



Congressional Record

PLENARY PROCEEDINGS OF THE 17th CONGRESS, FIRST REGULAR SESSION

House of Representatives

Vol. 2

Monday, October 3, 2016

No. 31

CALL TO ORDER

At 10:00 a.m., Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn F. Garcia called the session to order.

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

NATIONAL ANTHEM

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia. G.). Everyone is requested to stand for the singing of the Philippine National Anthem.

Everybody rose to sing the Philippine National Anthem.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Please remain standing for the Invocation. We call on Rep. Ma. Lucille L. Nava, M.D. from the Lone District of Guimaras.

Everybody remained standing for the Invocation.

INVOCATION

REP. NAVA. Let us put ourselves in the presence of the God Almighty.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for this new day that You have given unto us. A new day, a new hope for all of us.

As we gather here today, may You grant us Your heavenly wisdom, knowledge and understanding of the task that we ought to do.

We commit this activity unto You. May Your Holy Spirit be upon us and may Your presence be in our midst as we tackle the future of our people. Take control of this endeavor, Lord, and enable us to have good judgment and better understanding of the duties that we will be performing today.

All of these we ask, with thanksgiving in our hearts, in the mighty name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). We request for a moment of silence in memory of a former

colleague, Rep. Vicky Reyes of the Third District of Batangas, who passed away on the 30th of September this year.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

Everybody remained standing for a moment of silence.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we defer the calling of the roll.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the calling of the roll is deferred.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move for the deferment of the approval of the Journal of the previous session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the approval of the Journal is hereby deferred.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, may I move that we acknowledge the presence in the gallery of our honorable guests from the Department of Science and Technology headed by our dear Secretary Fortunato T. Dela Peña, Undersecretary Carol M. Yorobe, Undersecretary Rowena Cristina L. Guevara and all the family of the Department of Science and Technology. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Will our guests please rise, headed by the Secretary of the DOST. (*Applause*) Welcome to the House of Representatives.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, may I also request that we acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the guests of our honorable Deputy Speaker, the Hon. Gwendolyn F. Garcia, namely: the son of Deputy Speaker Garcia, Mr. Paulo Garcia, and the daughter-in-law of the Deputy Speaker, Mrs. Michelle Garcia.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Please rise. Welcome to the House of Representatives.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, may I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 10:05 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:05 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the Reference of Business.

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

The Secretary General will please read the Reference of Business.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

BILLS ON FIRST READING

House Bill No. 3769, entitled:

“AN ACT EMPOWERING NON-REGULAR WORKERS, ELIMINATING ABUSIVE CONTRACTUALIZATION PRACTICES AND PENALIZING EMPLOYERS AND CONTRACTORS WHO COMMIT SUCH ABUSES, BY AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE BOOK THREE, TITLE TWO AND BOOK SIX, TITLE 1 OF PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 442, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Yap (A.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 3770, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE CONVERSION OF THE MAMPLASAN – GANADO – MACABLING PROVINCIAL ROAD IN

THE CITIES OF SANTA ROSA AND BIÑAN, PROVINCE OF LAGUNA INTO A NATIONAL ROAD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT THEREOF”

By Representatives Arcillas and Alonte-Naguiat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 3771, entitled:

“AN ACT RENEWING THE FRANCHISE GRANTED TO RINCONADA BROADCASTING CORPORATION UNDER REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7158 ENTITLED ‘AN ACT GRANTING THE RINCONADA BROADCASTING CORPORATION A FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, INSTALL, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES RADIO BROADCASTING STATIONS AND TELEVISION STATIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’ FOR ANOTHER TWENTY-FIVE (25) YEARS FROM THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT”

By Representative Bertiz
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE FRANCHISES

House Bill No. 3772, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE TAGPANGI NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – TUBURAN ANNEX IN BARANGAY TUBURAN, CITY OF CAGAYAN DE ORO, FROM THE TAGPANGI NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS TUBURAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Uy (R.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3773, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE TAGLIMAO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – BESIGAN ANNEX IN BARANGAY BESIGAN, CITY OF CAGAYAN DE ORO, FROM THE TAGLIMAO NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BESIGAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Uy (R.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3774, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE MAMBUAYA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL–DANSOLIHON ANNEX IN BARANGAY DANSOLIHON, CITY OF CAGAYAN DE ORO, FROM THE MAMBAUYA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS DANSOLIHON NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Uy (R.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3775, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE MAMBAUYA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – BAYANGA ANNEX IN BARANGAY BAYANGA, CITY OF CAGAYAN DE ORO, FROM THE MAMBAUYA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BAYANGA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Uy (R.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3776, entitled:

“AN ACT MANDATING THE INTEGRATION OF DRUG EDUCATION IN THE K TO 12 CURRICULUM”

By Representative Antonio
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3777, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING INAGAWAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL- ANNEX IN SITIO TAGBARUNGIS, BARANGAY INAGAWAN-SUB, PUERTO PRINCESA CITY FROM THE INAGAWAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS TAGBARUNGIS NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Acosta
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3778, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE IRAWAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – ANNEX IN

SITIO BUCANA, BARANGAY MATAHIMIK, PUERTO PRINCESA CITY FROM THE IRAWAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BUCANA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Acosta
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3779, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE NAPSAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – ANNEX IN BARANGAY SIMPUCAN, PUERTO PRINCESA CITY FROM THE NAPSAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS SIMPUCAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Acosta
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION
AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3780, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING HAZARD PAY TO ALL BARANGAY OFFICIALS AND WORKERS DURING THEIR INCUMBENCY, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Velasco
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL
GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3781, entitled:

“AN ACT RIGHTSIZING THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY”

By Representatives Nograles (K.) and Nograles (J.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
REORGANIZATION

House Bill No. 3782, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE PROVINCIAL ROAD FROM THE MUNICIPALITY OF BUTIG IN THE SECOND DISTRICT OF LANAO DEL SUR TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF BARIRA IN MAGUINDANAO, INTO A NATIONAL ROAD”

By Representative Papandayan
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
AND HIGHWAYS

House Bill No. 3783, entitled:

“AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO INFORMATION ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC CONCERN GUARANTEED UNDER SECTION SEVEN, ARTICLE THREE OF THE 1987 CONSTITUTION AND THE STATE POLICY OF FULL PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF ALL ITS TRANSACTIONS INVOLVING PUBLIC INTEREST UNDER SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT, ARTICLE TWO OF THE 1987 CONSTITUTION, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Cayetano
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

THE LAWIG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS PANOPDOPAN NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Baguilat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3784, entitled:

“AN ACT FURTHER AMENDING SECTION 51(b) PARAGRAPH 4 OF REPUBLIC ACT 6975, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT 8551”

By Representative Atienza
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3788, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTIONS 2 AND 3 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8187, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE PATERNITY LEAVE ACT OF 1996”

By Representative Baguilat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 3785, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS AS BENEFICIARIES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION FUND (SEF), AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE RA 7160 OR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991, AS AMENDED”

By Representatives Batocabe, Garbin and Co
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3789, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO FREE EXPRESSION, TO PEACEABLY ASSEMBLE AND TO PETITION THE GOVERNMENT FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE BATAS PAMBANSA BLG. 880 OR THE ‘PUBLIC ASSEMBLY ACT OF 1985’”

By Representative Zarate
TO THE COMMITTEE ON PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION

House Bill No. 3786, entitled:

“AN ACT CONVERTING THE HAPID NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL ANNEX IN BARANGAY BIMPAL, MUNICIPALITY OF LAMUT, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO INTO A TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS BIMPAL TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFORE”

By Representative Baguilat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BASIC EDUCATION AND CULTURE

House Bill No. 3790, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 26 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8282 OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT OF 1997 INCREASING THE INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING PURPOSES AND SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM LOANS FROM THE INVESTMENT RESERVE FUNDS OF THE SYSTEM”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES AND PRIVATIZATION

House Bill No. 3787, entitled:

“AN ACT SEPARATING THE LAWIG NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL EXTENSION IN BARANGAY PANOPDOPAN, MUNICIPALITY OF LAMUT, PROVINCE OF IFUGAO FROM

House Bill No. 3791, entitled:

“AN ACT PROHIBITING PERIMETER FENCING, SECURING, AND ACQUIRING AREA OF PROPERTY OCCUPIED BY INFORMAL SETTLERS AFTER A FIRE UNTIL CASE IS PENDING IN COURT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

House Bill No. 3792, entitled:

“AN ACT DECLARING AND DEFINING THE CRIME OF DISTRIBUTING ‘BOTCHA,’ ‘DOUBLE-DEAD MEAT,’ OR ANY MEAT TAKEN FROM ANY FOOD ANIMAL THAT HAS DIED OF DISEASE, AS A CRIMINAL OFFENSE, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9296, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘THE MEAT INSPECTION CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES’ AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Herrera-Dy
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD

House Bill No. 3793, entitled:

“AN ACT AMENDING SECTION 12 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9485, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘AN ACT TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN THE DELIVERY OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC BY REDUCING BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE, PREVENTING GRAFT AND CORRUPTION, AND PROVIDING PENALTIES THEREFOR, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘ANTI-RED TAPE ACT OF 2016’ AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Herrera-Dy
TO THE COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE
AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

House Bill No. 3794, entitled:

“AN ACT REVISING THE SCHEDULED RATES OF ESTATE TAX COMPUTATION AND INCREASING THE ALLOWABLE DEDUCTIONS THEREON AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE SECTIONS 84, 86, 89 AND 97 OF TITLE III, CHAPTER I, ESTATE TAX OF THE NATIONAL INTERNAL REVENUE CODE OF 1997, AS AMENDED”

By Representative Ocampo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND
MEANS

House Bill No. 3795, entitled:

“AN ACT GRANTING ASSISTANCE TO FRESH GRADUATES BY WAIVING GOVERNMENT FEES AND CHARGES COLLECTED IN CONNECTION WITH DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT”

By Representative Tupas
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND
EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 3796, entitled:

“AN ACT PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH, PROMULGATING A POLICY TOWARDS THE NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH ENHANCEMENT OF INTEGRATED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES AND ESTABLISHMENT OF A PHILIPPINE MENTAL HEALTH COUNCIL”

By Representative Baguilat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

House Bill No. 3797, entitled:

“AN ACT INTEGRATING ALL THE PROVINCIAL AND SUB-PROVINCIAL JAILS WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE BUREAU OF JAIL MANAGEMENT AND PENOLOGY AMENDING FOR THAT PURPOSE CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6975 AND REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9263”

By Representative Baguilat
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 3798, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING THE NATIONAL BIOSAFETY FRAMEWORK AND INSTITUTIONALIZING THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON BIOSAFETY OF THE PHILIPPINES, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Yu
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
REORGANIZATION AND THE COMMITTEE
ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 3799, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Yu
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
REORGANIZATION AND THE
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY

House Bill No. 3800, entitled:

“AN ACT PRESCRIBING A FIXED TERM OF SIX (6) YEARS FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS WITHOUT REAPPOINTMENT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

House Bill No. 3801, entitled:

“AN ACT BANNING USE OF SINGLE-USE PLASTIC SHOPPING BAGS AT GROCERY STORES, CONVENIENCE STORES, DRUG STORES, DELICATESSENS OR SIMILAR MARKETPLACE IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Castelo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY

House Bill No. 3802, entitled:

“AN ACT STRENGTHENING WORKERS’ RIGHT TO SECURITY OF TENURE BY EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF PROHIBITED LABOR-ONLY CONTRACTING, AMENDING THE LABOR CODE OF THE PHILIPPINES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Zubiri
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

House Bill No. 3803, entitled:

“AN ACT RENAMING THE LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES TO THE FARMERS BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 74 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 3844, ENTITLED ‘AN ACT TO ORDAIN THE AGRICULTURAL LAND REFORM CODE AND TO INSTITUTE LAND REFORMS IN THE PHILIPPINES INCLUDING THE ABOLITION OF TENANCY AND THE CHANNELING OF CAPITAL INTO INDUSTRY, PROVIDE FOR THE NECESSARY IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES, APPROPRIATE FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES’ ”

By Representatives Caminero and Villarín
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Bill No. 3804, entitled:

“AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCILS (LDCs) BY THREE FOLDING ITS REPRESENTATION, AMENDING FOR THAT PURPOSE CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS ‘THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991,’ AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Relampagos
TO THE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

House Bill No. 3805, entitled:

“AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES TRAINING AND LEARNING CENTER IN THE PROVINCE OF BOHOL, PRESERVING THE CULTURE AND LANGUAGE OF THE ‘ESKAYA’ AND PROVIDING THEM LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES, THROUGH EDUCATION, SEMINARS AND LITERACY PROGRAMS FOR LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL PRESERVATION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Relampagos
TO THE COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

House Bill No. 3806, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DRUG REHABILITATION CENTER IN THE ISLAND MUNICIPALITY OF PRES. C.P. GARCIA IN THE SECOND DISTRICT OF BOHOL AND IN EVERY PROVINCE IN THE COUNTRY AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

By Representative Aumentado
TO THE COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS DRUGS

House Bill No. 3807, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION (CHED) OFFICE IN THE LONE DISTRICT OF BACOLOD CITY, PROVINCE OF NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES”

By Representative Gasataya
TO THE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

House Bill No. 3808, entitled:

“AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PROFESSIONAL REGULATION COMMISSION (PRC) OFFICE IN THE CITY OF BACOLOD AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR”

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

House Bill No. 3809, entitled:

“AN ACT TO STRENGTHEN AND INTENSIFY THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFICKING, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE SECTIONS 3, 4, 5, 6, 8,

11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 20, 29, 33, 78, 84 AND 92 OF REPUBLIC ACT 9165, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE 'COMPREHENSIVE DANGEROUS DRUGS ACT OF 2002'”

By Representative Barbers
TO THE COMMITTEE ON DANGEROUS DRUGS

RESOLUTIONS

House Resolution No. 394, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING FILIPINO BOXER DONNIE ‘AHAS’ NIETES FOR OUTPOINTING MEXICAN FIGHTER IN FLYWEIGHT DIVISION AT THE STUBHUB CENTER IN CARSON, CALIFORNIA LAST SEPTEMBER 24, 2016”

By Representatives Sambar, Nograles (J.) and Nograles (K.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON GAMES AND AMUSEMENTS

House Resolution No. 395, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING PHILIPPINE NATIONAL WOMEN BASKETBALL TEAM PERLAS NG PILIPINAS FOR CLINCHING GOLD MEDAL IN 2016 SEABA WOMEN’S CHAMPIONSHIP AT BUKIT SERENDIT INDOOR STADIUM IN MALACCA, MALAYSIA LAST SEPTEMBER 24, 2016”

By Representatives Sambar, Nograles (J.) and Nograles (K.)
TO THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT

House Resolution No. 396, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS WORKERS AFFAIRS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECTION 20 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8042, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE ‘MIGRANT WORKERS AND OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ACT OF 1995’, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10022”

By Representative Villarín
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 397, entitled:

“RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE PERLAS PILIPINAS WOMEN’S NATIONAL

BASKETBALL TEAM FOR WINNING THE GOLD MEDAL IN THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED 2016 SOUTHEAST ASIAN BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP (SEABA) FOR WOMEN HELD IN MALACCA CITY, MALAYSIA FROM SEPTEMBER 20-26, 2016”

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

House Resolution No. 398, entitled:

“RESOLUTION STRONGLY URGING THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP) TO PRINT AND PUT INTO CIRCULATION MONETARY BILLS OF VARIOUS SIZES TO PROVIDE ALL CONSUMERS WITH AN EASIER WAY TO DISTINGUISH AMONG THESE SAID BILLS”

By Representative Atienza
TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

House Resolution No. 399, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING JESLYN DAVID SANTOS FOR WINNING THE MISS UNITED CONTINENTS 2016 CROWN AT THE PALACIO DE CRISTAL IN GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR LAST SEPTEMBER 24, 2016”

By Representative Atienza
TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES

House Resolution No. 400, entitled:

“A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR AN INVESTIGATION ON THE CHARGES IMPOSED BY MOBILE SERVICE PROVIDERS ON MOBILE INTERNET USE”

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

House Resolution No. 401, entitled:

“RESOLUTION REQUIRING THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS TO FURNISH THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WITH A COPY OF ITS REPORT ON THE COMPLIANCE WITH THE MANDATORY CREDIT ALLOCATION OF BANK LENDING INSTITUTIONS PURSUANT TO REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10000, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE AGRI-AGRA REFORM CREDIT ACT OF 2009”

By Representative Ocampo
TO THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

ADDITIONAL COAUTHORS

*The additional coauthors is reflected in Journal No. 31, dated October 3, 2016.**

COMMUNICATIONS

Letter dated July 12, 2016 of Marsia A. Ruero, State Auditor IV, Audit Team Leader, transmitting a copy of the Annual Audit Report for CY 2015 on the Central Bicol State University of Agriculture (CBSUA), Pili, Camarines Sur.
TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated July 12, 2016 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, transmitting copies of the Cy 2015 Annual Audit Reports and Management Letter on the following government agencies:

A. Annual Audit Report:

1. Agricultural Credit Policy Council (ACPC);
2. Philippine Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (PCAF);
3. National Meat Inspection Service (NMIS);
4. National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA);
5. National Water Resources Board (NWRB);
6. Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC);
7. Board of Investments (BOI);
8. Philippine Trade Training Center (PTTC);
9. Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOP HL); and
10. Design Center of the Philippines (DCP).

B. Management Letters:

1. Philippine Fiber Industry Development Authority (PHILFIDA); and
2. Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines (CIAP).

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated July 15, 2016 of Lourdes T. Pedros, State Auditor V, Audit Team Leader, Commission on Audit, transmitting a copy of the Annual Audit Report for CY 2015 on the Negros Oriental State University (NORSU), Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated July 22, 2016 of Elena B. Tabayag, State Auditor IV, Audit Team Leader, Commission on Audit, transmitting a copy of the 2015 Annual Audit Report on the Partido State University (PSU), Goa, Camarines Sur.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated July 25, 2016 of Maria Gleda E. Lim, State Auditor, Supervising Auditor, Regional Office No. VI, Commission on Audit, transmitting a copy of the Annual Audit Report on the Barbaza Water District, Barbaza, Antique for the years ended December 31, 2010 to 2013.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated July 26, 2016 of Alicia M. Malquisto, Regional Director, Regional Office No. VII, Commission on Audit, transmitting copies of the CY 2015 Annual Audit Reports on the State Universities and Colleges of Region VII, to wit:

1. Cebu Normal University (CNU);
2. Cebu Technological University (CTU);
3. Bohol Island State University (BISU); and
4. Siquijor State College (SSC).

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated July 29, 2016 of Emmanuel F. Dooc, Insurance Commissioner, Insurance Commission, submitting a copy of the Report on the Examination of the Government Service Insurance System for the year ending December 31, 2014.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON BANKS AND FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES

Letter dated August 15, 2016 of Roland A. Rey, Regional Director, Regional Office No. V, Commission on Audit, transmitting copies of the Annual Audit Reports (AARs) on the accounts and operations on the following water districts in Region V:

1. San Andres Water District, San Andres, Catanduanes (CY 2015);
2. Bulan Water District, Bulan, Sorsogon (CY 2014);
3. Casiguran Water District, Casiguran, Sorsogon (CY 2014);
4. Irosin Water District, Irosin, Sorsogon (CY 2014);
5. Ligao City Water District, Ligao City (CY 2014);
6. Sorsogon City Water District, Sorsogon City, Sorsogon (CY 2014);
7. Donsol Water District, Donsol, Sorsogon (CYs 2013-2014); and
8. Matnog Water District, Matnog, Sorsogon (CYs 2013-2014).

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Letter dated September 2, 2016 of Mariano R. Alquiza, CESO III, Regional Director, Region XI, Department of Public Works and Highways submitting their monthly progress status reports of

projects for the month of August 2016 implemented by their office.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS
AND HIGHWAYS

Letter dated September 8, 2016 of Atty. Felix S. Alicer, Regional Director, Regional XI, Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), furnishing a copy of DENR-XI Programs, Activities and Projects within respective administrative districts and accomplishments from January to August 2016.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL
RESOURCES

Letter dated September 28, 2016 of Michael G. Aguinaldo, Chairperson, Commission on Audit, transmitting a copy of the 2015 Annual Financial Report for the Local Government.

