the Committee to fast-track the passage of HB 4843, the bill strengthening GAB, authored by Rep. Batocabe.</p>
Population and Family Relations	HB 116	Rep. Lagman	Instituting absolute divorce in the Philippines	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Sol Aragon (3rd District, Laguna), will deliberate further on the seven bills in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Emmi de Jesus (Party-List, GABRIELA) said her bill, HB 2380, seeks to introduce “divorce” as another option for couples in failed and irreparable marriages.</p> <p>For his part, Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), author of HB 116, said that the institution of absolute divorce is a “pro-woman legislation,” citing several reasons to prove his point.</p> <p>On the other hand, Deputy Speaker Pia Cayetano (2nd District, Taguig City-Pateros) said that HB 6446 which she authored, allows a Filipino citizen to remarry upon the acquisition of a foreign judicial decree of foreign divorce duly authenticated by the Philippine consul in the country where the decree was granted.</p> <p>Suggesting the conduct of a study on divorce laws in other countries, Deputy Speaker Cayetano cited Japan where divorce may be obtained administratively without the need for judicial proceedings.</p> <p>Rep. Antonio Tinio (Party-List, ACT TEACHERS), co-author of HB 6027, highlighted the provisions of the bill on the support for and custody of the children in case of the dissolution of marriage.</p> <p>Rep. Ma. Lourdes Aggabao (4th District, Isabela), who sponsored HB 1629 on behalf of the author Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn Garcia (3rd District, Cebu), manifested that the explanatory note to the bill be registered as her sponsorship speech.</p> <p>Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) Gender and Development Specialist Orlando Orcilla Jr. expressed support for the bills. Orcilla recommended to simplify and reduce the cost of the divorce process and include “violence and</p>
	HB 1062	Rep. Barbers	Amending Title I, Chapter 3, of EO 209, otherwise known as the Family Code of the Philippines, prescribing additional ground for annulment	
	HB 1629	Deputy Speaker Garcia	Legalizing church annulment or dissolution of certain marriages	
	HB 2380	Rep. De Jesus	Introducing divorce in the Philippines, amending for the purpose Articles 26, 55 to 66 and repealing Article 36 under Title II of EO 209, as amended	
	HB 3705	Rep. Romualdez	Recognizing the civil effects of church declaration of nullity, annulment, and dissolution of marriages	
	HB 6027	Rep. Baguilat	Providing for grounds for the dissolution of a marriage	
	HB 6446	Deputy Speaker Cayetano	Recognizing the capacity of the Filipino spouse to remarry when the alien spouse has obtained a foreign judicial decree of absolute divorce, amending for the purpose EO 209	

Continuation... Population and Family Relations				<p>sexual abuse" as grounds for the dissolution of marriage.</p> <p>Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) legal counsel Revelyn Cayetano Abduhalim submitted relevant data gathered by the PSA pertaining to petitions for nullity/annulment of marriages, legal separation and foreign divorce from 2008 to August 2017 and the 2015 data on Philippine marriages.</p> <p>Representatives from the civil society organizations (CSOs), namely, Democratic Socialist Women of the Philippines, Population Services Pilipinas Incorporated, and Filipino Freethinkers, expressed support for the bills.</p>
Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development	Substitute Bill to HBs 4498 & 5540	Reps. Rodriguez (M.) and Romero	Further promoting entrepreneurship by strengthening, empowering and enhancing the financing programs for micro, small and medium enterprises, amending for the purpose RA 6977, as amended, otherwise known as the Magna Carta for Small Enterprises	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Peter "Sr. Pedro" Unabia (1st District, Misamis Oriental), approved the Substitute Bill to HBs 4498 and 5540 with amendments.</p> <p>Rep. Unabia underscored the need for the government to extend additional support to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), considering that they employ 63% of the country's total labor force.</p> <p>One of the agreements reached during the meeting was to increase the penalty to be imposed on non-compliant lending institutions.</p>

PUBLIC HEARING				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Agrarian Reform	HB 5085	Rep. Baguilat	Regulating the establishment and implementation of agribusiness ventures arrangements (AVAs) in the agrarian reform lands	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Rene Relampagos (1st District, Bohol), held a public hearing in Davao City on November 23, 2017 in relation to HB 5085 and HR 919.</p>
	HR 919	Rep. Casilao	Investigation into the impact of AVAs in the country in the light of mounting demand of agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs), farmers, and agricultural workers for its revocation	<p>The public hearing aims to hear the views and comments of the ARBs who are greatly affected by the implementation of AVAs.</p> <p>The rules and regulations governing AVAs are based on Administrative Order (AO) No. 09, series of 2006. Under the said AO, individual ARBs and ARB cooperatives or associations who are bonafide holders of Emancipation Patent (EP), Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA), or similar tenurial instruments issued by the DAR or its predecessor may apply for AVA.</p> <p>The formation of AVAs is encouraged as a means by which investments of financial and other resources by the private sector can be channeled to agrarian reform areas through productive and collaborative ventures between the private sector and the ARBs.</p> <p>Rep. Relampagos emphasized that the implementation of AVAs should not be</p>

Continuation... Agrarian Reform				<p>disadvantageous to the ARBs but should promote their interests. He added that the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) should be informed and consulted whenever ARBs enter into such agreements with agri-business enterprises.</p> <p>Other House Members who attended the public hearing were Party-List Reps. Ariel "Ka Ayik" Casilao (ANAKPAWIS) and Raymond Democrito Mendoza (TUCP).</p> <p>Also present were officials from the DAR headed by OIC-Secretary Rosalina Bistoyong, Undersecretaries Luis Meinrado Pañgulayan and Karlo Bello, and Region XI Regional Director Joseph Orilla, and representatives from various ARBs and private investors.</p>
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IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Justice	Impeachment complaint against Supreme Court (SC) Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno filed by Atty. Lorenzo Gadon and endorsed by 25 House Members	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Reynaldo Umali (2nd District, Oriental Mindoro), continued its hearing on the determination of probable cause regarding the impeachment complaint against the Chief Justice.</p> <p>But before the start of the hearing proper, the Committee first held an executive session to discuss procedural matters and some important concerns.</p> <p>When the hearing resumed, Rep. Umali highlighted the following points which were previously discussed in a preliminary meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee shall respect the internal procedure of the SC with regard to the need for associate justices and other SC officials to seek approval or clearance from the SC en banc prior to their appearance as resource speakers or witnesses before the Committee. In return, the Committee requests that it be accorded the same respect in the execution of its internal rules and procedure. • The Committee on Justice shall be called the Impeachment Committee, while fulfilling its mandate to hear impeachment complaints. • To instill order and save the time of resource persons in upcoming proceedings, Committee members shall submit a list of their questions prior to the meeting or hearing, and a maximum of one hour shall be allocated to deliberate a specific allegation or issue. (A total of 27 allegations were included in the impeachment complaint filed by Gadon against the Chief Justice.) • The request to allow non-members of the Impeachment/Justice Committee members to throw questions at witnesses or resource persons is also denied. • Congress, as vested by the constitution, has exclusive powers over the impeachment proceedings and that the separation of powers cannot be applied as Congress acts in fulfillment of its constitutional mandate. As such, any disobedience to the rules of proceedings is tantamount to a violation of the Constitution itself. <p>The Committee also agreed that a show cause order will be issued to three individuals who made derogatory statements against the Justice Committee in interviews conducted by the Philippine Daily Inquirer. They are: Lawyers Joseph Santiago and Aldwin Salumbides, spokespersons of the Chief Justice, and Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Commissioner Roberto Cadiz.</p>

Continuation...
Justice

Manila Times Senior Reporter Jomar Canlas was asked to clarify the issue on the alleged falsification by Sereno of a temporary restraining order (TRO) regarding the case of the Coalition of Associations of Senior Citizens in the Philippines, Inc. vs. Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in 2013, where Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo-De Castro was head of the division handling the case.

Canlas claimed that based on his sources, which he was able to verify through first and second-hand accounts, the Chief Justice falsified and altered the said TRO which displeased Associate Justice Teresita Leonardo-De Castro due to the lack of consultation. De Castro also threatened to revoke the order, Canlas added.

Reps. Lawrence "Law" Fortun (1st District, Agusan del Norte) and Alfredo Garbin Jr. (Party-List, AKO BICOL) asked Canlas if he would be willing to reveal his sources. Canlas answered in the negative, invoking RA 53 or the "Act to exempt the publisher, editor or reporter of any publication from revealing the source of published news or information obtained in confidence."

On the query of Rep. Vincent "Bingbong" Crisologo (1st District, Quezon City) if he has personal knowledge of the issue, Canlas replied that he does not, but strongly believes in the story of his sources.

Meanwhile, Attorney Lorenzo Gadon admitted that he could not fully remember if Canlas was his only source of information on the issue regarding the TRO as he has many sources with regard to several issues against the CJ.

As regards Sereno's non-disclosure of earnings from handling a government arbitration case against the Philippine International Air Terminals Co., Inc. (Piatco) in her Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) lawyer Rosario Padilla promised to submit the requested documents as soon as they are authenticated by the BIR Commissioner.