TO THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, considering that copies of Journal No. 29, dated September 29, 2016, have been distributed to the Members, I move that we dispense with the reading of the Journal.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the reading of the Journal is hereby dispensed with.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Consequently, Mme. Speaker, I move that we approve Journal No. 29, dated September 29, 2016.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Journal is approved.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we consider House Bill No. 3408, as contained in Committee Report No. 2, and for this purpose, may I ask that the Secretary General be directed to read the title of the Bill.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is

there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the Secretary General is directed to read the title of the Bill.

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, may I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 10:15 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:21 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that it is in the period of interpellation and debate. I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the Department of Science and Technology.

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

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the First District of Zamboanga del Norte, the Hon. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Department of Science and Technology.

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

The Hon. Frederick Jalosjos is recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. JALOSJOS

REP. JALOSJOS. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Members of the House of Representatives, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant day.

I stand before you today to respectfully endorse the 2017 budget of the Department of Science and Technology, including its 18 attached agencies and 17 regional offices. The importance of science and technology for national development and progress is embedded in the Constitution as highlighted in Section 10, Article XIV, as enunciated in Section 4 of E.O. No.128.

The DOST is primarily mandated to provide central direction, leadership and coordination of all scientific and technological efforts and ensure that the results therefrom are geared and utilized in areas of maximum economic and social benefits for the people. To enable the DOST to aggressively implement the programs for 2017, the DOST, including its attached agencies, will need a total budget of P20,803,000,000. By S and T priorities, the bulk of the P20,803,000,000 or 34 percent of the total budget is allocated to implementing significant programs and projects highlighting S and T education, including infrastructure development in compliance with the K to 12 budget allocation.

With this, I strongly recommend the passage of the DOST budget to pave the way for more innovations, more S and T interventions and more S and T professionals.

May you fully support the thrust to maximize the use of science and technology and innovation to propel our country's development.

Thank you very much.

I am now ready to accept interpellators, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Danilo E. Suarez, the Minority Leader, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Danilo Suarez, our Minority Leader, is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Is the distinguished Gentleman willing to yield to some questions?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, of course, Mme. Speaker, I would gladly yield to the queries of our Minority Leader.

REP. SUAREZ. As you have stated, the requested budget for 2017 is P20 billion plus, is that correct?

REP. JALOSJOS. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. You know, Your Honor, it is a far cry from the Tenth Congress. They barely reached a billion pesos. So, I think we did our homework in allocating this increase over the years to give funds to a very important department. Still, P20 billion is not as—how would you compare the requested budget of P20 billion to GDP? How much percentage? My point is, developing and developed countries set aside a certain percentage of their GDP to their national budget. I just would like to find out, is the P20 billion at par with the developing countries?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. JALOSJOS. I would like to request for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended

It was 10:25 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

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

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. JALOSJOS. To the honorable Minority Leader, with the information that we gathered, for a total GDP, we have allocated at least 0.14 percent.

REP. SUAREZ. Percent?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes po.

REP. SUAREZ. 2.14.

REP. JALOSJOS. 0.14, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. That is a far cry from 2 percent. So, kulang na kulang pa rin.

So, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, considering that this budget, as I have said, and I will repeat again every time I interpellate the Sponsor, is, hindi naman sila ang gumawa, e. Meaning, this is not a PDP-Laban-presented budget but the previous administration-, am I correct? Although there is an

increase of, I think, P2 billion as compared to 2015, hindi po ba?

REP. JALOSJOS. That is correct. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. But still, considering the potential in this pamphlet that I am reading that came from them, where my line of questioning will be coming from, napakababa pa rin, and this may be a wake-up call for the leadership, that maybe, in 2018, we can allocate a better budget for this very important agency.

REP. JALOSJOS. That is correct, Mme. Speaker. I fully subscribe to and support your sentiments.

REP. SUAREZ. They come up here, Mme. Speaker, can you do me a favor of—do you have this matrix with you? So, at least, do you have this?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Can you turn to page 3, Science and Technology Service Institutes.

REP. JALOSJOS. Mme. Speaker, can you please clarify, page ...

REP. SUAREZ. Page 3, page 3, 1, 2, 3, and the title is DOST Agencies.

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. On this page, there is Philippine Science High School, PSHS, Specialized in Science High School Program. Can the distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, ask the officer-in-charge of this particular program to look into the function of the Quezon Provincial Science High School which was established, I think, in 2010, wherein we came up with a package of—is this agency aware of the existence of Quezon Province Science High School?

REP. JALOSJOS. Mme. Speaker, I am sorry but that is not part of the Philippine Science High School jurisdiction po. But we can help through curricular and ...

REP. SUAREZ. That is what I am trying to drive at, distinguished Sponsor. What we did was, the governor got the best and the brightest from each municipality and we placed them in dorms in this particular school and we hired, not necessarily the best and the brightest teachers, but we gave them preferential salaries and allowances to train our first year students. I just would like to find out what contribution can the Philippine Science High School give to this very noble program of

our, this might be parochial for me, but to this particular school. Can they just commit that they will take a look at this, and maybe in the proposed budget of 2018 or whatever they can give assistance for 2017, tingnan ho kung ano ang maitutulong doon sa Quezon Science High School. Anyway, the objective is relatively the same.

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. Actually, I have consulted already with the honorable Secretary, and the programs that they can participate in regarding teacher training, curriculum and additional infrastructure planning. And, yes po, we will take a look at your concerns.

REP. SUAREZ. On these DOST agencies in 17 regional offices, where is Region IV-A located, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. JALOSJOS. In UP Los Baños, Mme. Speaker. Los Baños, I mean, Los Baños po.

REP. SUAREZ. UP Los Baños.

REP. JALOSJOS. Los Baños po.

REP. SUAREZ. Yes, but considering that that is already a hub of learning facilities, what is the advantage of putting it there when you can deploy it elsewhere, where it can come up with better training? Learning center na po iyong Los Baños, nandoon na iyong UP. So, why Los Baños?

REP. JALOSJOS. Mayroon po tayong provincial offices na ini-strengthen po ng DOST.

REP. SUAREZ. Can we ask your agency to take a second look at this, and maybe redeploy this particular office para magkaroon kayo ng potential growth, kasi, nandoon na ho ang UP. Who can best UP in terms of learning curve? This is science and technology, hindi ba? So, pakitingnan lang iyong possibility na ilipat sa ibang lalawigan kasi malaki naman ang Region IV-A.

REP. JALOSJOS. Mme. Speaker, mahirap pong ilipat but what we are mandated to do is to strengthen our regional and provincial offices. Support lang tayo sa mga eskwelahan, and kasama na po doon iyong mga universities within the area.

REP. SUAREZ. Then, you just answered my question, ...

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes po.

REP. SUAREZ. ... why UP, di ho ba?

REP. JALOSJOS. Mme. Speaker, ...

REP. SUAREZ. Medyo you look at the geographical application ...

REP. JALOSJOS. Mme. Speaker, I would like to clarify, hindi po sa loob ng UP ito. It is within Los Baños, and independent po iyong mga eskwelahan po na ito, hindi po covered.

REP. SUAREZ. Nevertheless, distinguished Sponsor, it is still in Los Baños.

Can I just go to page 4. There was a mention here, there is a feature here about coconut. Did the DOST participate in the measure of combating coccolisap?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, involved po ang DOST sa research and development to eradicate coccolisap sa bansa natin.

REP. SUAREZ. What have they done, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. JALOSJOS. Well, Mme. Speaker, support sa mga development ng mga techniques para sugpuin po natin ang problema sa coccolisap. So, nandoon pa rin po tayo sa research and development, which is mandated by our agency.

REP. SUAREZ. You are saying that kasama ito doon sa allocation na P20,771,000 for 2017.

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So ano ang working, do they coordinate with the Philippine Coconut Authority on this particular matter?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, closely coordinating po iyan, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Is the agency aware that one reason kung bakit medyo nawala ang coccolisap ay tinamaan tayo ng bagyo, it completely wiped them out? So, in effect, na parang ...

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. In fact, doon po kino-conduct iyong meeting, sa PCA mismo.

REP. SUAREZ. Nevertheless, there will be a continuing working arrangement with the PCA on this.

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes po, assured iyon, Mme. Speaker. They are closely coordinating with the agency.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, these are very noble programs as I can see.

REP. JALOSJOS. Continuing rin ho iyong ...

REP. SUAREZ. Going to my parochial concern, considering that Quezon is the biggest in Region IV, mayroon ba kayong programa sa aming lalawigan?. Do you have any programs for this very noble agricultural, natural resources industry that pertain to our province?

REP. JALOSJOS. A big part is allocated for Quezon, iyong mass rearing of parasitoids and iyong studies for the PCA, doon po sa region ninyo po naka-allocate, the bulk of the research and development.

REP. SUAREZ. During the Fifteenth Congress, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, this Representation asked them to upgrade their capability and electronics, test equipment, et cetera. Have they availed themselves of that particular program? I was absent during the last Congress. Have they done any improvement on their capability on testing, analysis, metallurgy, et cetera.?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. We have spent around P150 million in the last two years solely dedicated to that problem, Mme. Speaker. Labing-anim na labs po iyong naka-dedicate for that major concern, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. If you will go to page 7, distinguished Sponsor, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation, I did raise this question when we interpellated, I think, no less than the distinguished Congressman Salceda who was the one who sponsored the Climate Change Commission. I am going to raise this question again.

This climate change adaptation is very sensitive on this. Now, will they have the same answer when I raise the question: Is it a valid statement that we are just getting hotter and warmer every year?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, that is correct.

REP. SUAREZ. Now, is it man-made or it is a natural formation?

REP. JALOSJOS. Man-made po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. That is being contested by several authorities in developed nations. What is the rationale when you say it is man-made? Is it the emission that affects our layer, what we call protective layer that is

being affected by ultraviolet rays, the same principle that they are saying?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes po, Mme. Speaker, resulting from the CO₂ emissions po natin and the carbon cycle and the greenhouse effect na umiikot na po ngayon, that exist.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, I am happy to note that they have deployed 14 meteorological weather radars all over the country. Do we still have a blind spot? Are we amply covered?

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker, there are blind spots, pero maliliit na lang po along river basins.

REP. SUAREZ. Are they making sure that in the 2017 budget, there will be no more blind spots, Mme. Speaker?

REP. JALOSJOS. Until 2018, Mme. Speaker, we can assure na wala na pong blind spots.

REP. SUAREZ. When they forecast turbulence, and what we call “low pressure area,” how far is the local capability of the tracking radar? Because they also get information from Japan and Honolulu, so gaano po kalayo ang weather disturbance bago nila ma-pick up?

REP. JALOSJOS. Iyong range po ng radar natin is around 480 kilometers. So, malapad po iyong range natin na umaabot.

REP. SUAREZ. We can pick up a weather disturbance when it is 480 kilometers from our territorial boundary?

REP. JALOSJOS. That is the maximum range, Mme. Speaker. Yes, napi-pick up na po natin iyon.

REP. SUAREZ. Malapit na iyon. If that is moving at 15 kilometers an hour, we barely have enough time to mobilize and inform, the residents about this incoming weather impediment. Mme. Speaker, is the distinguished Sponsor sure of his answer?

REP. JALOSJOS. That is 480 kilometers, Me. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Where do we get better advanced warning data, from Japan and Honolulu, or from our weather tracking system?

REP. JALOSJOS. We have access and we are a member of the World Meteorological Organization.

REP. SUAREZ. Nevertheless, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, right now, we are saying that there is an LPA, hindi po ba? So, ang sinasabi natin, baka naman puwede i-advance nang kaunti ang forecast ng weather disturbance. Right now, the Sponsor is saying that we have a three to four days’ lead time, hindi po ba, right now, Mme. Speaker?

REP. JALOSJOS. Five days po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Baka puwede nating dagdagan pa nang kaunti by adopting the tracking system of Honolulu and Japan.

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker. we will let you know...

REP. SUAREZ. We had the assurance that by 2018, wala na tayong blind spots.

REP. JALOSJOS. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, I am very satisfied with the answers given by the distinguished Sponsor.

Having no other questions to raise on the proposed budget, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Department of Science and Technology, including its attached agencies.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in its motion to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Science and Technology, including its attached agencies.

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

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. I move for a suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 10:43 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:51 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of our guests in the gallery. We have the Department of Trade and Industry family, including its attached agencies, namely: Secretary Ramon M. Lopez, Usec. Rowel Barba, Usec. Zenaida Cuison-Maglaya, Usec. Teodoro C. Pascua, Usec. Ceferino S. Rodolfo, Usec. Nora K. Terrado, Asst. Sec. Ireneo V. Vizmonte, Usec. Ruth B. Castelo, Exec. Dir. Rosvi C. Gaetos, Dir. Gen. Charito B. Plaza, Asst. Sec. Ameenah A. Fajardo, Asst. Sec. Rafaelita M. Aldaba, Asst. Sec. Anna Maria D. Robeniol, Asst. Sec. Christopher Naga and Asst. Sec. Arturo P. Boncato Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Will our guests from the Department of Trade and Industry, including its attached agencies, please rise. *(Applause)* Welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry, including its attached agencies and corporations.

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

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Joey Sarte Salceda, Vice Chairperson for the Committee on Rules, to sponsor the proposed budget of the Department of Trade and Industry.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Joey Salceda is recognized.

REP. SALCEDA. We are ready to answer questions, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Jose L. Atienza Jr. from BUHAY Party-List, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Lito Atienza is recognized.

REP. ATIENZA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

With the kind permission of my respected colleague, the honorable Sponsor, we would like to ask some general questions on the Department of Trade and Industry's budget, and its corresponding programs that go into this budget.

First of all, we would like to state that the budget that they are asking for is not that much. On the other hand, less does not mean more beneficial, believing in the functions of trade and industry in our national economic quest. So, we would like to ask some basic questions knowing that the distinguished Sponsor is a very well-versed economist himself, a respected mind in the world of trade and industry.

Ito bang budget sa Department of Trade and Industry ay sapat upang masiguro na ang ating negosyo, ang ating mga industriya at kalakal ay mabibigyan ng sapat na tulong upang magtagumpay. Ano po ba ang sa tingin ninyo, Mme. Speaker?

REP. SALCEDA. The Department, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, could actually do with more in promoting the public good, as well as, of course, the inclusion of the economic acceleration. Sa ngayon po, ang 9.51 percent increase ay mas mataas naman po sa 2 percent inflation rate at 7 percent GDP growth rate. Ang masasabi natin, in line lang po ito sa paglago ng ating ekonomiya.

REP. ATIENZA. Ang pag-aalala ng ating mamamayan ngayon sa larangan ng industriya at negosyo ay ang general perception that our government is very antagonistic to foreign relations. Would this in any way affect the programs that they envision to be pursuing in 2017, considering that we have ruffled a lot of foreign feelings and foreign relations, to say the least, the latest of which is our continuing jousting with the United States, and with the President's pronouncements that he may even terminate the EDCA with the US? Would this affect our economic planning and the Department's work?

REP. SALCEDA. Ang mga patakaran naman, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, pagdating po sa macroeconomic

stability, iyon po kaagad ang number one sa 10-point economic agenda ng ating gobyerno. Pangalawa po, I think we have a very empowered economic managers group. But I would like to ask on the official position of the Secretary with respect to that point, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. SALCEDA. May I ask for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 10:57 a.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 10:58 a.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

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

As far as the understanding of the Secretary is concerned, tinukoy po ng Pangulo na pinakahuli na po ang joint military exercise, iyon po ay actually, sabi ay mapag-aaralan pa. Patungkol naman sa EDCA, ito po ay isang agreement kaya po, at isang tratado, at mukhang wala naman tayong balak na unilaterally o magpaalam na buwagin po ito. Samakatuwid po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, ang understanding po ng Secretary, ang nangyari sa atin, o sa mga pronouncement ng ating Pangulo, ay masasabing sinusubukan na magkaroon ng independent foreign policy na mas equidistant sa lahat po ng potential trading powers ng buong mundo, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Kung ganoon po, ang tanong ko, Mme. Speaker, does the Secretary himself see an improvement in the trade and industry potentials of the country in this type of negative relations with the world?

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ceteris paribus, halimbawa po, I think, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, mukhang by seeking equidistant relations with the economic powers of the world, mukhang lalawak po iyong atin pong mga posibleng maging export market, at the same time sources ng ating teknolohiya para mas mapalago po ang ating ekonomiya.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, an independent foreign policy is one to which many of us will agree. But a negative and in fact sometimes insulting foreign

policy will never help any local economy. Kapag inaaway natin ay hindi po naman siguro independent foreign policy iyon. Iyon ay inaaway natin iyong hindi naman dapat awayin. Wala pong dahilan na tayo ay makipag-away maski na kanino, lalung-lalo na sa mga dati nang trading partners natin.

REP. SALCEDA. Ang understanding po ...

REP. ATIENZA. Now, if you think we will get more trade from China, ay mas malalaki po ang kanilang mga kanegosyo na ngayon, baka mahirapan tayo. Kaya, I maintain, I agree that we should have finally an independent foreign policy. But we do not need to make enemies out of the rest of the world, who are already our partners.

So, will the present management of the DTI, see it as a positive, correct step to be antagonistic to the rest of the world while we are seeking our own national independent posture in foreign relations, in the political field and in trade and industry? Does she agree that a negative approach is better than a positive, amiable, friendly approach to the problem of trade and industry in the world?

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ang sabi po sa akin ng Secretary, it sounds negative, dahil po sinasabi ng Pilipinas na huwag po tayong pakialaman. Samakatuwid, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, parang nagsasalita po tayo na more assertive of our position in the affairs of the world. Para po maging mas consistent and coherent, for example, the geopolitical and geostrategic advantage of the Philippines is being right at the center of the trading patterns of the world. Nagmumukhang—it just sounds negative because ang sabi po na huwag lang pakialaman po ang domestic policies pati na po iyong pagko-correct o pagre-rectify na maging mas equidistant po ang relasyon ng Pilipinas economically and geopolitically po sa ibang countries ng mundo. I agree, a positive approach is always better than a negative approach; but what we are saying is that, it only sounds negative because the statement is, “Don’t intervene.”

REP. ATIENZA. Well, Mme. Speaker and honorable Sponsor, I ask this question because I feel it is very, very relevant to where we are now, where we are headed, saan tayo pupunta, na dapat tayong magkaisa, dapat tayong magtulongan. Kaya ang sasabihin ko po ay, iyong ating Secretary of Trade and Industry should be heard in the Cabinet meetings so that the position of this particular Department that we are now discussing should be considered in whatever statements coming out of our leadership and our government. We cannot continue in our quest for economic development and political stability if we keep on developing problems

every day. Eh nagmi-meeting naman po sila, tatanungin ko nga po, nag-Cabinet meeting po ba sila?

REP. SALCEDA. Opo, mamaya po, alas dos.

REP. ATIENZA. Mayroon.

REP. SALCEDA. Pang-lima na po.

REP. ATIENZA. Pag may Cabinet meeting, come what may, whatever happens, however it is taken, it is the duty of the head of the Department concerned to speak up. That is the purpose of the Cabinet meeting. The gentleman Sponsor ...

REP. SALCEDA. At this point.

REP. ATIENZA. ...and I, we had been Cabinet members. It had always been expected of us to speak up. Do not swallow your saliva, knowing very well what is going on. It is not good for the country. The bigger portion of this budget, no matter how meager it is, is in the form of trade and industry promotions services. How can they effectively promote if we are creating enemies? Nakuha mo ito, mawawala ito; mawawala ito, nawala; nakuha mo iyong konti, nawalan ka ng marami. So we will not be able to move forward. That is the point, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po iyan, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, na ang atin pong Sekretaryo ay ginagawa naman po niya na maiparating. Subalit po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, pag tiningnan mo po iyong investment trends ngayon, halimbawa noong Hulyo, umangat po ng 68.8 percent ang kabuuan po ng BOI approval. Ito ay mas kaunting mas mababa kaysa sa the 98 percent in the first seven months, subalit po, makikita mo kaagad doon na iyong internal dynamics ng Pilipinas ay may sarili naman pong kakayahan para po mapanatili ang paglago ng ekonomiya, kasi, for the first time ang number one investment destination is Region XII, at no time in the economic history of the Philippines.

So, ayaw ko naman pong ihiwalay po. Pero ang sinasabi lang po natin na definitely, we agree that a positive approach is better than a negative approach. But the seeming negative approach is only because we are trying to reposition the Philippines in an equidistant fashion with respect to the other trading powers or economic powers of the world. Pero ipinaparating naman po, halimbawa po, kumusta iyong peso o kumusta po iyong stock market? Eh, iyan po ay, there are inputs to the decisions that are made by the Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. I was expecting somehow that

kind of proposition from the honorable Sponsor, knowing very well that he is well-schooled in the field of economics. What I am trying to say though, is that we as a nation will continue to experience economic instability, if not now, in the very near future as the peso is now declining, and we would be developing more withdrawals of hot money in the country as it cannot be denied na ngayon ay maraming mga negosyante ang nagdadalawang-isip kung sila ay papasok, o mananatili sa Pilipinas. That is a known fact and that should be a common-sense reaction to what is going on. No investment can go into a country where there seems to be—I am not even admitting there is—there seems to be political instability. So, trade, commercial stability and security go hand in hand. Ang sinasabi ko po, itong budget na ito will come to nothing if our present Secretary is not heard properly and effectively by the President.