On the other hand, UP Diliman's Human Resource Development Office (HRDO) Director Angela Escoto revealed that only CJ Sereno's 2002 SALN could be found in her office files based on her review of documents from years 2000 to 2006. Sereno was with UP until 2006 only, based on her service records.

Rep. Umali inquired if it is possible that CJ Sereno missed filing those SALNs with the HRDO. In response, Escoto said that her knowledge on the matter might be limited given that she was not yet the HRDO director from 2006 and earlier. However, Escoto mentioned that the "missing files" could be in the possession of the Office of the Ombudsman (OMB), where UP submits the SALNs.

Clarificatory questions were also raised on the alleged manipulation of the shortlist of nominees to the SC by the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) that eased out then Solicitor General Francis Jardeleza, and the manipulation of the selection process to six vacancies at the Sandiganbayan through "clustering" which favored less qualified candidates and minimized the chances of other applicants.

Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn Garcia (3rd District, Cebu) stressed that revising and disregarding long held practices at the JBC under the administration of Sereno clearly shows the chief justice's propensity to make unilateral decisions.

On the allegation of corruption, such as the purchase of a luxury vehicle, Rep. Romeo Acop (2nd District, Antipolo City) asked if there were specific irregularities in the procurement of the Land Cruiser for the CJ's use. Gadon replied in the affirmative saying that among the previous Chief Justices, only CJ Sereno procured a P5.51 million worth of vehicle and that the procurement was not done through open bidding as the type of vehicle was already specified.

Continuation... Justice		<p>Rep. Eugene Michael de Vera (Party-List, ABS) agreed that “branding” is not allowed under the Procurement Act.</p> <p>The Committee will issue subpoenas to several persons or offices to compel the submission of pertinent documents.</p>
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Energy (Technical Working Group)	Draft Substitute Bill to HB 4892	Rep. Batocabe	Establishing the energy virtual one stop shop (EVOSS) for the purpose of streamlining the permitting process of energy projects	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Rodel Batocabe (Party-List, AKO BICOL), terminated its discussions on the draft substitute bill and agreed to submit the bill to the mother Committee after incorporating the pertinent recommendations of the resource persons.</p> <p>Among the agreements reached during the meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend the definition of the term “action” as used in the bill, to refer to a decision on an application by a proponent for a permit and/or certification for power generation, transmission and distribution projects (Section 4 - a); • Create an EVOSS Coordinating Council with the secretaries of the Department of Energy (DOE) and the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) as chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively (Section 7); • Include a provision under Section 11 of the bill that will require the Council to review internal process flow to increase efficiency and reduce processing time; • Delete Section 12 (Duties and Responsibilities of the Members of the EVOSS) of the bill inasmuch as the Council shall issue internal rules on the duties and responsibilities of its members; • Reduce the time frame within which to comply with the documentary requirements for the permitting process of energy projects to 30 days for applications not requiring sustainability plan, 120 days for applications requiring sustainability plan, and 180 days for applications with protests or cases to resolve (Section 13); and • Treat with confidentiality any information, such as business plan, feasibility study, and financial projection, submitted by any power generation developer.
Natural Resources (Technical Working Group)	HBs 50, 907, 1104, 1171, 1213, 1893 & 5194	Rep. Fortun, Deputy Speaker Castro, Rep. Baguilat, Deputy Speaker Cayetano,	Providing for sustainable forest management	<p>The technical working group (TWG), presided by Committee Secretary Raul Terso, will deliberate further on the seven bills in its next meeting.</p> <p>Forest Management Specialist Ray Thomas Kabigting of the Forest Management Bureau,</p>