All of them who are involved in the same concern should speak up during Cabinet meetings. Hindi iyong oo na lang sila nang oo, eh, mahihirapan tayong pare-pareho because hindi naman sila magtatagumpay sa kanilang programa. That would be a fact that we will be looking back to after the discussion on this matter.

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po iyan, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor. Pero alam po ninyo, katulad ninyo na well-versed din po kayo na magpatakbo ng pinakamalaking siyudad ng Pilipinas, eh, siguro kayo po ay kasing-galing, lalung-lalo nakasama ko kayo, o mas magaling noong kayo ay nasa loob po ng Gabinete. Pero paano natin—the fruit of the pudding is in the eating. Noong September 1st hanggang end of September, iyong BOI investment po, umangat from P17 billion to P51 billion po. So, mayroon naman po na masasabi ko na iyong structural adjustment can create noise, static but, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, it also emits certain positive signals na kung minsan po, on balance, ay actually results in better outcomes.

So, hindi kasi ako political analyst po, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, pero iyong conventional analysis ay mukhang we must take into consideration the structural adjustment that is being pursued by the administration. Thus far, from July to September, it has created more stimulus, it has stimulated more investments and trade than negating it. But, of course, I cannot say that for the rest of the next six years if suddenly, there will be major changes in the world. Pero right now, Your Honor, aminin na natin na before 2016, wala pong kainbe-investment ang Tsina sa Pilipinas. Finally, we have a P238-million investment from China. We never had an investment from China. We had some loans but we paid for it and that is for North Rail. For example, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the huge potential ng iba pong mga countries na hindi po natin nakakausap,

or medyo sa atin pong pananaw na ito po ay baka matawag o matanaw bilang isang pag-atras mula sa isang pagkakaibigan. In other words, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the structural adjustment towards equidistant economic relationship certainly will create a lot of noise and static, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Tinatanggap ko po ang mga mapagkumbabang pananalita ng ating Ginoong Salceda who very humbly said that he does not seem to know much about political principles and philosophies. I would like everybody to know that he has been undefeated in his political fights. So, I consider him as a very brilliant political mind.

What I am trying to say is that, I know that he is defending the budget of the DTI. This Representation would like to defend the budget of the DTI, but we must state, for the purpose of putting on record, that Congress takes the position that what is going on now may not last. If you say there were signs of good foreign money inflow or investments, I would agree with that because we had a good start—the promise of a new leadership for the country and an effective leader at that. His campaign against drugs is very timely. We support that. But his deteriorating relations now with the rest of the world should worry all of us. Hindi po kailangang awayin ang Amerika habang nakikipagkakaibigan tayo sa Tsina.

I support the view that China can provide a lot of economic opportunities for the Philippines. We are right next to the supergiant economic power of the world. Tama po iyon, pero ayoko namang awayin natin iyong iba sapagkat pag nagkaroon ng gusot, e tayo ang talo. Pag nag-away ang mga elepante, iyong mga langgam at daga nadudurog. E tayo po iyon e. Tayo ang pinakamaliit na elemento pag nagbanggaan iyang mga puwersang iyan.

So, anyway, I will shift now, Mme. Speaker, to another relevant function on budget item that I see before me. Ito po iyong Consumer Protection Services which is actually amounting to P260 million. Ano po ba iyong Consumer Protection Service ng Department?

REP. SALCEDA. Basically, Mme. Speaker, first, ICC legislation; second, product monitoring and market monitoring, lalung-lalo na iyong mga fake. Usually, Mme. Speaker, may spike po ang kanilang activity, pag palapit na po iyong Pasko. So, mapapansin kaagad natin kung saan po napupunta iyong P200 million, Mme. Speaker. Iyon po ang ginagawa nila, ICC legislation at monitoring ng quality po ng products na nandito po sa domestic market.

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, mayroon po bang maire-report ang consumer protection office, bureau, whatever it is, in the Department, what they have done

in the past and what they intend to do now to protect the consumers of our country? Mayroon po ba tayong record on protection services which this particular item talks about?

REP. SALCEDA. Bawa't Sabado ay mayroon po tayong programa kung saan nakakahagilap po ng maraming reklamo. Pero, iyong mga masasabi natin pong flagship o maaalala natin ay iyong Montero investigation, o iyong Christmas lights na kung minsan po ay bigla pong—lalung-lalo na sa Divisoria. So, iyong pagmo-monitor po niyan, o bago po magpasukan, pinapasiguro po na wala pong mga lead content ng atin pong mga gamit na anumang binibili ng atin pong kabataan, mga estudyante. Ito po iyong mga klase, Mme. Speaker, na ginagawa po ng consumer protection bureau..

REP. ATIENZA. Mme. Speaker, as far as monitoring of goods is concerned, especially imported ones, whether they conform with international requirements and standards, I would say that deputizing the local government units would be one of the most effective means of ensuring effectivity, with the DTI merely acting as a general supervisor of the effort. Hindi po naman siguro sila kailangang mag-maintain ng mga ahente, ng mga field officers. Hindi po sapat itong salaping ito kung ang pag-uusapan natin ay national monitoring. But, working with local government units and working with the DILG, working with the barangays would ensure protection of consumers effectively.

REP. SALCEDA. Alam ninyo, Mme. Speaker, noong ako po ang nagpapatakbo ng disaster risk reduction sa Albay, kami po ang dine-deputize ng DTI para mapasiguro, lalung-lalo na pag nag-declare na po ng state of calamity. Sa probinsya po, nagpa-train po kami ng 15 para po ikutin lahat ng mga merkado, pero ang ID po na ginagamit nila ay parang bilang isang DTI deputy. Siguro naman, Mme. Speaker, ito po ay puwedeng ma-universalize o ma-upscale—may batas po tayo kung saan talaga ay pinapayagan o halos iniengganyo ang DTI na gamitin po ang kakayahan dahil po ang DTI ay hindi po organisado hanggang sa mga bayan-bayan. Halos po ang kanilang presensya ay sa probinsya. Samakatuwid, Mme. Speaker, may MOA po sila pero sa mga iba't ibang probinsya at munisipyo. Subali't sa pananaw ko, Mme. Speaker, na we can make it a policy of the DTI to deputize ang lahat ng LGUs po, lalung-lalo na up to the town and city levels, para po sila ang maging mukha at kamay ng DTI pagdating po sa consumer protection, Mme. Speaker.

Pero mayroon naman po silang karapatan na pag nilabag, under the law po, pag nilabag ang isang panuntunan, ay kaya na pong i-withdraw ng mga LGUs ang business permit kahit ang nagbigay ng business permit po ay ang DTI, Mme. Speaker. So, ibig sabihin,

kung pinayagan nila na mag-operate, pero ang LGU may nakita na hindi pupuwede, puwede na pong bawiin o i-sequester, o hindi “sequester,” the word probably is, to “suspend” or not allow them to operate. In short, bawiin iyong registration. At hindi ko po alam kung papaano po iyong resolution niyan pero, I think, we can work on that with the Gentleman, especially since he is serving a very highly vocal urban middle-class in the entire country, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

We accept the reasoning that we need to protect the consumers. We need to do that. But I am not ready to accept the problems that have been brought to the consumers of our nation, and big accidents that have happened—even iyong sinabi ninyong Christmas lights which are substandard, which caused many, many big fires. The house of our former Speaker Joe De Venecia was gutted down by fire and he lost one child in that accident that was caused by what the Gentleman just mentioned. But where was the DTI in that particular issue? Hindi ba nila nakita na iyong mga ginagamit na Christmas lights ng ating mga mamamayan at ng consumers ay substandard and therefore dangerous? Now we maintain an office supposedly to protect us, and we see a non-performing office as far as genuine protection is concerned because naghihintay lang magkaroon ng malaking sakuna bago ito lumabas at mapag-alaman ng tao. Before that, we did not hear anything from the DTI, until a big fire already occurred. Up to now, it continues to cause many fires in the country.

What I am saying is, we are maintaining the third biggest budget in the Department for some protection that the consumers are supposed to have, but obviously, it is either not enough or they are not effective enough in what they are doing.

So, we take note of that, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SALCEDA. Yes, Mme. Speaker, sa pananaw ...

REP. ATIENZA. I would like to transfer to another ...

REP. SALCEDA. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ATIENZA. ... subject.

Let us talk about local business promotion. Our economy, I am sure, the honorable Representative from Albay will admit, is actually propelled primarily by consumerism. Much of our economic endeavors are caused by the Filipinos' ability to consume kaya ito po ay dapat pangalagaan, hindi po ba?

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po iyon.

REP. ATIENZA. Mapalad naman tayo dahil ang ating mga mamamayan ay nagugustuhan na ring

mamili, bumili, at gumastos sapagkat mayroon silang salaping hinihintay, primarily coming from abroad. The biggest industry today, and the DTI can deny this if they want to, is the OFW industry sapagkat ang ating mga kapwa Pilipino ay nakapagpapadala ng pera sa kanilang pamilya. So, are we correct in assuming that the biggest industry that we have is our overseas Filipino workers who are sending money home from abroad?

REP. SALCEDA. Yes, Mme. Speaker. May OFW desk po doon sa mga negosyo centers, at talagang buong bansa po ay—each one of the 1,542 municipalities, o 1,498 municipalities and 100-something cities—lalagyan po nila. So, sa ngayon po mayroon na tayong 300 negosyo centers at next year po magtatatag po tayo ng 150. Siguro naman, Your Honor, kung sa tamang panahon ay puwede natin itong dagdagan para mapabilis. Pero kailangan natin pong siguraduhin iyong mga tao po doon ay well-trained para po mas makatulong. Kaya po, kumbaga sa ano, ipini-phase in naman po, kaya, 300, 150, 150. Pero, Mme. Speaker, I think the DTI has the structure and capacity of completing the entire 1,500 in three years, Mme. Speaker, kung madagdagan lang po iyong kanilang budget.

REP. ATIENZA. We are glad, Mme. Speaker, to know and to hear that the Department has a program to further harness the beneficial impact of the industry called “OFW.” Ito po iyong ating mga kababayang nagpapadala, nagtatrabaho sa abroad, bagama't mahirap magtatrabaho sa abroad, ay nagpapadala ng salaping kanilang kinikita sa ating mga pamilya dito.

Now, with regard to helping them, aside from the initial reaction of the Department, helping them secure their investments here, mayroon po bang programa ang DTI ngayon para po hindi naman maloko at ma-swindle itong ating mga kababayang nagtatrabaho? Marami pong nagsasamantala ngayon, eh. Dahil alam nilang maraming salapi na pumapasok, iyon ang kanilang sinesentro at pinupuntirya. Mayroon po ba tayong proteksyon sa mga OFW who are now attracted by seemingly good investments, which companies now bring forth to where they are? Nagpapadala pa po iyan ng mga eksperto para po iyong mga overseas workers ay maengganyong bumili, mag-invest, magpatayo ng bahay.

Sari-sari na pong horror stories ang narinig din namin, sapagkat iyon din po ang aking pinupuna sa HLURB. Noong isang araw, diniretso po natin iyong Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board. Hindi po nila pinoproteksiyonan ang mga bumibili ng condominium, ng bahay, lote. Hindi sila nagtatrabaho.

Marami po rito sa mga naloloko, mga OFW o seamen who send their money home to be invested in their long-time family dream, and that is to have their own house and, hopefully, their own lot.

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, mayroon, isa po sa ginagawa po iyan, puwede kayong magreklamo through online, and various other forms. Halimbawa ngayon pong taon, nakatanggap sila ng 4,600 o 4,573 consumer complaints, received and processed, of which 2,595 were resolved through mediation, at iyong 266 po, elevated for adjudication. Ang ibig sabihin, kahit po hindi sila ang primarily mayroon pong jurisdiction, kasi, under HLURB po iyan, kasi, apat na level po iyan. Unang-una, iyong direct selling po, iyan talaga po, pure DTI.

Pangalawa po, iyong mga investment scam, iyan po ay kung saan po iyong SEC registration certificates, ay ibinebenta kahit wala pong permit. Iyan po ang tinatawag na “investment scam.”

Iyong pangatlo po ay siguro, kasama po sa product and product specification, iyan po, depende sa kung anong produkto. So, pagdating po sa direct selling siya nagiging scam, lalung-lalo na ang tinatawag na, kung minsan, lagi pong nagkakaroon ng reklamo ay iyong sector ng multi-level marketing. Hindi ko sinasabing lahat sila, pero, ang sinasabi ko po na ang ginagawa po ng DTI ay makipagtrabaho sa DSAP para po magkaroon ng registration para po iyong matitinong direct sellers ay maiiba po kaysa doon sa mga MLM. Pagdating po naman doon sa isa, pagtanggap ng reklamo, ay ibibigay po sa SEC. Kung ito ay patungkol naman po sa isang mahinang bangko, ito po iyong pangatlo, ay ito po naman ay kino-coordinate po sa BSP. Kung ang isang bagay naman po ay tungkol sa mga produkto, halimbawa, ng physical products like condominiums, which are essentially also an investment, but in particular, these are physical capital assets, iyan po ay ipinapasa sa HLURB na siya po ang may jurisdiction. Samakatuwid po, sila ang parang funnel kung saan po pumapasok lahat ng mga reklamo ng mga consumers para po ito ma-address.

REP. ATIENZA. Masasabi po ba natin, Mme. Speaker, na ang DTI ay handang tumulong sa sinumang biktima ng panloloko as part of that Consumer Protection Service?

REP. SALCEDA. Ako nga po, Mme. Speaker, ang pananaw ko ay, the DTI was born to protect the consumers first; second, to promote trade; and third, to promote investments, kung ito po ay pararangguhin ng Kinatawan sa akin. Samakatuwid nga po, itong budget nila, over time, I think, will have to transform. But from a regulatory perspective po, mukhang tama naman po iyong naibigay na mga powers ng atin pong Kongreso para po ang DTI ay maproteksyunan ang ating consumers o magawan po ng solusyon ang kanila pong hinaing, lalung-lalo na kung sila po ay inaapi o pinagsasamantalahan ng mga negosyante.

REP. ATIENZA. Salamat po naman sa garantiyang iyon.

Now, shifting to the local trade that is abounding, knowing very well that our provinces, our regions, ang ating mga mamamayan ay mayroon talagang kanyang maliliit na negosyong maaaring punlaan, puhunanan, tulungan ng gobyerno upang umunlad. Bangkok in Thailand, at one time, had a program, One Product, ...

REP. SALCEDA. One Town...

REP. ATIENZA. ... One Town. Tama po ba iyon?

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po iyon, OTOPI.

REP. ATIENZA. One Town, One Product. Pinondohan ito ng gobyerno at nagpaunlad ng ekonomiya kaya iyong nagpasimula noon, iyong kanilang Prime Minister na tinanggal sa trabaho ay hindi po malimutan ng mga mamamayan sa kanyang matagumpay na pagtulong sa mga maliliit na negosyante ng kanyang mga maliliit na pook at mga munisipyo.

Dito sa atin, marami tayong ganyan. Iyong gumagawa ng balut, palipat-lipat na po ang pinanggagalingan niyan dahil kulang ng suporta ng gobyerno. Kaya kung saan na lang napapadpad, doon po nanggagaling ang balut. Iyon pong suman, iba't ibang uri ng suman mayroon tayo, depende kung saan kayo bibili. Iba iyong Rizal, iba iyong Pampanga, iba iyong Northern Luzon. Ang dami po nating variety na masasarap na mga pagkain pero hindi po magawa ang tamang promotion dito sa mga produktong ito sapagkat nauubusan sila ng dahon na pambalot. Kung minsan ay kukunin pa nila sa Bicol. Ginagawa nila sa Pampanga iyong suman, pero sa Bicol pa kumukuha ng dahon na pambalot noong suman.

Again, marami po akong nakausap na mga maliliit na negosyante na iyan ang nasabi sa aking problema. Naibahagi sa akin, “Paano kami makapagplano ng paglago at paglaki, e wala po namang tulong ang gobyerno sa amin. Kapag iyong dahon, naubos po sa isang bayan, lilipat na naman kami sa kabila. Ang layo-layo po ng pinanggagalingan. Dito namin hinahalo iyong suman sa Pampanga, ang pambalot, galing pa po sa Bicol.”

Baka po naman si Governor Salceda ang nakatutulong kaya mayroon silang nabibiling dahon na—ano bang tawag ho roon, pandan—pandan leaf na pambalot ng suman. Bakit kailangang sa Bicol manggagaling iyon kung may tulong ang gobyerno na ang Pampanga ay makapagtatanim ng pandan?

REP. SALCEDA. Ang tawag po diyan “trade.” Ang ibig sabihin niyan, mas iyong talento ng mga taga-Pampanga ay mas mainam gamitin sa paggawa ng suman at kumuha na lang po ng dahon mula sa Bicol.

Kaysa naman po iyong kanilang talento, kapital, at ang kanilang espasyo ay gamitin pa para doon, samantala po ay mas—in other words, you allow capital as well as resources to go to where there will be the highest return with respect to the comparative advantage po.

Pero, para mas masagot po iyong tanong, dalawang bagay po ang ginagawa nila. Unang-una po, iyong shared service facilities. Kasi nga po, katulad ng sabi mo, lahat na lang ng nagtitinda ng balut ay babagsak ang presyo, malulugi, mawawala iyong pera. So, ang ginagawa po ng gobyerno ngayon—katulad doon sa amin, marami po sa amin na gumagawa po ng mga abaka, ng mga produkto. So nagpagawa po sila ng isang advanced na packaging center na kung saan po puwedeng gamitin ng kahit sino na malapit po doon sa Daraga, Camalig o Legazpi. Iyon na po ang tulong nila para po mas maging competitive po, kasi kung siya lang ay hindi po sila bibilhin. Ibig sabihin, kung iyong dati po, ang public road ay kalsada lang, ang pagsuporta po sa enterprises na nabanggit po ninyo ay puwede na rin po iyong mga shared service facilities.

Ang pangalawa po, mayroon pa rin naman pong OTOP, may P147 million tayo this year. Hindi ko naman po inalam pa sa DTI kung saan nila dadalhin iyong OTOP, dahil ito po, sabi nga ninyo, kasama po sa taxonomics, pero ito po iyong pangalawang bagay na ginagawa.

Ang pangatlo po ang pag-a-advocate po ng lending to SMEs, lalung-lalo na through ACPC, BSP, BAP, at saka iba't iba pa pong mga ahensya na maaari pong tumulong para mas maparami po ang long-term capital sa atin pong mga negosyante na sa ngayon po, nagsisimula na walang collateral, walang lahat. Subali't po, sa pamamagitan ng pagbibigay ng training at ng katulad ng ating mga negosyo center po, ang binibigay nila ay automatic po ang business registration in one day. Number two, mayroon po silang business monitoring at mayroon ding binibigay na training. At, pang-apat, nagbibigay po sila ng referral pagdating po sa pinansyal o mga “angel funds” kung tawagin po natin o mga bangko na may mga pasilidad po para tumulong sa SME.

REP. ATIENZA. Again, maganda na naman iyong sinabi ng ating kagalang-galang na Sponsor ng ating budget for the DTI but, very obvious na hindi po iyan ang nangyayari sapagkat ang ating mga produkto ay nagde-deteriorate everywhere. Kung gumagawa ng puto noong araw na napakasarap sa Bulacan, halos wala na po iyan. Iyong puto sa Biñan, Laguna ay bihirang-bihira na po iyan. Unless dala-dala po ng ating Congresswoman Naguiat, mahirap na pong asahang masarap iyong puto na nanggagaling sa Biñan.

What I am trying to drive at, Mme. Speaker, our government, even this present government, has not really looked into the situation of the local entrepreneurs.

Iyon pong mga maliliit na nagnenegosyo sa paggawa ng longganisa, tapa, tocino—maraming uri po iyan—kakanin, suman na iba't ibang hugis, iba't ibang materyal, unti-unting nawawala po sa ating kapaligiran, sapagkat either kulang sa puhunan, nahihirapan sa paglalako, kulang sa marketing skills, at marami pang mga kadahilanan. Pagkatapos ay pahihirapan pa po ng local government sa kanilang lugar.