<p>Continuation... Natural Resources (Technical Working Group)</p>		<p>Reps. Yu, Defensor, and Villanueva</p>		<p>Department of Environment and Natural Resources (FMB-DENR), suggested the inclusion of a provision in the bill stating that the base map prepared by the DENR shall be used as reference in identifying the permanent forest lands in the country. Kabigting explained that through this map, House Members may no longer see the need to file separate bills delineating specific forest limits in their respective districts.</p> <p>It is also consistent with Section 4, Article XII of the 1987 Philippine Constitution which authorizes Congress to determine by law the specific limits of forest lands and national parks, marking clearly their boundaries on the ground, Kabigting said.</p> <p>On the other hand, Forester Joey Austria of the Society of Filipino Foresters Inc. (SFFI) proposed the creation of a forestry police force to curb illegal wildlife trade and intensify the campaign against illegal logging.</p> <p>Rep. Arthur Defensor Jr. (3rd District, Iloilo), author of HB 1893, pointed out that while there is a need to protect forestlands in the country, there should be enough areas to be used for commercial purposes.</p> <p>The TWG agreed to hold its next TWG meeting in San Roque, Pangasinan on the invitation of the SFFI.</p>
<p>Public Order and Safety (Technical working group)</p>	<p>HB 6208</p>	<p>Majority Leader Fariñas</p>	<p>Establishing the Philippine Legislative Police (PLP) and appropriating funds therefor</p>	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Leopoldo Bataoil (2nd District, Pangasinan), will deliberate further on HB 6208 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Celso Lobregat (1st District, Zamboanga City) sponsored HB 6208 in behalf of the author, Majority Leader Rodolfo Fariñas (1st District, Ilocos Norte).</p> <p>According to Rep. Lobregat, the bill seeks to establish a PLP which will primarily be responsible for securing the safety of all Members of Congress as well as the premises and properties of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This is to ensure that both Houses are able to perform their mandates fully and independently.</p> <p>Chief Superintendent Joel Crisostomo Garcia, director of the Philippine National Police's (PNP) Police Security and Protection Group (PSPG), said that while the PNP recognizes the intention of the bill, it sees a possible encroachment into the powers of the Executive, citing Section 6, Article XVI of the 1987 Constitution.</p> <p>Section 6 provides that "The State shall establish and maintain one police force, which shall be national in scope and civilian in character, to be administered and controlled by the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM)."</p>

Continuation... Public Order and Safety (Technical working group)				<p>Garcia proposed instead to strengthen and expand the PSPG which is currently performing the duties and functions akin to the proposed duties of the PLP.</p> <p>House of Representatives Sergeant-at-Arms Roland Detabali expressed his support for HB 6208, saying that a dedicated group, with knowledge and expertise in the security of VIPs, is required to ensure the safety of the Members of Congress. He added that similar groups already exist and are operational such as the Military Police (MP) and Customs Police.</p> <p>The TWG agreed to invite representatives from government agencies with existing police forces to attend the next TWG meeting. Likewise, upon the suggestion of House Secretary General Cesar Strait Pareja, the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms will be invited as well.</p> <p>The resource persons were instructed to submit their respective position papers at the soonest possible time.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFING		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Metro Manila Development	Update on the traffic plans of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) during the Christmas Season	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), listened to the MMDA on its plans to ease traffic congestion in Metro Manila during the Christmas season.</p> <p>MMDA Chair Danilo Lim said that in an effort to reduce traffic in Metro Manila during the Christmas season, the MMDA conducted dialogues with mall owners and operators and have agreed on the following: mall operations during the season will start from 11:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. effective November 28; mall-wide sales shall not be allowed during weekdays; and delivery of non-perishable goods to malls will only be made from 11:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m. the next day.</p> <p>MMDA Assistant General Manager for Planning Jose Art Garcia also informed the Committee that the MMDA is strictly implementing its modified guidelines on the use of yellow and motorcycle lanes along EDSA, which helped reduce the travel time of buses by at least 10 minutes. He likewise reported that the MMDA's "no contact apprehension" policy, in its first week of implementation alone, has recorded 3,724 traffic violations committed by private vehicles and buses.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) NCR Director Tiburcio Canlas expressed support for MMDA's Memorandum Circular No. 6 dated October 20, 2017 which temporarily suspends road excavation and construction activities in all major roads of Metro Manila this Christmas season except for the flagship projects of the government.</p> <p>Both Minority Leader Danilo Suarez (3rd District, Quezon) and Rep. Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales Jr. (3rd District, Pampanga) recommended that the current "number coding scheme" be modified, at least during the Christmas season, to further lessen the number of vehicles plying the streets of Metro Manila, or even just on EDSA. Lim said that he also suggested the same idea before but it was met with strong opposition from some sectors.</p> <p>When asked by Rep. Castelo on how best the Philippine National Police</p>