Proof of that, when you and I, all of us were young boys, kapag bibiyahe po tayo sa anumang highway sa ating bansa, nakikita natin itong mga produktong ito, nandoon sa tabi ng highway. Hindi na po nagbago iyan. Natatanong mo sa sarili mo, ano na ang ginawa ng gobyerno? Bakit hindi bigyan ng mas magandang merchandising opportunity itong mga nagtitinda ng local delicacies? Pampanga is one instance, ang dami pong kakanin diyan pero hindi po tinutulungan ng gobyerno. Maganda iyong sinabi ninyo, pero hindi po siguro natutupad.

I would suggest to the Department of Trade and Industry, pag-aralan ninyong mabuti kung papaano iyong local products of every town serve the purpose of giving opportunities of livelihood for everyone in that region.

Believe me, we will be like Japan na ang produktong Hapon, iyong kanilang kakanin ay paganda nang paganda, patingkad nang patingkad sapagkat tinutulungan ng gobyerno. Dito sa atin, ang tingin ng gobyerno sa mga maliliit na nagnenegosyong katulad nitong mga tinuran ko ay para bagang, “Bahala na kayo diyan sa buhay ninyo.” What has been happening in the past three, four decades is what is happening today. We would like to take note of this as one sure means of promoting the economy. Local entrepreneurs, local consumerism and the national economy will benefit.

Dahil ako po ay inaawat na po rito ay magpapasalamat na po ako kay Congressman Salceda sa kanyang makabuluhang opinyon at paninindigan. Subali't lahat ng sinabi ko po sana ay nakinig ang pamilya ng DTI para hindi po naman dito na lamang sila sa Makati at sa SMX Convention Center nagkakaroon ng activities. Pumunta po sila sa mga rehiyon at magturo sila sa mga maliliit na Pilipinong nagnenegosyo. Iyan po ang paraan para ang ating ekonomiya ay lumago, maski na marami tayong problemang panlabas ngayon. Even if the TIEZA continues to deteriorate, we will survive if our local entrepreneurship is protected and supported by the DTI. With our big number of Filipinos, 100 million, I see the potential of a nation surviving whatever happens because we have enough consumers locally.

Maraming-maraming salamat po, Mme. Speaker. Thank you very much, Mr. Floor Leader. Thank you, Honorable Salceda.

REP. SALCEDA. Salamat po. Ang ating bagong

Secretary ay icon po ng SMEs, galing po siya sa GoNegosyo kaya may mga substantial at significant na pagbabago po sa DTI dahil po sa kanya pong background bilang SME icon po, Your Honor.

REP. ATIENZA. With the assurance of the Gentleman from Albay and the listening ears of the DTI family, I believe that we have served the purpose in this discussion.

REP. SALCEDA. Salamat po. (*Applause*)

REP. ATIENZA. Sana ay mabigyan sila ng mas malaking budget if you will ask me. Salamat po.

REP. SALCEDA. Salamat po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). We thank the Hon. Jose “Lito” L. Atienza Jr.
The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized..

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of the budget of the DTI and its attached agencies. I so move, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. ANDAYA. Mme. Speaker, privileged ...

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the consideration of the budget of the DTI and its attached agencies is hereby suspended.

ROLL CALL

REP. BONDOC. Mr. Speaker, I move that we call the roll.

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

The Secretary General will please call the roll.

*The Secretary General called the roll, and the result is reflected in Journal No. 31, dated October 3, 2016.**

THE SECRETARY GENERAL. The roll call shows that 196 Members responded to the call.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). With 196 Members present, the Chair declares the presence of a quorum.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 3408.

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

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.), I move that we resume the consideration of the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry including its attached agencies and corporations.

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

REP. LOPEZ (B.), May we now recognize the honorable Vice Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, the Hon. Joey Sarte Salceda, to sponsor the budget of the said agency.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Joey Sarte Salceda is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Next to interpellate the honorable Sponsor is the Gentleman from the First District of Albay, Rep. Edcel C. Lagman. I move that we recognize him.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Edcel C. Lagman is recognized.

REP. LAGMAN. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Before I go to my interpellation, let me first congratulate and acknowledge the brand new head of PEZA, our former colleague, Rep. Charito Plaza. (*Applause*)

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the mandate of the DTI includes the attraction of badly needed direct foreign investments to the country. Do you agree?

REP. SALCEDA. That is correct, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. If any, what are the innovative policies being undertaken by the DTI to fulfill this mandate, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. SALCEDA. One, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is we have trade agreements ...

REP. LAGMAN. I beg your pardon.

REP. SALCEDA. Trade agreements ...

REP. LAGMAN. Trade agreements.

REP. SALCEDA. For example, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, when we have trade agreements that give access, let us say, to the EU, we are given 4,722 items at zero tariff, then the EU producers, like, you can see in the BOI-approved investments, the number one now is from the EU because they like to take advantage of the trade preferences that were given to us under the EU. In the whole of Asia, for example, in the ASEAN, only the Philippines was given EU-GSP. In the whole of Asia, only two were given, Pakistan and Philippines, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. The second, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is that aside from trade agreements, of course, we have trade attachés. We have 26 trade attachés, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, who are strategically located or placed in our embassies abroad definitely, with our major trading partners. Third, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, of course, we have the BOI incentives, plus, of course, the other Philippine economic zones that are given essentially certain tax holidays plus duty-free importation of their capital equipment. Fourth, of course, where will they invest? So, there are two things to number four. One, we have designed major—we have 42 new industries that are being promoted, including aerospace development, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, and we have spent money in developing this program, and I think I can make them available to everyone here so that you would know the new industries that are being promoted for investment. Lastly, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is the provision of public goods. Again, that, essentially, infrastructure, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, that, of course, is beyond the DTI, but it is the DTI, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker—let us say, if there is interest in investing in Subic, Clark or La Union, they will ensure that the mobility of assets, as well as, of course, of the goods is there, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, in order to promote the investments, and thereby lower the cost of doing business.

So, those are the five basic components of our investment promotion policy, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. But my question, Mme Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, is, what are the innovative policies being pursued because these are all traditional policies? Are there new policies being implemented by the DTI under its new leadership?

REP. SALCEDA. As I have said, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the newest really is the MRP. You can see, for example, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, in their budget, there is MRP, wherein we have 42 new industries. This MRP, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, includes aerospace, biodiesel, design, iron and steel, IT-BPM or call centers, even metalcasting, natural health products, processed shrimps and prawns, pulp and paper, retirement areas, rubber products, seaweeds and carrageenan and, of course, shipbuilding, and even bamboo, we have studied them and we have created packets that we offer. When somebody wants to invest in the Philippines then, they would know immediately where both, our latent and our overt comparative advantage, lie.

So, that is, to my mind, the most innovative that they have done so far. The other one, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is, a little part of it is CARS program, which is essentially trying to promote investment, dalawa na po ang nag-invest sa CARS. Ang CARS po ay naka-roll out na, so, Comprehensive Automotive Resurgence Strategy program, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, to develop the Philippines to a regional automotive manufacturing hub, in order that we could, at least, move higher and higher in the global value chain and so that it can produce not just gross value added in our GDP, but also jobs for our people, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Through the CARS initiative, automobile initiative would make the Philippines a manufacturer of automobiles instead of only a manufacturer of spare parts, is that correct?

REP. SALCEDA. Siguro ngayon ang local content, ilan? Twenty percent lang po. Siguro, ang balak po ng CARS,, gawing 40 percent. Kasi, hindi naman natin po mabibigla at kung bibiglain natin, iyong gobyerno mismo po, kailangan nating i-subsidize, and we will be choosing winners and losers, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. Kasi, kailangan po ng R&D para po maiangat pa lalo ito kung gusto nating ubusin iyong buong value chain po ng isang kotse. Pero, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, I think very viable po in our current level of resources na abutin po ang 40 percent local content under the CARS program as designed po ng DTI. Isa po iyan sa example ng innovation ng atin pong Department of Trade and Industry.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, was the Secretary of DTI consulted in the preparation of the proposed package of tax reforms?

REP. SALCEDA. I think so, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. That is why kung dati po, ako po nakita ko po iyong evolution noong tax reforms mula po noong ito ay inilatag. Dati po, P178 billion sana ang kukunin sa fiscal incentives rationalization; ngayon po, P33 billion na lang. Ang ibig sabihin po, iyong may mga redundant incentives na lang. Hindi katulad po noon, na halos i-give up natin ang incentives at baka po nga magtakbuhan e, lalung-lalo na po, mas agresibo po ang Thailand. Kasi, ito naman pong lahat ng ginagawa natin pagdating po sa investment ay mayroon ho tayong kalaban. So, diyan po pumapasok ang boses ng DTI upang mapanatili, at least, iyong masasabi nating normal market share ng Pilipinas pagdating po sa investment sa buong mundo, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Okay. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, if the Secretary of the DTI was consulted on this proposed comprehensive package, what was his take if there will be increases in the excise tax on automobiles, from 2 percent to 5 percent for prices below P600,000; 20 percent for prices of P600,000 to P1.1 million; 40 percent for prices of P1.1 million to P2.1 million and 60 percent for prices above P2.1 million?

REP. SALCEDA. Alam po ninyo, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, pagdating sa loob, ke ikaw po ang mag-import o i-produce mo dito, o kung i-produce ng Toyota o ng Nissan, parehas naman po sila, 60 percent. Ang differentiation lang po kung bakit ganyan po ang pag-angat ay dahil po ang nakakabili ay mayayaman. Samakatuwid po, iyong may kaya ang sinusubukang buwisan, lalung-lalo na siguro, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, at the appropriate time, kung nakalatag na po dito sa ating floor iyong Comprehensive Tax Reform package, ay puwede natin sigurong buwisan ng mas malaki iyong second cars, third cars, fourth cars, para mas makita natin. Ang ibig kong sabihin, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, this is policy-neutral. Kahit sino po ay pare-parehas po. Ang masasaktan po dito ay iyong may kayang bumili ng kotse.

REP. LAGMAN. In other words, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, is it the take of the distinguished Sponsor that there is, effectively, no increase in the excise taxes on automobiles?

REP. SALCEDA. Mayroon po.

REP. LAGMAN. Mayroon. So, when one buys an automobile in the amount P1,500,000, the tax is 40 percent.

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po.

REP. LAGMAN. Or P600,000, more than one-third of the price, is that correct?

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. And when one buys an automobile worth P2,100,000, the tax is 60 percent, which is P1,260,000, is that correct?

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po iyon, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. Iyan po iyong proposal.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes. If this proposal is approved, then what would be the effect of these new excise taxes on automobiles on automotive distribution companies? Will there be an increase or decrease in the sales?

REP. SALCEDA. Sa loob po ng isang band of price movement, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, lalung-lalo na umaangat din po iyong ekonomiya, umaangat din po iyong incomes, ang presyo po ng kotse, at kitang-kita naman po natin na ang mas mabilis na umangat ay ang iyong upper middle class, pataas na po, ang mercado nito, ang elasticity po ng CARS sa kotse ay iyong demand po ay hindi masyado pong magbabago.

Kung sa ngayon po, nakakabenta po tayo ng 247,000 per year, ikumpara mo na po lang sa Thailand. Ang kanila pong populasyon ay mga 56 million pero ang benta po ng kotse 600,000 per year. Tayo po 250,000, ang populasyon natin ay 104 million. So, ang ibig kong sabihin, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, mayroon pong tipping point o may Kinked-Demand curve po siya kung saan po, huwag lang nating lampasan iyon, iyong demand po, mape-preserve kahit po iangat natin. Samakatuwid po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ang neto—kasi kung hindi po, bakit natin gagawin?

Kasi nga po ang neto sa gobyerno, zero ang net incremental. Ang ibig sabihin po, idinaan po ito sa isang incremental analysis, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, na kung taasan natin ng ganito ang excise tax, may neto po na dagdag sa koleksyon ng gobyerno. Hindi ko naman po sinasabi na ang kotse ay parang yosi. Pero iyong demand curve po at saka iyong market na target po na upper middle class to rich and ultra-rich, ay mukha pong kaya nila pong bayaran ang buwis na ito dahil iyong lower 60 percent naman po natin ay hindi naman po kaya namang bumili ng kotse, na iyon po ang pinoproteksyunan po natin.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, has there been an elasticity study made by the DTI with respect to this projected increase in the excise taxes on automobiles?

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, aaminin ko po na walang formal study, pero kung babasehan mo po iyong mga pag-angat ng presyo at doon po sa pagdami ng binibili, ay matatanaw mo kaagad po doon na ang relatively po, inelastic po ang kotse kasi nga po ang bumibili po nito ay hindi naman po iyong mahihirap na isang bunggo mo lang, bagsak kaagad po sa pagkain pag hindi na nila po kinakaya.

So, habang bumababa po ang kanilang income o tumataas ang presyo, ang porsyento na nilalagyan nila ng budget ay napupunta kaagad sa pagkain. Pero iyong mayayaman po, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, halimbawa, wala pa po sa 9 percent ang kanila pong budget ay napupunta sa pagkain. Samakatuwid po eh sila po ay kaya po nilang bumili ng mga kotse. Pero, Mr. Speaker, Your Honor, I think we can easily, no, not easily, we can ask the DTI na gumawa po ng isang demand and supply elasticity, demand and price elasticity para po mas mapatunayan natin na unang-una po, ito rin iyong basis, for the ano; otherwise po, tanungin natin ang DOF, paano nila nasabi na magdadagdag ang koleksyon ng gobyerno, eh, kayo na mismo ang nagsasabi na pag iangat ninyo po ay babagsak po ang volume.

So, samakatuwid, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, ay dapat lang po siguro na patunayan natin sa sarili, kasi baka naman papasok-pasok tayo dito sa comprehensive tax reform, ang neto pala ay wala nang buwis. Pero napatunayan naman, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, doon po sa kinatatakutan na pag iangat po iyong presyo ng yosi, ay biglang lalo umangat po iyong koleksyon sa yosi. Ang ibig sabihin po, relatively inelastic po iyong demand po para sa yosi.

REP. LAGMAN. Eh ang yosi naman, hindi kaparis ng automobile.

REP. SALCEDA. Example lang, analogy lang po ang ginagamit ko.

REP. LAGMAN. Ang layo naman ng example na iyan.

REP. SALCEDA. Analogy lang po iyan.

REP. LAGMAN. Sapagkat sa ngayon, the lowest price, palagay mo the lowest-priced vehicle is P600,000, the excise tax was increased from two percent to five percent. Ang tatamaan dito ay hindi talaga iyong mga mayayaman because kaya naman ng hindi mayaman na bumili ng mga sasakyan. Pero palagay ko naman, hindi na bibili sapagkat masyadong malaki iyong tax. Gagamitin na lang iyong mga lumang sasakyan which are not environment- friendly. Iyan ang mangyayari. And, bagsak ang sales ng mga automobiles because of this exorbitant increase in the excise taxes on automobiles.

Kaya palagay ko, kailangang pag-aralang mabuti ...

REP. SALCEDA. Opo.

REP. LAGMAN. ... ng hindi lang ng Department of Finance but Department of Trade and Industry, kung ano talaga ang impact nito sa ekonomiya hinggil sa automobile industry.

REP. SALCEDA. Tama po.

REP. LAGMAN. Okay. Now, considerable direct foreign investments traditionally come from the United States and the European Union countries, among others, is that correct? Correct?

REP. SALCEDA. That is right, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. Does the DTI consider the outrageous and provocative statements of President Duterte as a disincentive to the entry of direct foreign investments?

REP. SALCEDA. From a long-term perspective, the message being sent is, it can be done some other way, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, admittedly. But, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, as I have said, the Philippines is undertaking a structural adjustment in creating a more equidistant relation with all economic powers in the world, rather than the current America-centric economy.

As you can see Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, for example, we may argue about it, but in September, the BOI increased almost 300 percent, from P17 billion to P51 billion. As you all well know, these provocative statements have long been there, even during the campaign period, since April or March, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, but those BOI- approved applications are just commitments. They are not actual or real inflow of investments in the country. These commitments could be withdrawn because investors are now more cautious, and there are options for them to invest in other countries. Is that correct?

REP. SALCEDA. That is right, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. But even we can argue, but perhaps, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, since the President has been exerting so much influence on the affairs of our state since he got elected or since everybody started conceding, then perhaps, the January to June FDI-BSP base, which is really the real figure, has increased from \$2.1 billion to \$4.2 billion, or almost 95.6 percent.

In short, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, I will probably, because sometimes it takes time, the BSP

figure always lags the BOI figure. But nonetheless, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, it is a leading indicator because if there is no BOI, then there will be no FDI. But, at least, we have a rich inventory of commitments that can eventually, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, become—like, right now, we have almost \$6 billion of commitments and, therefore, at least, at a certain point, they can either be disincentivized as you probably fear, but they are responding to more structural and secular trends in this country. Like, I could say, for example, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, by 2028, this country will be a one-trillion dollar country. With 120 million people, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, the ninth, tenth largest, we can easily be an OECD. What I am saying, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, is that investors respond to long-term, secular and structural trends, rather than merely six years or even three years, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. But I am just making a case, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker. Anyway, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, I will concede that it does affect. But, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, there are countervailing factors that allowed investment to still flourish despite these.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, I have heard, Mme. Speaker, the distinguished Sponsor say for the nth time, equidistant economic relations. Equidistant means equal distance. When you say, “To hell with the Americans and the EU, and welcome, to China and Russia,” is that equidistant economic relations?

REP. SALCEDA. Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, China is one, America is five, and EU is three. So, when you say equidistant, what I am trying to say is that we only have a normal share of the total global GDP.

Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, when you say equidistant, it is that, one plus three, four, plus nine, nine. So, divided by three, China will have to be pushed to three, EU will have to be pushed down to three from four, and therefore, America will have to be pushed down from five to three. Or, Your Honor, what is the first best policy option is to grow China faster, so you do not have to minus China or EU. Then I agree, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Well, I am not really concerned about getting new alliances with China or Russia. That is the prerogative, and that should be encouraged. But if you alienate traditional economic partners and allies, that could be destructive and to a layman, equidistant means equal distance. That is how the dictionary defines equidistant. When you say you are out and this is in, there is no equidistance in that policy.

Now, let me go to another point, Mme. Speaker. From July to September 2016 or during the first 100 days of the Duterte administration, how much actual,

not committed, direct foreign investments have entered the country?

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, may I seek the Gentleman’s indulgence. As you know, the BSP figure is still up to June. As I have said, the BSP lags the BOI. What we have is the BOI, but as I have said, Mme. Speaker, we could treat them as commitments. But the real inflows, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, have yet to be received. Mme. Speaker, I would guess that they would still be positive investments. We commit to submit to the Gentleman’s office, Mme. Speaker, this data, once they emerge or once the BSP releases the data.

REP. LAGMAN. That is actually the empirical documentation of the actual entry of foreign investments.

REP. SALCEDA. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Not the BOI-approved applications or the PEZA- approved applications.. Is that correct, Mme. Speaker?

REP. SALCEDA. That is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. LAGMAN. Now, let me refer the distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, to the reactions of traditional investors to the country. Let me quote this. One, and I quote: “We can all deal with risks. We can put measures in place to provide for risks,” said Guenter Taus, head of the European Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines. He added, “But, uncertainty is a factor that we do not like in business, and that is exactly what we’re experiencing right now because we don’t know where we are heading.”

REP. SALCEDA. Does the Gentleman need a response, Mme. Speaker?

REP. LAGMAN. Another statement came from the American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines. It said that while the country’s economic fundamentals are strong and its potential high, there is a growing concern that Duterte’s policies and behavior could affect long-standing optimism by American businesses in the Philippines. And then this statement: The Chamber said that the large number of deaths in the anti-drug campaign is harming the Philippines’ image, and that some investors are asking if the drug war ‘reduces the rule of law.’

I am sure that the Secretary of the Department of Trade and Industry is aware of these statements. What is his reaction to these statements?

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, we are not reducing our incentives to investments. We will

probably expand our trade attachés, Mme. Speaker, and just responding to one of them, they can provide for risk by taking risk insurance. But the uncertainty being pronounced there, Mme. Speaker, is the predictability of policy. I guess, Mme. Speaker, at this point, we have a very empowered economic managers group. We have had already five Cabinet meetings, we will have another one this afternoon. Thus far, Mme. Speaker, their sentiments and inputs to the decision-making of the government are being heard.

We are at that level of the cycle of our economy where we are really on, what we call, an upward thrust or band and I do not know how far politics can be differentiated or isolated from our economic policies, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. But as I have said, with respect to tax policy, for example, and it is well-pronounced, and they all supported it, we have the support of the AmCham and the EU as well with respect to the comprehensive tax reform. We also have the support with respect to the 42 new industries.

In other words, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I will not be dismissive that it is pure static or noise. Certainly, it forms part of a bigger universe of factors that influence an investor to invest. But certainly, I think that we are still well within the band of predictability with respect to economic policies.

REP. LAGMAN. While it is true, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that we are not removing the incentives, we are increasing the disincentives because of the President's outrageous utterances. It cannot be denied, this will have a serious impact on the Philippine economy. No matter what the apologists of the administration would say, that adverse impact will be there, Mme. Speaker.

Now, let me go to another point.

In global competitiveness, the Philippines went down by 10 notches. What is the DTI doing to cushion the fall and improve our ranking?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. SALCEDA. May I ask for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G). The session is suspended.

It was 12:27 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 12:29 p.m. the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G). The session is resumed.

REP. SALCEDA. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

That is a DTI press release, but the measurements were done in May 2016, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor. We went down from number 47 to number 57, and the Philippines is always trying to target that we should be at the top 50.

Where did we go down, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor? We dropped in eight of the 12 pillars, and the biggest drop was goods market efficiency. That is, basically, infrastructure. Technological readiness down 15, from 68 to 83; quality of institution down 14, from 77 to 91; innovation down 14, from 48 to 62; and business sophistication down 10, from 42 to 52.

Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, but on the positive side, we got better ratings on: higher education, post-secondary, including the TESDA, up 5, from 63 to 58; health and primary education up 5, from 86 to 81; and macroeconomic environment, up 4, from 24 to 20.

This is probably the subject of our current discussion.

Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, I think we are addressing that by the rapid increase in infrastructure. I think the biggest thing that happened to us was goods market efficiency and, certainly, that requires a lot of mobility of access, especially of physical goods and physical equipment.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I am not blaming the new administration for this fall in the global competitiveness of the country, because the basis was the previous administration's performance. My question is, what are the policies being pursued by the DTI to cushion the fall and to improve our ranking, other than infrastructure development?

REP. SALCEDA. There is a software on goods efficiency, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, and it is called "Effectiveness of State Bureaucracy." Essentially, that means inefficient government bureaucracy, red tape, inadequate supply of infrastructure, corruption, tax rates and tax regulation. That, essentially, sums up what is the key performance indicator, as far as the DTI is concerned that they are trying to address.

REP. LAGMAN. I hope, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, the government will soon address that because at the moment, the singular policy of this administration is to decimate the drug menace to the extent that the rule of law, human rights and due process are violated. We have not seen the advance of the Duterte administration or the President's team to really push through the 10-point economic agenda because the sole preoccupation is about the extermination, the slaughter of 3,000 drug criminals, a statement which

the President has not recanted. He just apologized to the Jewish community.

Now, the good Secretary of the DTI was quoted as having said:

The challenge is ensuring that these investments benefit the poorest of the poor. The administration will be embarking on measures to make investments more inclusive through, among others, providing linkages with micro, small and medium enterprises, to the agricultural sector, and to the marginalized geographic regions.

These are really motherhood statements. May we know the strategies which the DTI would pursue in order to have these realized?

REP. SALCEDA. Let us work from down to higher. From the bottom, Mme. Speaker, what is being done is the establishment of Negosyo Centers which have desks that essentially provide business mentoring on an almost one-day business registration. As you know, Mme. Speaker, out of the almost 992,000 businesses registered in the Philippines, most of them are really SMEs. In short Mme. Speaker, like, for example, out of perhaps, I would say 992,000, 900,000 of them will be SMEs, where 330,000 have already received assistance from the Negosyo Centers. So, what we need really is to expand the Negosyo Center so that they can link, because they actually do four things for us: mentoring, business registration, training and referral to financing, as well as, of course, marketing strategies, Mme. Speaker.

Ang isa pa po, Mme. Speaker, is that, para mas maka-comply sila kasi ang bigat-bigat talaga para mapasok mo po iyong itaas, ay iyong ease of doing business po dito sa atin ay talagang isa pa rin sa pinakamahirap sa buong Asya. There are 22,000 laws and regulations that are redundant. Therefore, Mme. Speaker, kailangan ma-repeal, there is a Project Repeal of the DTI, na ito pong 22,000 laws and regulations, I do not know what is the mother figure because I am not a lawyer but, definitely, the size and the magnitude of 22,000 redundant laws and regulations already suggest what kind of structural rigidity an ordinary returning OFW faces, in trying to establish, in making his idea a profitable business, Mme. Speaker.

We can line up several things, Mme. Speaker. We have trainings and capacity building—training capacity, OTOP, NexGen, Negosyo Center, shared service facilities like FabLabs, innovation centers and incubation centers, and co-working spaces, kung saan po iyong Negosyo Center natin, puwede po doon mag-opisina ang maliliit na negosyo na wala pa pong opisina at siyempre, access to finance, Mme. Speaker.

Those essentially, Mme. Speaker, connect from the bottom.

Then, to the middle or I would say the top, probably, is, of course, our 42 new industries that we are trying to promote for foreign or even big business investments in the Philippines, like aerospace or even bamboo. Bamboo has a very huge backward linkage like Christmas decors.

REP. LAGMAN. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, from the answer, I could not really see the connection to investments because this was made by the Secretary with respect to investments.

REP. SALCEDA. Mme. Speaker, isang halimbawa na lang, ang bagong IPPP—Investments Promotion Priorities Plan, iyong mga least-developed regions po, gagayahin po natin, halimbarawa, iyon nga sana, gusto kong maipasa sa Kongreso, na kung ang isang negosyo ay lower than \$100 million, puwede na pong aprubahan sa mga rehiyon, hindi na kailangang dumaan pa sa BOI. Hindi na po dumaan sa kung saan-saan. It is called the Kampuchean model, Your Honor, for investment. But our counterpart, really, Mme. Speaker, because we have to work within the law, is to include least-developed regions na magkaroon po ng tax holiday and duty-free importation of capital equipment, kapag ikaw ay mag-invest hindi po sa Region III, IV-A o sa NCR, but rather sa Mimaropa o sa Region II. So, Mme. Speaker, may linkage po.

REP. LAGMAN. Okay. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, that is the personal agenda of the distinguished Sponsor. I hope that could be adopted by the DTI.

To my last point, we are bombarded on TV by advertisements which are really false and far from the truth. We have a truth in advertising protection for consumers, is that correct, Mme. Speaker?

REP. SALCEDA. That is correct, Your Honor, Truth in Advertising Act.

REP. LAGMAN. Now, may we know, for the last five years, how many had been prosecuted for violating the Truth in Advertising Act, and how many have been convicted?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. SALCEDA. Bago po ma-advertise, kini-clear—may self-regulation po sila, iyong PANA. I think the regulatory regime, Your Honor, is through self-regulation. So, kahit ano po ang makita ninyo sa TV, dumaan po iyan sa PANA. So, kung saka-sakali pong kakailanganin po ng intervention ng estado, ay mayroong supisyente pong kakayahan ang DTI upang panghimasukan po o through MTRCB, I suppose, para panghimasukan po iyong pagpapalabas.

Sandali lang po, Your Honor, can I have a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 12: 41 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 12:41 p.m. the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. SALCEDA. Gaano ang tiwala po natin, Your Honor, sa PANA bilang partner ng gobyerno? Pero, Your Honor, if you will suggest or probably pinpoint these instances where state intervention is so necessary as to overrule or override the PANA self-regulation, Your Honor, I think, we have sufficient power in order to correct that.

REP. LAGMAN. Yes, Your Honor.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, what PANA would authorize is not absolute. If it violates the law, then the DTI and other agencies can prosecute, is that correct?

REP. SALCEDA. That is correct, Your Honor.

REP. LAGMAN. My question is, how many, for the last five years have been prosecuted and convicted for violating the Truth in Advertising Act?

REP. SALCEDA. Wala po.

REP. LAGMAN. Wala. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. *(Applause)*

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). We thank the distinguished Gentleman from the First District of Albay, the Hon. Edcel C. Lagman.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize the Gentleman from KABAYAN Party-List, Rep. H. Harry L. Roque, Jr. for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. H. Harry Roque Jr. is recognized.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Minority, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry and its attached agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry including its attached agencies and corporations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Trade and Industry, including its attached agencies and corporations, is now hereby terminated.

Congratulations! *(Applause)*

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move for the recognition of the honorable Dep. Speaker Rolando G. Andaya Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Dep. Speaker Rolando G. Andaya Jr. is recognized.

REP. ANDAYA. Just a manifestation, Mme. Speaker.

Over the weekend, we were greeted by a very pleasant news that an executive order was signed by the President granting additional combat pay to our policemen and soldiers. This was signed over the weekend. May we just seek information from the Department of Budget and Management, for this has been signed just over the weekend, and the budget has been submitted to us a month ago. This is a recurring expense which would incur an additional expense of P12 billion next year.

Now, the question is, whether the amount of P12 billion has already been inputted in the 2017 proposed budget, considering that it was just signed over the weekend. Just a point of information, Mme. Speaker, just to let us know whether such funding is present, or there is a need for us to make adjustments to accommodate the executive order signed by our President.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Thank you, Dep. Speaker Andaya, your manifestation is noted.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. LOPEZ (B.). Mme. Speaker, I move to suspend the session and resume at two o'clock in the afternoon. I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended, to resume at two o'clock in the afternoon.

It was 12:45 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:08 p.m., the session was resumed with Rep. Juan Pablo "Rimpy" P. Bondoc presiding.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). The session is resumed.

The honorable Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. BELARO. Mr. Speaker, at this juncture, may we acknowledge the presence of our guests in the gallery: Usec. Noel George P. Puyat from the Presidential Communications Office, as well as Usec. George A. Apacible and Usec. Enrique L. Tandan III. Asst. Sec. Kissinger V. Reyes and Asst. Sec. Ana Maria Banaag, and also, the heads of three government-owned and controlled corporations, namely: Mr. Dino Apolonio of People's Television Network, Inc., Mr. Manolito Cruz of IBC-13 and Mr. Dominic F. Tajon of APO Production Unit, Inc.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). The aforementioned guests will please rise, most especially my cousin, Noel Puyat. (*Applause*) Welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

Continuation

PERIOD OF SPONSORSHIP AND DEBATE

REP. BELARO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we resume the consideration of House Bill No. 3408. For this purpose, may we request that the Secretary General be directed to read only the title of the measure.

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

The Secretary General will please read the title of the measure.

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

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). The Floor Leader is recognized.

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE

REP. BELARO. Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary status of the Bill is that it is in the period of interpellation and debate. For this purpose, Mr. Speaker, I move that we consider the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, and its attached agencies and corporations.

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

The budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, including its attached agencies and corporations, will now be considered.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. BELARO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Eric L. Olivarez from the First District of Parañaque City to sponsor the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, including its attached agencies and corporations.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). Our esteemed Vice Chairman, the Hon. Eric Olivarez, is recognized.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF REP. OLIVAREZ

REP. OLIVAREZ. Thank you very much, Floor Leader. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

For Fiscal Year 2017, the Presidential Communications Operations Office or the PCOO is proposing a P1.255-billion budget distributed as follows:

For the PCOO (Proper), P234,994,000;

For the Bureau of Broadcast Services, P317,422,000;

For the Bureau of Communications Services, P42,044,000;

For the National Printing Office, P11,372,000;

For News and Information Bureau, P131,902,000;

For the Philippine Information Agency, P336,772,000; and

For the Presidential Broadcast Staff, P180,895,000.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office for 2017 reflects an overall increase of P9,739,000 or only .78 percent increase from the 2016 approved budget.

I am now ready to answer questions from the Members of this august Body.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). The sponsorship speech of the honorable Sponsor is well-taken.

The session is suspended for a few minutes to give a chance to the Minority Leader to speak with the technical working committee.

It was 2:12 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:12 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. BELARO. Mr. Speaker, I move that we proceed to the period of interpellation and debate to begin the consideration of the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, including its attached agencies and corporations. For this purpose, I move that we recognize the distinguished Minority Leader, the Hon. Danilo Suarez, for his interpellation.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Rep. Bondoc). Before we recognize the Hon. Danilo Suarez, I move that we suspend the session for one minute to allow the honorable Dep. Speaker Romero "Miro" S. Quimbo to ascend the rostrum.

It was 2:13 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:13 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Romero "Miro" S. Quimbo presiding.

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

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. BELARO. Mr. Speaker, I move again that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader Danilo Suarez for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Quimbo). The honorable Minority Leader, the kingpin of Quezon, is hereby recognized.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, kingpin of Marikina.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Quimbo). Thank you.

REP. SUAREZ. Will the distinguished Sponsor yield to some clarificatory questions, Mr. Speaker?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the distinguished Gentleman from Quezon.

REP. SUAREZ. Can we just have some learning curve here. The Presidential Communications Operations Office is the same as the one that was the office of the late Gregorio Cendaña during the Marcos years? Am I correct there? It is the same, Mr. Speaker?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mr. Speaker, the Presidential Communications Operations Office is different from what was mentioned by the Minority Leader.

REP. SUAREZ. Kasi, noong araw, nawala na rito iyong National Media Production Center, it is no longer here now. What we have inherited after the EDSA Revolution are Channels 9 and 13. If I am not mistaken, Channel 9 now is ABS-CBN, am I correct there? And, Channel 13 is still the same here at the ...

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mr. Speaker, for RPN 9, it is CNN.

REP. SUAREZ. No, Mr. Speaker, before the EDSA Revolution, ABS-CBN, if I am not mistaken, used to be the center of Malacañang Press Office. Am I correct?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mr. Speaker, the PCOO, the Presidential Communications Operations Office, is the output of the former Presidential Office of the Spokesperson.

REP. SUAREZ. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I just would like to raise my question on the proposed budget for this entire office which is P21,568,000. Is that correct, Mr. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mr. Speaker, it is P1.255 billion-budget for 2017. It is divided into seven agencies, namely: the PCOO proper, the Bureau of Broadcast Services, the Bureau of Communications Services, the National Printing Office, the News and Information Bureau, the Philippine Information Agency and the Presidential Broadcast Staff, which has a 0.78 percent increase compared to the 2016 budget, a total of P9,739,000 increase compared to last year's, Mr. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. The PBSRTVM, is this Channel 9, Mr. Speaker? No.

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mr. Speaker, no, it is the Presidential Broadcast Staff Radio-Television Malacanang or PBSRTVM.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Quimbo relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Gwendolyn F. Garcia.

REP. SUAREZ. Is Channel 9 under the PCOO, Mme. Speaker?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. And Channel 13. Saan dito, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, naroroon ang budget ng dalawang TV stations?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mme. Speaker, we are not asking for the budget allotted to Channel 13 and Channel 9.

REP. SUAREZ. This also includes the Bureau of Broadcast Services before, the radio network called Radyo ng Bayan, am I correct? Is this the local radio network, Radyo ng Bayan, Mme. Speaker?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mme. Speaker, for Radyo ng Bayan, there is an allotted budget to it. However, as I have mentioned, for Channel 13 and Channel 9, they have no budget.

REP. SUAREZ. Do they accept commercials as well, these three networks, the two TV channels and the radio station?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Is there a print production? Is there newspaper or gazette?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Yes, Mme. Speaker, that would be under the Bureau of Communications Services, as well as the National Printing Office.

REP. SUAREZ. And you are saying that you have a printed newsprint as well? I am not aware of that. What is the title of the newspaper?

REP. OLIVAREZ. It is "Mula sa Masa, para sa Masa," Mme. Speaker. That is the official gazette?

REP. SUAREZ. How many copies do you print every day? Is it daily or weekly?

REP. OLIVAREZ. It is twice a month, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Twice a month.

REP. OLIVAREZ. Yes, a total of 12,000 copies.

REP. SUAREZ. So, your principal believes that the printing twice a month of a national newsprint is enough to disseminate information.

REP. OLIVAREZ. No, Mme. Speaker, it is not sufficient.

REP. SUAREZ. So, if it is not sufficient, why do you not increase the circulation on a—maybe once a week or ...

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mme. Speaker, there is a proposed increase in the budget of the NPO, as well as for the Bureau of Communications Services, and this has been submitted to the Committee on Appropriations.

REP. SUAREZ. Okay. In your presented budget, we will have to assume that without government support, Channel 9, Channel 13 and Radyo ng Bayan cannot operate independently if it is just a question of deriving from what they earn from the commercials. Hindi ho nila kayang mag-survive.

REP. OLIVAREZ. That is correct, Mme. Speaker. They cannot survive, Mme. Speaker. They cannot survive without the budget.

REP. SUAREZ. Ano ang ratio? Is it 80/20, 30/70?

REP. OLIVAREZ. It is 60/40, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Ah, 60/40. And what seems to be the trend? Are you improving the revenue every year? Nag-i-improve po ba ang revenue nitong tatlong entities na ito, dalawang TV stations, at saka radio?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mme. Speaker, as I mentioned, the 60/40 percent, 60 percent will be coming from the national budget.

REP. SUAREZ. Yes, that is right. Forty percent na-ge-generate nila out of their commercials and advertisements.

So, iyon hong office ni Secretary Andanar, if I will look at the matrix here, is basically maliit, ano? Ang bulk ng expenditures ninyo is operating the radio and the TV, ano? Tama ho ako dito, ano? Does the good Secretary have allocation to improve public relations image with the private sector? I am talking about working relations with the media in the private sector.

REP. OLIVAREZ. Going back to Channel 13 and Channel 9, with the Channel 9, 20 percent of it is owned by the national government.

REP. SUAREZ. No, no, no. I am sorry to intervene, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. What I am saying, sa office po ba ni Secretary Andanar, are we setting aside funds to enhance the image of the Presidential Communications Operations Office? Nasa budget po ba iyon?

REP. OLIVAREZ. With this meager budget, it is not inclusive, Mme. Speaker, Minority Leader.

REP. SUAREZ. Are we setting aside? Because, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, you need to polish the image of the President in terms of public perception, di ba? Kasi may natutuwa, may nagagalit. So, it is your call to make sure that iyong nagagalit ang napapaliwanagan ng tama.

So, ang tanong ko, may na set aside ba tayong pondo para sa public image ng ating Pangulo?

REP. OLIVAREZ. At present, there is P1.2 billion allotted, and there is an additional budget request of the PCOO and the attached agencies and bureaus: for the Bureau of Broadcast Services, the additional request is P331,420,000; for the Bureau of Communications Services, P52 million; for National Printing Office, P143 million; for the News and Information Bureau, P484 million additional budget; and for the PIA, P28 million.

REP. SUAREZ. I will be very rude in my reflection on what you have said, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker.

Iyon hong dalawang TV stations ninyo, napakahina ng rating. Ngayon, kung doon mo ibubuhos iyong posisyon ng iyong public relations o communications officer to explain the position of the government, kakaunti ho ang magiging recipient ng information. Kakaunti din naman ang nakikinig sa Radyo ng Bayan. Kasi, alam ho naman natin na dominated iyan ng DZMM, DZXL, iyong mga commercial. Kaya ang point ko lang, ibabalik ko lang ho ang mga panahon noong araw, noong mga dating Pangulo, iyon pong mga Secretaries of information and communications, mayroon po iyang binibigyan ng kaukulang pondo para pang-PR-PR sa mga editor ng diyaryo, sa mga kolumnista, sa mga reporter. Iyon ho ang tanong ko, mayroon po ba tayong pondo na inilaan sa 2017 para sa ganitong objective?

REP. OLIVAREZ. Mme. Speaker, that is the reason there is an additional budget allotted for the PCOO and attached agencies, and there is a plan to upgrade

the facilities, equipment of the PTV4 as well as the Radyo ng Bayan— to have one station per province in two years.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, now is it is 2:26 p.m., it will take me until five o'clock in the afternoon just to ask you a question on how your government agency will answer the concern of the Minority. We are the Minority, but we do not necessarily mean that we are against the President. What we are saying, you have a very sensitive and noble objective to polish the image of our President in terms of his performance. Iyon hong sinasabi ninyong relative allocation ng funds for the MOOE, naiintindihan ko ho iyan. Pero ang sa akin ho, inasmuch as this budget really was not prepared by the newly appointed Secretary, we will give them that elbow room that maybe in 2018, he can come up with a more responsive budget. Prepared na ho ito e, hindi natin alam magkano ba ang na-set aside natin para pang-PR on the position of our President. Kasi, araw-araw po, you have to come up with a statement supporting the position or explaining to the population what the President really means.

So, am I clear on that, distinguished Sponsor? Please tell your principal to polish the proposed budget, not this time, but for 2018.