Continuation... Metro Manila Development		<p>(PNP) can assist in traffic management, Chief Superintendent Oscar Albayalde, regional director of the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), proposed that the police be deputized by the Land Transportation Office (LTO) and be authorized to issue citation tickets to traffic violators to be more effective in this role.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Vincent "Bingbong" Crisologo (1st District, Quezon City) about the security measures of the PNP this Christmas season when more people are expected to be out shopping and attending parties or religious activities, Albayalde said that police visibility will be increased and PNP assistance desks will be stationed in strategic locations, such as malls, churches, open markets, and other highly populated areas.</p>
Public Works and Highways	Report of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) on its performance relative to the implementation of projects for 2016-2017, per region, and the Department's absorptive capacity	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Celso Lobregat (1st District, Zamboanga City), listened to the report of DPWH Secretary Mark Villar on the Department's performance relative to the implementation of its projects for 2016-2017.</p> <p>Villar presented the DPWH's accomplishments per region from January to October of this year. He also provided a comparison of the fund utilization of the Department for the year 2016 as against 2015 and from January to October 2017 versus January to October 2016.</p> <p>Villar highlighted several measures to accelerate infrastructure spending of the Department.</p> <p>Minority Leader Danilo Suarez (3rd District, Quezon) recommended that local contractors be tapped in the implementation of government infrastructure projects to further develop their capabilities.</p> <p>According to Villar, restricting project procurement to favor local contractors has legal impediments. However, he said that the DPWH gives opportunities to local contractors, except when a project involves the use of new technology that is not yet available in the country.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Munir Arbison (4th District, Sulu) why DPWH projects are not being implemented in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), Villar cited RA 6734 (Organic Act for ARMM) which mandates ARMM to implement its own projects.</p> <p>Rep. Joel Mayo Almario (2nd District, Davao Oriental) raised concern on the recent memorandum circular issued by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) which imposes 12% value added tax (VAT) on government projects instead of the usual 5% VAT. Villar assured the Committee that the DPWH will coordinate with the BIR on how to implement the said circular without compromising the implementation of infrastructure projects.</p> <p>Rep. Lobregat asked the DPWH why the problem of lack of personnel persists despite its increasing budget. DPWH Undersecretary for Planning Maria Catalina Cabral explained that while there are more than 16,000 employees of the Department, most of them are on a job order basis.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to prepare and file a resolution directing the DPWH to study the following areas of concern: criteria for the creation of district engineering offices (DEOs); criteria for the conversion of local roads to national roads; and increase in the DEO's authority to implement projects costing up to P200 million from the P50 million limit.</p> <p>The DPWH was requested to submit to the Committee a detailed report on the status of implementation of projects in each legislative district.</p>
Transportation	Briefing by the Department of Transportation (DOTr) on the status of the Metro Rail Transit 3 (MRT-3) maintenance contract with the Busan Universal Rail Inc. (BURI)	The Committee, chaired by Catanduanes Rep. Cesar Sarmiento, listened to the briefing of DOTr Assistant Secretary Timothy John Batan on the status of MRT-3 maintenance contract with BURI.

<p>Continuation... Transportation</p>		<p>Batan said the DOTr has recently terminated its maintenance contract with BURI in the wake of the repeated breakdowns of the MRT-3. To prevent service interruptions, BURI's technical personnel who have vital roles in the MRT-3 maintenance works will be absorbed by the MRT Corporation (MRTC), a private sector partner of the DOTr in running the MRT-3. Batan added that additional technical support would also be provided by the Philippine National Railways (PNR) and the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA).</p> <p>Batan went on to say that the DOTr also created an MRT Transition Team (MTT) which will temporarily take over the maintenance work, strengthen human resources, and procure spare parts for the MRT-3. It is also facilitating government to government negotiations with Japan to get the services of Sumitomo Corporation and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries as the next MRT-3 service provider. Batan disclosed that Sumitomo Corporation, the MRT-3's contractor that designed, built, and maintained the train line for 12 years, is willing to return as the maintenance provider of the MRT-3.</p> <p>Rep. Sarmiento inquired if the negotiations with Japan will not violate RA 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act. In response, Executive Director Dennis Santiago of the Government Procurement Policy Board-Technical Support Office (GPPB-TSO) assured the Committee that a government to government negotiation under the terms of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) is legal and does not violate RA 9184.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Johnny Ty Pimentel (2nd District, Surigao del Sur), Batan said that while a new service provider has not yet been contracted, the funds for the maintenance of the MRT-3 will be sourced from the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2017 allotted to the DOTr for the maintenance of MRT lines.</p> <p>When asked by Rep. Jesulito Manalo (Party-List, ANGKLA) if the DOTr is considering the privatization of the MRT lines, DOTr Undersecretary Gary de Guzman answered in the affirmative.</p> <p>To better address the problems of the MRT-3, Rep. Sarmiento suggested several courses of action, among which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designate only one official from the DOTr who will oversee the operations of MRT-3; • Establish a long term maintenance and procurement plan for the MRT-3; and • Require foreign consultants to impart their technical knowledge to local engineers for the proper and continuous operation and maintenance of the MRT. <p>The DOTr was requested to furnish the Committee a copy of the memorandum creating the MTT.</p>
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