REP. OLIVAREZ. Thank you very much, Minority Leader.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Minority, we do not have any more questions to raise on the proposed budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office. I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. BELARO. Mme. Speaker, there being no other member from the Minority who wishes to ask questions, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office and attached corporations and agencies, Mme. Speaker. I so move.

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

The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BELARO. I move that we suspend the session, Mme. Speaker, for one minute.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:29 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:29 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. BELARO. Mme. Speaker, I move for the reconsideration of the order to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office and its attached agencies and corporations.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the consideration of the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, including its attached agencies and corporations, is reconsidered.

The Minority Leader is recognized.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Minority Leader is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ. I would like to stand corrected, Mme. Speaker. Inasmuch as there is no more Member from the Minority who would like to raise questions on the Presidential Communications Operations Office, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the said office.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. BELARO. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office and its attached agencies and corporations. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Presidential Communications Operations Office, including its attached agencies and corporations, is now terminated. (*Applause*)

The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BELARO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session for one minute.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:31 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:31 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, I move that we consider the budgets of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority, the National Food Authority, the National Irrigation Administration and the Philippine Coconut Authority, and for that purpose, recognize the honorable vice chairman, the Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar. I so move, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar is recognized.

REP. SAMBAR. Thank you.

Mme. Speaker, esteemed colleagues, and our guests from the different agencies, good afternoon. This Representation is now ready for questions for these agencies.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, let me clarify the previous motion. The parliamentary status is that we are discussing the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority, and with that, I move that we recognize the Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar. I so move, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

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

In consideration of the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority, we recognize the Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, for the discussion of the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority, we are pleased to acknowledge the presence of the Administrator, Glen B. Santos.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). May we request the administrator, Glen B. Santos, to please stand up. A warm welcome from the House of Representatives (*Applause*)

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, we move for a few minutes suspension of the session to allow the Minority to speak with our Administrator. I so move, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:34 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:38 p.m. the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. BONDOC. Mme. Speaker, our parliamentary status is that we are in consideration of the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority. The Sponsor, the Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar, is recognized. For his interpellation of the honorable Sponsor, I move for the recognition of the honorable Minority Leader, the Hon. Danilo E. Suarez.

I so move, Mme. Speaker, Your Honor.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Danilo E. Suarez, the Minority Leader, is recognized.

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

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, it would be my privilege to interpellate the honorable Minority Leader.

REP. SUAREZ. I understand that the new head of the agency is here. I just would like to remind the distinguished Sponsor that what we are going to discuss here is a major industry that makes this country popular all over the world, and that is coconut.

I now ask the head of the agency whether he rose from the ranks. He said that this is his first time to be appointed as officer-in-charge of this particular office. May we know the background of the new agency head as to what he knows about coconut.

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Honorable Suarez, the Administrator of the PCA, the Hon. Glen Santos, has been the Deputy Director for Administration and Finance of the PCA for the past year, and after that, he took over as OIC of the PCA.

REP. SUAREZ. Galing na po siya sa PCA before, bago siya maging head ng agency na ito?

REP. SAMBAR. Yes, that is correct, Your Honor, Mme. Speaker, for a year.

REP. SUAREZ. And the General Manager, I understand, rose from the ranks as well.

REP. SAMBAR. The Dep. Exec. Administrator, Deputy Roel Rosales, has also been a Deputy for Administration as well.

REP. SUAREZ. Earlier, when we discussed the budget of one agency, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, we raised the issue of our concern on what is being done by his office, and I will raise the same question on the issue of cocolisap. May we know the action being taken by the PCA on this particular problem.

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, for the CALABARZON area, the cocolisap problem has been contained by the PCA. They are just continuing with the rehabilitation of the coconut trees. However, for the Basilan area, it remains a problem, and they are still under watch. They are monitoring it very, very closely because of the drought, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Can we just be more specific on what provinces do we still have a cocolisap problem?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, only Basilan has a problem with cocolisap today, as per the PCA.

REP. SUAREZ. Iyon na lang ang may hindi pa makontrol?

REP. SAMBAR. That is correct, Mme. Speaker. The excessive drought in that area makes cocolisap more active in that area. However, the PCA has guaranteed that they are in the middle of an operation to contain cocolisap in Basilan within the next 60 days, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Did we set aside any funds for the 2017 Budget to contain this particular problem?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, there is about P230 million set aside to combat the cocolisap problem.

REP. SUAREZ. You know, Mme. Speaker, during the last election campaign, our political opponent hit us on this particular issue. They said that the candidates of this political party were so good looking that they looked like Piolo Pascual, and we looked like Coco. And I said, "Like Coco Martin? No, you look like coco—cocolisap." That is what they said to me. So, baka mawala na naman iyang problema ng cocolisap with this proposed budget of the PCA for 2017.

Ang concern ko is this, good thing that maybe, divine intervention crept into the picture as well, about the number that could have been affected had this problem not been properly contained in time. Ang dami po nating agricultural lands at saka mga farmers na umaasa sa niyog.

On the present value of coconut byproducts, did we improve the per capita income of each family that is dependent on coconut farmer on a per-hectare basis?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, in areas where the PCA has been very active, the PCA has increased the annual income, per capita income of the farmer from P20,000 to P40,000. Family income po iyon.

REP. SUAREZ. Per hectare?

REP. SAMBAR. Per hectare, yes, that is correct, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Can we attribute that to coco water?

Distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, as a learning curve, dati po, iyong tubig itinatapon natin. Ngayon ho, binibili na iyong tubig, and it commands a good price.

REP. SAMBAR. That is correct, Mme. Speaker. I think not only coconut water. There are other new uses for coconut that have been newly researched like coco sugar, virgin coconut oil, and coco coir, as well.

REP. SUAREZ. Have they come up with a new variety that can improve the yield on the day it is planted? Normally, I think our rule of thumb is six to seven years. Am I correct there?

REP. SAMBAR. That is correct, Mme. Speaker. The PCA is developing a new hybrid coconut species that will be more productive as well as more hardy. So, there are new research and new ongoing studies being made in the production of the new hybrid coconut plants.

REP. SUAREZ. And the proposed 2017 Budget includes funds for this type of work--research and development of better variety?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, unfortunately, it was not considered for this budget. However, it is being implemented already, the new hybrid plants.

REP. SUAREZ. Distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, I understand this budget was not prepared by the present officers, considering that this is the start of the--naka 90 days pa lang po ang PDP Laban, which is the current government administrator. So, ang sinasabi ninyo, dito sa proposed na 2017, wala ho tayong allocation na inilalagay to come up with research and development program, to come up with a better variety that can yield faster and will live longer, that can produce longer life? Tama po ba ako, iyong variety po natin ay mga 60-70 years at the most? Hindi po ba? Tuloy-tuloy po naman ang pamumunga except iyon hong variety na sinasabi ninyo, high-yielding, pero ang atin pong napatunayan, maigsi po naman ang productive years. Now, for you to come up with an improved variety of this particular plant, the Gentleman is saying, maganda na ang production, maiksi ang magbe-bear ng fruit at hahaba ang buhay. That calls for massive research and development, but the Gentleman is saying we do not have any funds for that in 2017?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, let me correct my initial statement. There is actually a budget for research, but not specifically for the hybrid plants. There is for research on how coconut can be used, how it will be planted, fertilizers, and other components that will help coconut thrive more in the Philippines, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Does it earn revenues, the Philippine Coconut Authority?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, yes, the Philippine Coconut Authority does earn revenues.

REP. SUAREZ. I used to have an oil mill, and every time I export coconut oil, I pay the PCA. Do they still collect from the exporters of coconut products?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, the collection for exporting has been stricken out.

REP. SUAREZ. Wala na. Where do they get their income? The Gentleman said that they earn funds.

REP. SAMBAR. The fees collected are for registration and regulatory functions, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Do they earn money out of the—because when I crafted the Coconut Conservation Act of 1995, and then I had it amended in 2006, in that measure, the PCA is supposed to earn money out of coco lumber. Do they earn money out of that?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, yes, the PCA does collect funds from coco lumber but only for the replacement or replanting of those that had been cut.

REP. SUAREZ. Do they consistently observe the essence of the law, distinguished Sponsor, that you cannot cut if there is no replanting?

REP. SAMBAR. Yes, Mme. Speaker,.

REP. SUAREZ. Can we be given a comfort level that that is being implemented thoroughly?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker,, the PCA would gladly give a report and show the Gentleman their compliance ...

REP. SUAREZ. I would welcome to have that report.

REP. SAMBAR. Yes, Mme. Speaker,.

REP. SUAREZ. I crafted that law, that is why I am very sensitive on that particular measure.

Mme. Speaker, considering that the Minority has no more question to raise on the proposed budget of the PCA, I move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Philippine Coconut Authority is hereby terminated. (*Applause*)

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:52 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:53 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, may I move that we recognize the Hon. Elizabeth Ramiro, the administrative and finance chief, together with her staff. They are all in the gallery now.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Please rise. We welcome you to the House of Representatives.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

FERTILIZER AND PESTICIDE AUTHORITY

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority.

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

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Gentleman from the PBA Party-List, the honorable Vice Chairperson of the Committee on Appropriations, the Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar, to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Mark Sambar is recognized.

REP. SAMBAR. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

This Representation is now ready to answer questions for this agency.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Alfredo A. Garbin, Jr. from the AKO BICOL Party-List for his interpellation.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Alfredo Garbin is recognized.

REP. GARBIN. Mme. Speaker, there being no members from the Minority who wish to ask a question, I now move to terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Fertilizer and Pesticide Authority is hereby terminated.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:55 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:56 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the National Food Authority.

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

The period of interpellation and debate on the budget for the National Food Authority is now open.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Hon. Mark Sambar of the PBA Party-List to sponsor the budget of the NFA.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Mark Sambar is recognized.

REP. SAMBAR. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

This Representation is now ready to answer questions on the budget of the National Food Authority.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. CRISOLOGO. May we request for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:57 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 2:57 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Manuel Monsour Del Rosario III of the First District of Makati for his interpellation, if any.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Will the Dep. Majority Leader kindly repeat his motion.

REP. CRISOLOGO. I move that we recognize the Hon. Manuel Monsour T. Del Rosario III of the First District of Makati for his interpellation, if any. I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Manuel Monsour Del Rosario is recognized.

REP. DEL ROSARIO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Minority, there being no Member wishing to ask a question, I move to terminate this period of interpellation and debate.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. CRISOLOGO. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the National Food Authority. I so move.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of sponsorship and debate on the budget of the National Food Authority is hereby terminated. (*Applause*)

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 2:59 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:04 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the National Irrigation Administration.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the consideration of the budget of the National Irrigation Administration has now started.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Gentleman from the PBA Party-List, the honorable Vice Chairperson of the Committee on Appropriations, the Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar, to sponsor the budget of the National Irrigation Administration.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Hon. Mark Aeron H. Sambar is recognized.

REP. SAMBAR. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

This Representation is now ready to answer questions for the National Irrigation Administration.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Minority Leader, the Hon. Danilo E. Suarez, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Minority Leader, Hon. Danilo E. Suarez, is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Distinguished Sponsor, what we have seen in this new package for the PPP for 2017 is a good number of hydroelectric. May we know the working relationship between the agency of the NIA in terms of coming up with a working arrangement as regards harnessing water that will be used for electricity and using the same amount of water after harnessing it to generate power for potable or for irrigation purposes?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, with regard to how the NIA has joint projects with the DOE, the NIA just provides the areas where there are possible hydroelectric power sites, but they relegate the construction of these sites to the private sector, and the NIA just collects fees from them.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, thank you for that information. But the thrust of my question is the working relationship. For instance, let us talk about the proposed budget for harnessing power, the water of Agos in Kaliwa-Kanan. I think the good Administrator is very familiar with General Nakar. We will put up two hydroelectric there. My question is, this water, after you harness it for generating electricity, how will it be used for irrigation purposes?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the water passes through the irrigation system, whether it passes through a hydroelectric power generator, afterwards it will revert to the irrigation system. So, the water that is used will go to the irrigation areas that it is supposed to be used for.

REP. SUAREZ. Will they be materially involved in the approval of a project like, for instance, concomitant on how many acreage of land can be irrigated once a project like this is completed?

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, the NIA makes sure that the water being used in these irrigation systems can still be used afterwards even if it passes through a hydroelectric generating turbine, so that before any plan can be approved, the NIA will ensure that the irrigable area will still remain constant before and after the construction of these kinds of projects.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, thank you for that comfort level, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

I see in this proposed 2016 project implementation status, and we are now three months away from ending 2016, Coconet Slope Protection in the amount of 791—is this correct 794, is this applied project, or is this P794 million?

REP. SAMBAR. Your Honor, if I may just clarify, you are asking for the 2016 Coconet Slope Protection budget, is that correct?

REP. SUAREZ. I am reading the report, distinguished Sponsor, and they said that the 2016 project implementation status of Coconet Slope Protection targets square meters, actual square meters. There is no actual in the said column, there is a target. So, I just would like to find out what 794,111 is. Is this square meters or is this pesos?

REP. SAMBAR. Your Honor, that is square meters.

REP. SUAREZ. So, well, I am elated to find out that the agency is using—this is coconut fiber, tama po ba ako, distinguished Sponsor? You are using coconut fiber here?

REP. SAMBAR. Yes, that is correct, Your Honor, that is coconut fiber.

REP. SUAREZ. You have said that the target is 794, although, siguro, hindi pa nila nami-measure kung ano iyong output nila ng 2016. Mayroon ba tayong budgetary estimate in terms of pesos and cents of how much is being allocated by the NIA to buy these coconut fibers from the processors?

Distinguished Sponsor, katatapos lang ho natin ng PCA, hindi po ba?

REP. SAMBAR. Yes, that is correct.

REP. SUAREZ. Ang sabi nila, kaya ho sila nakaka-generate ng mas malaking income per hectare, per family, kasi kahit ho P40,000, kulang pa rin iyon, alam naman natin. That is a good news that na-enhance iyong kanilang revenue, and one of them is this coconut fiber. So, gusto ko lang hong malaman, ano ang contribution ng NIA in terms of what they purchased, let us say, for the first six months, kasi baka hindi pa ho sila ready.

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, we are just finding out the exact figure or the ballpark figure where the amount for the coco fiber is being procured at. But rest assured, most of the coco fiber procured for the NIA comes from the province of Quezon as well. So, a lot of the farmers from the province of Quezon benefit from the NIA coco slope protection program.

REP. SUAREZ. Yes, but there is very limited place where you have processors, distinguished Sponsor. Considering the very important task of this agency, we are aware that one reason we cannot compete with our ASEAN neighbors in terms of palay production is, there is a good number of farms that cannot plant maybe twice because we are dependent on rain. Now, it says here that for 2016, they have restored 14,703, is this hectares, distinguished Sponsor? Restored, and then new dams, I would imagine that these are dams. Am I correct that your target is 19,660 and the actual is 1,180?

REP. SAMBAR. That is correct, Your Honor. This is 14,000 hectares target, actual is 1,323 for 2016.

REP. SUAREZ. Medyo mababa po ang absorbing nila, 69 percent. May we know the problem being

encountered by this agency for not being able to hit their target, considering the sensitivity of their objective.

REP. SAMBAR. Mme. Speaker, Your Honor, according to the NIA, the coco slope protection program is in the demonstration stage as of this moment. So, the target right now is a lot lower than the actual so that they are still working on or going through a birthing stage on how to actually maximize the use of the coconut slope protection program.

REP. SUAREZ. So, you are saying that by year-end, mayroon pa ho silang unspent portion for 2016?

REP. SAMBAR. Your Honor, that is correct, but, I think, they are already in program. These are already programmed for different parts of the country.

REP. SUAREZ. So, in terms of your principal giving us a comfort level that although the actual here is alarmingly low, there is a good percentage that before the year ends—because by that time, we will find out what their output is—when we finalize the proposed budget for 2017 in our Bicam, can I call the attention of the Sponsor and give me a status report on the actual against target on these rehabilitated and new dams that are going to be constructed?

REP. SAMBAR. Yes, Your Honor, noted.

REP. SUAREZ. Mme. Speaker, thank you very much to the distinguished Sponsor. The Minority has no more question to raise and, therefore, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the National Irrigation Administration. I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, on behalf of the Majority, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the National Irrigation Administration.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the National Irrigation Administration is now terminated. (*Applause*)

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of Rep. Erlpe John “Ping” M. Amante of the Second District of Agusan del Norte. We have here the Sangguniang

Bayan members of the municipality of Tubay, Agusan del Norte, headed by Vice Mayor Raquim Cuyos.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Please rise. *(Applause)* A warm welcome from the House of Representatives.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move for a one-minute suspension of the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is suspended.

It was 3:17 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:25 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). The session is resumed.

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we acknowledge the presence of the guests of the Hon. Florida “Rida” P. Robes of the Lone District, city of San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan. We have here with us the San Lorenzo Ruiz Parish Church, Barangay San Manuel Lecture Committees.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garcia, G.). Please rise. *(Applause)* A warm welcome from the House of Representatives.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. PRIMICIAS-AGABAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session.

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

The session is suspended.

It was 3:25 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:19 p.m., the session was resumed with Deputy Speaker Ferdinand L. Hernandez presiding.

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

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. NOEL. Mr. Speaker, may we acknowledge the presence of guests in the gallery. They are the undersecretaries of the Department of Agriculture, namely: Undersecretary Bernadette Fatima R. Puyat; Undersecretary Bai Ranibai D. Dilangalen, Evelyn G. Laviña, Eduardo B. Gongona and Assistant Secretaries Hansel O. Didulo and Francisco M. Villano Jr.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The officials of the Department of Agriculture, please rise to be recognized. *(Applause)* Welcome to the House of Representatives.

The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

REP. NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move that we begin the consideration of the budget of the Department of Agriculture.

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

REP. NOEL. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Lady from the Fourth District of Nueva Ecija, Rep. Magnolia C. Antonino, to sponsor and answer questions, if any, on the budget of the Department of Agriculture.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The distinguished Representative from Nueva Ecija, Rep. Magnolia Antonino, is recognized to answer questions, interpellations in relation to the budget of the Department of Agriculture.

REP. ANTONINO. Magandang hapon po, Mr. Speaker, and all of my colleagues.

We are here to sponsor the budget of the Department of Agriculture and we are ready to answer any questions that my colleagues may have. Thank you po.

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

REP. MATUGAS. Mr. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from KABAYAN Party-List, the honorable Cong. Harry L. Roque, for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The distinguished Gentleman, Rep. Harry Roque, is recognized.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Floor Leader.

Now, will the good Sponsor yield to a few points of interpellation?

REP. ANTONINO. Gladly, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, my first question has to do with overall policy. Year in, year out, administration after administration, we have striven, we have always attempted or, at least, targeted to be self-sufficient, particularly in the production of rice. The past administration even went beyond aiming to be self-sufficient in rice. It even aimed to be a net rice exporter.

So, my first question to the good Sponsor, Mr. Speaker, is, where are we now in terms of self-sufficiency, at least, in rice?

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, my dear colleague, we are at 94 percent rice self-sufficiency right now.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Which means, Mr. Speaker, that we would still be a net importer of rice.

For 2017, Mr. Speaker, would the good Sponsor have an estimate on how much rice we would have to import?

REP. ANTONINO. Let me just correct it with the exact figures. It was 92.66 percent in 2015 due to the reduction in palay production by 4.31 percent because of the effect of the dry spell and damages caused by typhoons. To be able to be rice self-sufficient, we will have to import. Actually, the DA only provides information about rice self-sufficiency. Ang magdedesisyon po ng amounts of imported rice is the NFA. They have the decision-making power as to how much rice will be imported po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Correct me if I am wrong, Mr. Speaker, the NFA today is not considered a line agency of the Department of Agriculture.

REP. ANTONINO. No, it is not. It is under the Office of the President po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). That is why I will not pursue my line of questioning, Mr. Speaker, in that regard, manifesting though that there apparently is a crisis in a province that I visited recently, the province of Congresswoman Akbar in Basilan.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). I understand there is a shortage of rice in Basilan because the Bureau of Customs recently apprehended yet another load of smuggled rice from Malaysia, and that rice seized by the Customs is

now rotting in the Port of Zamboanga, while the rice prices in Basilan have apparently skyrocketed. Is this information correct, Mr. Speaker?

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. ANTONINO. Let me just double-check po. Can I ask for a one-minute suspension of the session, Mr. Speaker.

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

It was 4:24 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:25 p.m., the session was resumed.

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

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Hernandez). The Representative from Nueva Ecija is recognized.

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, the DA is not aware of the situation because that is being handled by the Customs and by the NFA. We are not involved in this situation po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mr. Speaker, perhaps, the DA should be involved because I understand that there is a crisis already in Basilan, the skyrocketing prices of rice currently.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Moving on now to the budget, Mr. Speaker, will the good Sponsor confirm the data provided by the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department that the current utilization rate of the Office of the Secretary, from 2011 to 2015, is only 80 percent of its total budget?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mr. Speaker, we will confirm those figures.

REP. ROQUE (H.). In fact, Mr. Speaker, this percentage amounts to, in 2015 alone, a staggering amount, under the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, P8 billion. From 2011 to 2015, the unused appropriation in billions of pesos averages to P10 billion for the Office of the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture alone.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, we confirm that, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). With this much amount unspent year in, year out, I wonder, Mr. Speaker, what exactly is the rationale for still increasing the provision for automatic appropriations in the budget of the Department of Agriculture with an average unspent amount of P10 billion in 2016. The general appropriations, the programmed appropriations, was even increased for 2017, although the total budget for the Department of Agriculture was concededly decreased from P40 billion to P35 billion; still, the budget for programs, nonetheless, increased despite consistent underutilization of funds by the Department of Agriculture.

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, we have to remember that every budget is valid for two years. So, the 2015 budget is still valid up to now. So, the DA is currently still utilizing that budget.

Right now, the unused appropriation na lang for 2011, P710 million, is closed na. Out of the P10 billion, P710 million ang na-revert; for 2012, this is closed also, P1.9 billion ang na-revert; for 2013, P2.1 billion ang na-revert; 2014, P2.7 billion ang na-revert; 2015, this is still valid up to now, and it is being utilized now. We have until December to utilize these funds.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, from the figures mentioned by the good Sponsor, it would appear that as of three years ago, and this is clearly an equivalent to an amount of money which would revert to the National Treasury, ...

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). ... they already reverted P2.7 billion as of 2014, if I am not mistaken.

REP. ANTONINO. More po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). So, they have remitted even more ...

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). ... than P2.4 billion. The amount is?

REP. ANTONINO. More or less, P6 billion po ...

REP. ROQUE (H.). Which is my ...

REP. ANTONINO. ... from 2011 to 2014 po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Which, Mr. Speaker, is my

point. If the Department of Agriculture had returned to the National Treasury no less than P6 billion...

REP. ANTONINO. But I would like to clarify also, Mr. Speaker, that is funding, that is not a cash allotment.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Nonetheless, it is still money that was unspent, which had to be returned to the National Treasury. Correct?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). What is the justification now for giving an even higher amount in terms of budget for projects to an agency that has proved to be not as efficient in its utilization of funds?

REP. ANTONINO. Actually, Mr. Speaker, the budget of the DA for projects has not increased. In 2016, it was P52.8 billion, and this year, it is only P49.4 billion.

REP. ROQUE (H.). I am sorry. The figures again are?

REP. ANTONINO. In 2016 po, ang naka-appropriate for projects under the DA, including attached agencies, is P52.8 billion. Ang naka-appropriate this year, Mr. Speaker, for projects under the DA and their attached agencies is P49.4 billion. So, the budget has decreased. It has not increased ho.

REP. ROQUE (H.). I understand that, Mr. Speaker. But my question is, let us look at the budget specifically in terms of the budget to the Office of the Secretary, and let us isolate it from the other budget items of the DA line agencies.

REP. ANTONINO. That budget has also decreased. In 2016, it was P40.3 billion, and this year it is P35.3 billion po. So, it has also decreased this year, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Okay. Now, my question is, should we not decrease this further, given historical underutilization of funds? Clearly, the DBM had already slashed it because it is money that the DA has not been able to spend anyway, having returned P6 billion. But it would seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that we can afford to slash further the budget of the DA, given its underutilization.

Now, already, from this reduced budget, we have to factor in, Mr. Speaker, the fact that projects under the National Irrigation Authority have already been removed from the budget of the Department of Agriculture. Is this not correct?

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, that is well within the purview of Congress to do, and the DA will submit to the collective wisdom of the majority of the Congressmen with regard to this issue. If Congress feels that we should slash the budget more, that is up to us to do, and we will submit to the wisdom of the group.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Thank you.

At the right time, perhaps we can have proposals, if only because of the reality that other agencies whose budgets were also slashed may deserve more budget, given their prior history of absorptive rates.

Let me now go specifically to the line items on Programs, which, is a lump-sum appropriation of P26,876,051,000.

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, can I ask my colleague to repeat the question, the line item on ...

REP. ROQUE (H.). Under Programs.

REP. ANTONINO. Under Programs po? Can the Gentleman repeat the question po, Mr. Speaker?

REP. ROQUE (H.). Well, I have no question yet, I just repeated the amount ...

REP. ANTONINO. Okay.

REP. ROQUE (H.). ... that appears under Programs, which is P26,876,051,000.

REP. ANTONINO. That is correct po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, what I noticed is, Mr. Speaker, and this is my question, going through the line items under Programs, we see that the specific amounts had already been allocated to the different regions. Is this not correct?

REP. ANTONINO. This is correct po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). And, in fact, in my preliminary talks with the Sponsor, she says there is nothing we can do with these allocations because they were proposed during the budget call, and they have been included in the budget. They are, therefore, identified recipients already as far as programmed budgets for the different regions are concerned.

REP. ANTONINO. That is true, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). That is why, consistently, the management, including the Secretary of Agriculture, has repeatedly told us, Members of Congress, that we cannot

specifically request for additional farm-to-market roads. There is just no way they can accommodate even a new proposal for farm-to-market road. Is this not correct?

REP. ANTONINO. This is true, Mr. Speaker. Under the current budget, everything has been pre-identified during the budget call that was done in January to March and has already been assigned to certain cooperatives, to certain farmers' groups, to certain regions, to certain municipalities po. So, it is very hard to move it now that these have already been identified and the recipients have been informed po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mr. Speaker, my next question is, the figures belie that every single budget intended for the DA had already been appropriated for the regions. To prove this, let me cite the specific budgetary allocations for the central office, which will not go to the different regions. For instance, under the line item Operations, a total of P24,172,088,000, Central Office is allocated P2,481,737,000. Apparently, Mr. Speaker, it is not true that every single centavo of the budget intended for Operations had been previously allotted on a per-region basis because here is an instance where 10 percent of the budget for operations pertains to the Central Office.

My first question is, does the Central Office maintain any agricultural lands? Does it maintain any plantation whatsoever within Metro Manila to warrant P2,481,000,000?

REP. ANTONINO. Included in this budget, Mr. Speaker, is the Project Management Office and the budget for the ARMM. That is why the budget has reached that amount po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). But it is not specified as to how the Central Office will spend this, Mr. Speaker. Meaning, it is absolutely discretionary on the part of the Secretary of Agriculture how to spend 10 percent of the funds intended for operations.

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, that information is in the annex of the budget po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, ...

REP. ANTONINO. Sa GAA po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). ... strangely, they also have production support services for the National Rice Program. This is equivalent to P2,156,000,000, and yet, Mr. Speaker, 6.5 percent of this amount pertains to the Central Office. Again, does the Central Office maintain any rice programs in Metro Manila to warrant 6.5 percent of the total budget for the National Rice Program?

REP. ANTONINO. The reason this budget has reached that amount is that the Project Management Office is under Production Support po, including that of the ARMM.

REP. ROQUE (H.). So, I do not understand, Mr. Speaker, what the system is in the Department of Agriculture.

REP. ANTONINO. It is because it is the nearest that it can be charged to. So, that is where it was put under po, Mr. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mr. Speaker, we are talking of line items here. I do not understand what the Project Management Office has to do with it. What does the Central Office do with P142 million intended for the National Rice Program? I can attest to you that as a resident of Quezon City, there are no rice fields in Quezon City. I can attest to you, Mr. Speaker, that I am a native of Pasay City, there is absolutely no rice field in Pasay City, neither is there any rice field in Muntinlupa.

REP. ANTONINO. Mr. Speaker, we are not claiming that there are rice fields in Metro Manila. This is the main office for production support and project management that gives support to the regions that do have ricefields. This has been put there because this office goes to the different regions. It just so happens that this office is located in Metro Manila which is why it was charged under the National Capital Region po.

At this juncture, Deputy Speaker Hernandez relinquished the Chair to Deputy Speaker Sharon S. Garin.

REP. ROQUE (H.). But we are not talking of a pittance, Mme. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, the total amount intended for the Central Office in Operations is 10 percent. What kind of support warrants a 10 percent of the total national budget that should go to the Central Office? Are we not better off giving it to the different regions?

REP. ANTONINO. Mme. Speaker, I also would like to clarify that the DA did propose to have a separate line item for Program Management and Operations under the budget but this was not approved by the DBM. Actually, if you look at the NEP, it is also specified, P79.6 million is the budget that is allocated for the ARMM under the Central Office. So, that is a huge chunk of the amount that you are talking about.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mme. Speaker, for the record, I would like to identify the other lump-sum appropriations within another lump-sum appropriation. I refer to the

lump sum of P2.4 billion under Operations as lump sum because they do not specify with particularity how it will be spent. But I find it even more unacceptable that within the line item of Operations, they have percentages of the budget assigned to the Central Office.

Now, I have read only two line items equivalent to P6.5 and P6.3. Allow me, for the record, to state the other line items that we uncovered in the budget of the Department of Agriculture. For instance, National High-Value Crops Program, P2.3 billion under Operations; for the Central Office, P171 million, or 72 percent; promotion and development of organic agriculture, P158 million; for the Central Office, P5,620,000, 3.6 percent; under Market Development Services, National Rice Program again, P24,571,000; P350 million intended for the Central Office. This is now the huge percentage, majority of the accounts of the sums allotted to the national office. And we will be intrigued. Why? I refer to the Market Development Services for National High-Value Crops Program. The total allocation is P70 million. Of the P70 million, P43 million or 61.5 percent is allotted for the Central Office. Again, my question is: Is the Central Office really engaged in the marketing of national high-value crops to warrant 61.5 percent of the total budget intended for Market Development Services for that program?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). May I know what services they offer to warrant 61 percent?

REP. ANTONINO. They provide monitoring. They are the ones who find the markets for the farmers. All of the operations, the monitoring, the program planning, it all emanates from the Central Office. That is why the program support budget is under the Central Office.

If my honorable colleague would like a further breakdown po, we are very willing to submit to him in writing a full explanation po of these expenses. But, as you have enumerated, Mme. Speaker, underneath the budget, it is enumerated. They are line items with specific purposes po for each budget. If you would like further information, Mme. Speaker, regarding what specific activities are under each line item, we are willing to submit that po.

REP. ROQUE (H.) Well, in fact, for this line item on National High-Value Crops Program under the Central Office with a budget of P43 million, Mme. Speaker, I would like to know how many individuals they have to implement a program with a budget of P43 million under the Central Office.

REP. ANTONINO. That does not only include the personnel of the Central Office, but even the regional

bureaucracy is underneath po this funding. This also includes the program management and program support po of every region, province, district and town, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mme. Speaker, with all due respect, that is strange because precisely, for every line item, there are already line items intended for the specific regions. Therefore, I find it hard to believe that despite the fact that there were funds already allocated for the different regional offices the Central Office is now claiming that they are still paying for the expenses of the regions.

REP. ANTONINO. Mme. Speaker, this includes all of the program support, activities, including engineering, structural design, program standards; this is all under the Central Office budget. If my honorable colleague would like to propose a change and to put this under line item per region, we will submit ho to the collective wisdom po of the group, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). I have one more point, then I will move on to another point. Agricultural Training Institute, P1.7 million, the entirety is under the Central Office. May I know why this is the case. Are all trainings conducted in the Central Office?

REP. ANTONINO. The trainers po are staff of the bureaus po. They are not trainers from the outside that are brought in. So, they are truly employees under the Central Office po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, second to the last point, and this is something that is close to my advocacy. A couple of years back, we hounded Joc-joc Bolante for the fertilizer fund scam. My question is: Is the Department of Agriculture still implementing the distribution of fertilizers to different farmers' groups?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department currently only provides fertilizer po to techno-demo farms and model farms, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). So, the possibility of the fertilizer scam being repeated no longer exists, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ANTONINO. The Department strives to do everything they can to avoid this type of thing happening as we all want the people's money to go to the proper place that it should go, to the people, my honorable colleague, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). I was also the one who exposed the so-called swine scam and charges have been filed

by the Ombudsman against individuals in connection with the swine scam.

My question is: Is the DA still engaged in giving farmers live livestock, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department no longer gives them to individuals. They give them to model farms which will serve as multiplier farms, and these are then distributed to individual cooperatives, farmers' groups in order to assure that these are put to good use, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). So, Mme. Speaker, by way of clarification, the Department still gives out livestock.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). But, Mme. Speaker, the difference is, unlike in the past where swine stock in particular were given to farmer groups, the livestock today are only given to farmers' cooperatives.

REP. ANTONINO. They are given to those who will put up model farms, multiplier farms, so that they will be in charge of distributing to different farmers amongst the surrounding communities to make sure that they are given to the proper people and that they are properly monitored. These multiplier farms are also properly trained as to how to become breeding centers and how to also train those in the surrounding areas to be able to raise and breed the hogs, whatever livestock po, so that we can show the community and give them livelihood po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). How different is this program, therefore, from the swine scam? In the swine scam, they also intended to multiply swine because there was a shortage then. So, it would seem to me that the actual operation, of the distribution of livestock still follows the same model of the swine program of the past which led to the filing of cases by the Ombudsman.

REP. ANTONINO. The difference po is that the Department no longer procures the livestock. It now comes from stock that has been multiplied already in the multiplier farms and the stock farms that the Department established many years ago. So now, what they give out is in kind. They do not anymore procure what they give out. It is based on the stock that is already in the stock farms of the Department, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Mme. Speaker, would the Sponsor have any idea on what had happened to the individuals charged by the Ombudsman in connection with the swine scam? I know they have the right to be presumed innocent, but are these individuals still in the employ of the Department of Agriculture?

REP. ANTONINO. Actually, the Department is not aware of the status of those cases because Secretary Piñol has taken a stand that he does not want to put his hand on or influence those cases in any way, and he would like justice to take its own proper course in terms of the things that happened in the past administration po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, my last question, Mme. Speaker, is, the Department of Agrarian Reform and the OPAPP implement a project known as PAMANA. What role, if any, does the Department of Agriculture have in the implementation of this PAMANA Program?

REP. ANTONINO. The technical feasibility and the eligibility and monitoring, these are what the Department of Agriculture does. But implementation is done through LGUs po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Is there a provision, Mme. Speaker, still in the 2017 Budget, for the continuation of the PAMANA Program?

REP. ANTONINO. No, Mme. Speaker, there is none.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Now, may I know why there is no more provision for the PAMANA Program?

REP. ANTONINO. Mme. Speaker, the proper Department to ask about that would be the DBM as that is their decision to make po.

REP. ROQUE (H.). But was it included in the budget call of the Department of Agriculture and simply slashed by the DBM, or was it completely omitted by the DA when they submitted their proposed budget to the DBM?

REP. ANTONINO. Actually, the Department of Agriculture requested that they not be included anymore in the implementation of the PAMANA Program for this year.

REP. ROQUE (H.). Okay. I have no further questions, Mme. Speaker. Thank you to the Sponsor, and thank you, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ANTONINO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you to my honorable colleague.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Thank you, Cong. Harry Roque.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the Gentleman from the Party-List ANAKPAWIS, Cong. Ariel “Ka Ayik” B. Casilao.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Cong. Ariel “Ka Ayik” B. Casilao of ANAKPAWIS Party-List is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. CASILAO. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Will the Lady Sponsor yield to some very few policy clarificatory questions?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, I will gladly yield to more questions from my colleague.

REP. CASILAO. Mme. Speaker, Lady Sponsor, the good Secretary from the Department, during the previous budget briefing and the pre-plenary, presented key policy directions. It is about 11 policy directions of this Department, and the highlight of this policy direction is to ensure availability and affordability, food for all Filipinos through food production which is mainly to ensure food security.

Will the Lady Sponsor, in due concurrence with the leadership of the Department, agree that in order to ensure this policy direction, the need for a genuine land reform and policies that would ensure that the lands appropriated for rice production should be expanded and should have a coverage that will require and will reach the necessary demand of our domestic market?

REP. ANTONINO. Actually, the Department, Mme. Speaker, does have a budget for expansion of rice-producing areas. Although the focus is more on improving the quality of the output of the per-hectare of our land, there is also an ongoing program to find new and expansion areas for rice production po.

REP. CASILAO. Yes, that would be a reassuring statement, good Lady Sponsor. However, while there is this ongoing moratorium being crafted by the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council to issue a two-year moratorium on the land conversion, this Representation, in our research, we have set an alarming data that several rice fields are being converted for industrial, commercial and even residential purposes. Now, will the Department that you ought to defend agree with the moratorium for land use conversion, especially those areas that are being considered to be the source of our food security in this country?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department is very supportive of the moratorium in terms of the conversion of agricultural lands and they are also very strictly enforcing all of the requirements to avoid illegal conversions at this point, Mme. Speaker, and my honorable colleague.

REP. CASILAO. Again, I am delighted with those reassuring words coming from our Lady Sponsor, and

I think, and I believe that is also the Department's thrust.

Now, is there an ongoing coordination and policy definition coming from both the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Department of Agriculture in achieving this policy direction being presented by the good Secretary of the Department? May this Representation be furnished copies of any policy formulation or documents that would give an assurance of strict coordination between the two departments that will ensure food security in our country?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker. Although there is no documentation at this point as to the coordination between the DA and the DAR, they are very strictly coordinating with DAR under the principle of convergence, and are committed to continuing this coordination to ensure the proper use of our agricultural lands, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Yes. As far as the information of this Representation, the Department of Agrarian Reform has a policy direction also issued during the first few days of the leadership of the good Secretary: that no farmer will be evicted, no farmer farming their agricultural lands will be affected by any eventual commercial or industrial purposes.

So, I believe, in that light and in that thrust, the Department of Agriculture is one in achieving that kind of objective.

REP. ANTONINO. There is also a priority bill that the Department of Agriculture is asking to be passed by Congress regarding land use. So, we are very supportive of this thrust of the DAR to ensure the proper use of our lands.

REP. CASILAO. Now, the Department mentioned the accessibility of credit and financing for the farmers. This Representation has been requesting the Department during the pre-plenary and the budget briefing that this Representation be furnished the guidelines, because, again, this Representation, in our effort to communicate and to touch base with our farmers organizations, has been complaining during the previous administration and even during this present administration, that there seems to be very strict guidelines in the availment of credit and financing by farmer-cooperatives and organizations.

Now, may this Representation be apprised of new guidelines, if there is any, or a simplified guideline for availing of such credit and financing services.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes. I have actually asked the Department to provide you with a copy of the guidelines right now, so, it is on its way down, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Yes. In the budget also, I have seen that there are certain provisions on sustained subsidy for production inputs. May I know again, it is also a policy question, may I know what particular subsidy for production inputs the Department is planning to implement, especially in the rice, corn and other crop-producing fields or areas that have been identified.

REP. ANTONINO. For 2017, the implementation of machinery and other such services is no longer required as subsidy po or no longer required counterpart po from the farmers' groups. So, it is all being given to them completely free.

REP. CASILAO. How about—while availing of the financing and credit facilities, the post-harvest facilities that are not included in the request or in the availment of credit and financing, has the Department instituted a policy and a formula that will ensure that there is access for the farmers and farmers organizations of post-harvest facilities?

REP. ANTONINO. The Secretary is currently advocating a program that they are calling "LGU corporate farming," so, the inputs will come from LGUs but the machinery and other support services shall come from the Department of Agriculture in order to ensure that our farmers are properly supported in terms of their being able to increase their per-hectare yield of rice, especially, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Now, let me go to another point, my last two points, with regard to our advocacy against genetically modified products.

Will the DA, in its policy formulation, will support a sustainable agriculture that is based on organic farming, much less, on genetically modified influence mode of farming of our products?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department supports biotechnology, but it is not supportive of GMO, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Again, it is a very reassuring commitment from the Department because this Representation fully believes that food security and self-sufficiency of our demand can only be achieved within our local market and should not mean the promotion of, and especially reliance on foreign and corporate-controlled agricultural technologies.

Now, this, for the last point, Mme Speaker, Lady Sponsor, there are certain areas that the Department is still accommodating GMO. In fact, the last previous budget briefing, the good Secretary even mentioned that the availability of still accessing the

GMO or genetically modified products with regard to supplementing our food security will be less of a choice of this Department.

Now, can we have a categorical commitment that we can really fully go to 100-percent organic?

REP. ANTONINO. The areas po that are currently still using genetically modified techniques are private areas po that the Department does not have any control over. In terms of the policy of the Department, they support biotechnology, but not GMO, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. Yes, but may nakakalusot po na partnership. This Representation will provide the Department, documentation of our study, as it was documented in the previous administration. That is why I urge the Lady Sponsor to convince the Department that there are certain partnerships between the Department of Agriculture and private corporations and companies that fully engage in developing GMO.

That is why, to end my interpellation, Lady Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, the review and the thrust to fully implement a one hundred-percent organic mode even if it reaches zero, would be a better choice for our Department to achieve food security and sufficiency.

REP. ANTONINO. The Department is fully supportive of this goal, and we thank you for bringing this to the attention of the Sponsor and the Department.

Please provide us po with the information, Mme. Speaker, and we will look into it as the Department has told me that they are unaware of these situations still ongoing.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

REP. CASILAO. That will be all, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The Dep. Majority Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (A.D.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Rep. Anthony M. Bravo, Ph.D. of COOP-NATCCO Party-List for his interpellation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Congressman Bravo of COOP-NATCCO Party-List is recognized for his interpellation.

REP. BRAVO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, Dep. Majority Leader.

Will the distinguished Lady from Nueva Ecija yield to some questions?

REP. ANTONINO. Mme. Speaker, we are ready and willing to answer questions.

REP. BRAVO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, I congratulate you for taking the cudgels for the Department of Agriculture, the Department headed by my good friend, Sec. Manny Piñol.

For the information of the Lady Sponsor from Nueva Ecija, the Department of Agriculture is a department very close to the heart of this Representation who hails from the province of Sorsogon representing different farmers' cooperatives in the entire country. I am truly very much involved in the agricultural sector.

Distinguished Speaker, distinguished colleague, in the budgetary provision of the Department of Education, more specifically, Provision No. 4, it provides that, "In the procurement thereof," referring to basic educational facilities, "the DepEd shall: (i) give preference to arts and trade schools and other similar technical or vocational schools with technical capabilities to manufacture and fabricate school desks, furniture and fixtures; and (ii) ensure that ten percent (10%) of this amount is allocated for cooperatives x x x."

This, to me, is a clear manifestation of this administration somehow giving preferential treatment to cooperatives.

Now, my question, Mme. distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, is this. Can we also have a similar provision on preferential treatment to cooperatives which are involved or actually agricultural cooperatives to actively involve them in the national programs of the Department of Agriculture? If possible, can we amend Section 5 of the Special Provisions of the Department of Agriculture, so as to include a provision specifically giving preference to farmers' cooperatives?

REP. ANTONINO. Mme. Speaker, we completely understand, as my honorable colleague knows, I represent farmers. I am from Nueva Ecija, I deal with coops on a daily basis. I am on the ground all the time. That is well within the purview of Congress to do, should we choose to, and we will yield to the collective wisdom of our colleagues.

My honorable colleague is invited to make the proposal in the period of amendments so that we can consider such at the proper time. But rest assured, this is something that is very close to the Sponsor's heart and we are very supportive of this, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BRAVO (A.). Am I assured that the distinguished Sponsor is supportive of this position?

REP. ANTONINO. You have my support, my

honorable colleague, Mme. Speaker, and I will do what I can. But again, I will yield to the collective wisdom of the Body as I am only one vote in this Congress. Like I said, I am a Representative of farmers, I believe in the cause and I will help as much as I can, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BRAVO (A.). Thank you for the answer, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor.

The provisions that I am pushing for amendment, come proper time, will be Section 5, number 5, number 9, a Special Provision on the Agricultural Credit Facility of the Department of Agriculture, specifically page 157 of the proposed Expenditure Program, that is number one, on page 157, Special Provision; and, to include also the number two of Special Provision on the Expenditure Program, page 162. These are all attributable to the activities on procurement of the Department and that this Representation fully supports that preferential treatment of farmers cooperatives be recognized, as it is also enshrined in the Declaration of Policy in Republic Act No. 9520, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague.

REP. ANTONINO. Again po, we will yield to the collective knowledge and wisdom of the Body. It is well within our purview to put in any provision that we should choose to see fit. My honorable colleague is invited to propose such at the proper time, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BRAVO (A.). Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague.

This humble Representation will submit the proposed amendment come proper time. I appeal to this honorable Body for support so that, once and for all, we will give also preferential treatment to our farmers and fisherfolk who are the poorest of the poor in the entire country, Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague.

REP. ANTONINO. You have our support, but again, I am only one vote in this Body, and we will yield to the collective wisdom of the Body. But, I do hope that we do give as much preference as we can to our farmers and fisherfolk. As I said, I am a Representative of the farmers, they are very close to my heart, and I hope that we can do such many, many things, my honorable colleague and Mme. Speaker.

Many, many thanks to my honorable colleague and Mme. Speaker. Thank you very much. Good afternoon po.

REP. BRAVO (A.). Mme. Speaker, distinguished colleague, I am proposing a minimum or not less than 20 percent of the allocation that will go to farmers' cooperatives.

Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker. That is all.

Thank you very much, distinguished Sponsor.

REP. ANTONINO. Thank you very much po.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Thank you, Congressman Tony Bravo of COOP-NATCCO Party-List.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (A.P.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize the honorable Rep. Ferjenel G. Biron, M.D. of the Fourth District of Iloilo for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; the motion is approved. Hon. Ferjenel G. Biron, M.D. of the Fourth District of Iloilo is recognized for his interpellation.

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

I would have some clarificatory questions with respect to the budget of the Sugar Regulatory Administration.

REP. ANTONINO. We are ready and willing to answer my old friend, who is an old friend of the Caram family, that I am actually a granddaughter of former Assemblyman Caram.

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

Mme. Sponsor, if you recall that Republic Act No. 10659, promoting and supporting the competitiveness of the sugarcane industry, provides that the state has to promote the competitiveness of the sugarcane industry and maximize the utilization of sugarcane resources and improve the incomes of farmers and farm workers through improved productivity, product diversification, job generation and increased efficiency of sugar mills.

In the same law, Section 11 provides the Mandated Appropriations where the Department of Budget and Management is mandated to include annually, starting the year 2016, an initial aggregate amount of P2 billion in the President's program of expenditures for submission to Congress and allocated, as follows: (a) 15 percent for grants to block farms under the Block Farm Program; (b) 15 percent for socialized credit under the Farm Support and Farm Mechanization Programs; (c) 15 percent for research and development, capability building and technology transfer activities under Research and Development, Extension Services,

Human Resources Development, and Farm Support Programs; (d) 5 percent for scholarship grants to be provided under paragraph (b) of Section 6, Human Resources Development; and finally, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, (e) 50 percent for infrastructure support programs, which should be equivalent to P1 billion.

In the proposed budget submitted by the Department of Agriculture and all its attached agencies, it provides that only P1.4 billion is or has been allocated for the budget of the SRA for 2017. This P1.4 billion is broken down as follows: P547 million for farm-to-mill roads, equivalent to 40.73 kilometers; P10.16 million for bridge construction and P422.75 million for Tanjay-Bais River Irrigation Project.

May I know, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, since this is a mandated appropriation, why is it that for 2017, the budget for the SRA has been drastically reduced by P600 million? What is affected by this reduction is the budget or the allocation for the construction of farm-to-mill roads. May I get a response from the distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker?

REP. ANTONINO. Actually, I am very aware of this law, because one of the principal proponents of this law was the former Assemblyman Caram who is my grandfather. That was a decision made by the DBM that this should be the budget. Under the computation given to this Representation by the SRA now, it should be P2 billion but what was allocated to them was only P1.5 billion. We invite our colleague to make a proposal to the group and we will bring it up with the DBM, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BIRON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Speaker, in light of the tax reforms being pushed by the Duterte administration where additional taxes should be imposed on sugar products, definitely the demand for sugar will be significantly diminished, and this will be aggravated by the fact that the support for our sugar farmers has been reduced quite significantly by the reduction of our budget for the construction of new sugar-to-mill roads.

REP. ANTONINO. That was the decision made by the DBM, it was proposed by the SRA. They are providing me with a copy of the original proposal which is in consonance with the law. So it was the DBM's decision to only allocate P1.5 billion under the budget po.

REP. BIRON. Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, for the record, I am not a sugar planter. I do not own a sugarland. I am just simply representing our constituency from my district, which is primarily a sugar district in the upland area, where four towns are

actually affected, and I am simply bringing to Congress this very, very important and significant concern, that if we continue ignoring mandated appropriations, walang mangyayari sa mga batas na ipinapasa natin sa Kongreso. This is a mandated appropriation, and we know how significant it is, how vital it is to the survival of the sugar industry in this country.

As I said earlier, we cannot underestimate the effect on our economy especially when our tax reforms will be pursued as planned by the Department of Finance of President Duterte's administration. Definitely, the demand for sugar will diminish and it will be very pitiful on the part of the industry to be given less resources and less budget.

Mme. Speaker, this Representation will do its part and appeal to our distinguished Sponsor and to the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, the Hon. Karlo Nograles, that in the Bicameral Committee, he could perhaps push to reconsider and bring back what was mandated, that we should provide at least P1 billion worth of infrastructure projects under the SRA Law.

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

REP. ANTONINO. Mme. Speaker, I would like to further clarify that the SRA did also propose P500 million worth of irrigation projects to the DBM, but was also told that it should coordinate with the NIA regarding these irrigation projects to avoid overlap.

I would like to assure my honorable colleague that my grandfather died fighting for the sugar farmers, and we will do what we can to ensure the proper implementation of this law. Once again, I am only one vote in this Congress, and we will yield, Mme. Speaker.

REP. BIRON. The distinguished Sponsor's vote is a very vital vote, Mme. Speaker.

By the way, before I forget, the SRA is requesting to amend what is in the NEP with respect to the scholarship program because for 2016, in the scholarship program, as provided for in the law, which represents 5 percent of the P2 billion, the CHED gets P70 million for the dependents of the sugar industry farmers, the TESDA gets P20 million and the SRA, for sugar workers, farmers and their researchers who would want to proceed to post-graduate courses, gets P10 million. But in the present proposal, they lumped everything, all the P100 million, under the CHED.

Mme. Speaker, may I request that in the bicameral, we can make representation that the budget for scholarships will be allocated based on the 2016 budget, where the CHED gets P70 million, the TESDA, P20 million, and the SRA gets P10 million.

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

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, the SRA has submitted such. We will yield to the wisdom of the Body, Mme. Speaker.

Many thanks, Mme. Speaker, honorable colleague.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Thank you, Hon. Ferj Biron from the Fourth District of Iloilo.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. GONZALES (A.P.). Mme. Speaker, I move that we recognize Rep. Cesar V. Sarmiento from the Lone District of Catanduanes for his manifestation.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The Hon. Cesar Sarmiento from the Lone District of Catanduanes is now recognized for his interpellation.

REP. SARMIENTO (C.). Thank you very much, Mme. Speaker.

I will not be asking questions about the DA budget rather, I want to make an appeal and make this appeal on record. On behalf of the agriculture industry, the farmers of the abaca industry in Catanduanes, the abaca farmers in the rest of the country, I want to manifest my appeal for this administration to help the abaca industry which I think will be a big boost to the whole Philippine economy.

Allow me to open your eyes to the great potential of the abaca industry to help the Philippine economy. Let us do some fact checks:

Fact check no. 1: Abaca is the strongest organic fiber in the world. It is used in making currency notes, paper, tea bags and even car components. Best of all, abaca is natural. Abaca is a sustainable product. Abaca is earth-friendly.

Fact check no. 2: The demand for abaca is big. It is for the reasons I mentioned that demand for abaca worldwide is growing right this very moment. The fact that the demand for abaca is huge is based on news reports.

Fact check no. 3: The supply of abaca is down. While global demand has increased, global supply has gone down. Five years ago, worldwide supply for abaca is 80,000 tons. Today, worldwide supply is just 60,000 tons per year.

Fact check no. 4: The price of abaca has increased dramatically. With demand for abaca increasing and the supply of abaca declining, basic economics will tell us that the price of abaca will be increasing as well. It has indeed.

The last time I checked, the price of abaca has increased by a whopping 48 percent. The price of abaca this year is P90 per kilo.

Fact check no. 5: The world's largest supplier of abaca is the Philippines. The Philippines supplies 85 percent of the supply of abaca in the world. And in the Philippines, let me ask you, who is the biggest supplier of abaca? It is that small island in Bicol called Catanduanes. Yes, the island of Catanduanes supplies 35 percent of the supply of abaca. Catanduanes is the abaca capital of the world. However, the abaca industry in the Philippines today faces an abaca crisis. The abaca industry faces a shortage of abaca today. Due to the great demand of abaca, supply is coming short.

According to manufacturers in the abaca industry, if the Philippines does not fill the demand for abaca immediately in the next two years, they will shift to buying abaca from other countries or worse, shift to synthetic substitute fibers that can meet the demand. They do not want to shift to synthetic substitutes as they do not have the same qualities of an organic fiber like abaca. In the end, the shortage of abaca will lead to the permanent destruction of our national abaca industry which, let me stress again, is in charge of 85 percent of global abaca production.

In Catanduanes alone, there will be 15,000 abaca farmers who would lose their livelihood. But there is a glimmer of hope amidst this crisis. Being an optimist, we can turn this crisis into opportunity for the Philippines to strengthen the economy. Recently, the Department of Agriculture made a P100-million abaca nursery investment in Southern Leyte. It is a good start, but it is not good enough. If we want to solve the abaca shortage, let the DA Secretary take this opportunity to do what no other DA Secretary has done before.

I strongly urge the DA Secretary to aggressively invest in our abaca industry. To the DA, I appeal na palakasin natin ang industriya ng abaka. To address the abaca crisis with speed and urgency, let this administration invest in Catanduanes which produces almost 40 percent of Philippine abaca production. As the abaca capital of the world, Catanduanes would be the quickest solution to solving the abaca demand crisis.

For my part, I am already identifying the people's organizations to be granted community-based forest management agreements to have the needed land for increased abaca production. On behalf of the abaca industry, I urge the DA to approve the funding requested by the PhilFIDA with specific focus on Catanduanes. I hope that the Department of Agriculture will sincerely and continuously support our abaca industry which has the potential to greatly improve the Philippine economy.

Thank you, Mme. Speaker. Thank you, distinguished Sponsor. That is my manifestation. Thank you very much.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Thank you, Hon. Cesar Sarmiento from the Lone District of Catanduanes.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the session for a few minutes.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The session is suspended.

It was 5:37 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:40 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, I move to suspend the session.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The session is suspended.

It was 5:41 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:15 p.m., the session was resumed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The session is resumed.

The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, I move to recognize our Minority Leader, the honorable Cong. Danilo Suarez.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The honorable Minority Leader, Hon. Danilo Suarez, is recognized.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker.

Will the Lady from Nueva Ecija yield to some minor interpellation?

REP. ANTONINO. Gladly, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Distinguished Sponsor, my first

concern is much-dreamed about in our country which is, that we will be sufficient in rice. Will that be in the radar of the new leadership of the Department of Agriculture, to come up with a program that can attain the wish of every Filipino, considering that rice is a major staple in every table of a Filipino family? Iyan po ang pinakamahalaga, bigas.

So, may I know the objective vision of the Sponsor's principal on this particular subject.

REP. ANTONINO. The Department believes that it is their obligation to make sure that affordable food is available for every Filipino family.

REP. SUAREZ. I know. I think that is everybody's concern, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker. But what I am saying is, an earlier agency came up with some, what we call "alarming statistical data." For instance, we just finished the NIA budget, and then, we saw their presented program wherein it was clear that the target against actual construction was barely nine percent.

Well, going to this historical curve, Mme. Speaker, I think, you cannot attain self-sufficiency without attaining an assurance of availability of water. Will the Sponsor agree with me on that statement?

That is why, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, it was a learning curve that when we went to Laos, we saw the reason they have an abundant and programmed plantation of rice, of palay. Why? They have the mighty Mekong River, which we do not have, plus the fact that these producing countries are not archipelagic like we are.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes.

REP. SUAREZ. So, ano hong programa ng ating magiting na bagong Kalihim kung paano natin matutugunan ang problema ng tubig?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department has decided that it would be better for them to focus on small-scale irrigation projects rather than large projects. As was the problem in the previous administration, many of these large-scale projects, after they were done, we ended up not having enough water supply to supply the projects with the proper amount of water that was needed.

So, the Department feels that if we focus on smaller-scale projects that are sure to be properly supplied with water, we will be able to address better the needs of the farmers with regard to irrigation po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, that is the vision.

REP. ANTONINO. They are also introducing solar-

powered irrigation, Mme. Speaker, in order to further support the farmers.

REP. SUAREZ. Solar power.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po.

REP. SUAREZ. Solar to run pumps.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. So, that does not complement two things. When you say solar, you need solar to run your deep-well pump, or ...

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. And then, because it does not jibe. In irrigation, you must have an adequate and assured supply of water. It is entirely different from having a solar.

REP. ANTONINO. There will be two sources of water that will be the source of these small-scale irrigation systems: the small water impoundments and the deep wells. The pumps will be used to transfer water from these sources to the irrigation systems, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Does the Lady know how many solar power panels you need to run, for instance, a 20-horsepower booster pump?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department will be coming up with five different prototypes, all designed in the United States to be implemented here in order to power these pumps. Aside from providing water, these pumps will also be source of electricity as well for the barangays that are off the grid. So, it is a dual- purpose program po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, thank you, distinguished Sponsor, for the vision of your principal.

This is one thing that we will have to accept, and this is reality. We are subject to climate change, meaning, typhoon is inevitable, will visit us, maybe seven, eight times a year. For rice-producing provinces, this will be a big problem, especially in Luzon, part of Visayas, and good thing that Mindanao and the southern portion of the Visayan region is somewhat being spared from that natural calamity.

Will it not be a proper vision for your principal, distinguished Sponsor, to maximize the potential of Mindanao and introduce other crops that may not be as susceptible to severe weather battering and come up with an alternative crop for our farmers?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department also believes that typhoons can be viewed in two ways. Although they can be very destructive, they can also serve as a source of water. So, they believe that if we can have a proper water management plan, we can harness the water from the typhoons to serve as an alternative source of water for our farmers.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, considering ...

REP. ANTONINO. But the Department is also looking into other crops that can be used to supplement the farmers' needs in order to also properly address these. One of the things that the Department is doing is soil assessment and other kinds of assessment to show the farmers that there are alternatives that they can do to identify the proper crops for each province, town and region. So, that is really one of their focuses right now in order to help our farmers.

REP. SUAREZ. Well, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, these are statements that I hear every time we appropriate funds for the DA every year. So ...

REP. ANTONINO. The Department has committed to finishing their survey by the end of the year, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. No, no. Ang point ko lang po ay ito, okay. If the good Secretary believes that, yes, typhoon visits us but we need typhoon because of the water, so, I would like to imagine that the Department will be bright enough with this modern technology to somewhat come up with, "When do we plant and when does the typhoon normally visit us?" And, a calculated move of saying, "If we plant now, unless there is unusual shift in weather, we can harvest after x number of days." Would that be the tactical program of the Department?

REP. ANTONINO. The Department is coming up with a recommended crop calendar for the farmers in order to help them properly plan their planting season. The Secretary has also expressed to me that he is fully committed to correcting whatever past mistakes have been made and as he has just sat this year, he also begs for more time in order to prove that he will do differently from what has happened in the past.

REP. SUAREZ. Can I assume, distinguished Sponsor, that the calendar program of your principal is regional?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. Hindi naman iyan the whole country, ano?

RP. ANTONINO. Regional po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, po.

REP. SUAREZ. So, regional iyong kanyang program na sinabing....

REP. SUAREZ. ... so, hindi sila ang nag-prepare?

REP. ANTONINO. Opo.

REP. ANTONINO. Opo.

REP. SUAREZ. ... dito sa Nueva Ecija, ganito ang buwan ng tanim ninyo, pero sa Negros, sa Leyte, sa Bicol ganito, sa Quezon ganito. So, will that be the calendar?

REP. SUAREZ. So, wala na tayong masyado pang, siguro, pagde-debatehan.

REP. ANTONINO. Opo.

REP. ANTONINO. The Department has come up also with priority crops per province. So, per province, Mme. Speaker, there is a list of their priority crops.

REP. SUAREZ. At pag-usapan na lang natin iyong 2018 siguro, Mr. Secretary.

REP. SUAREZ. Let us focus on rice first. We will go to other crops later.

REP. ANTONINO. Opo. The Secretary has committed ho to me, Mme. Speaker, that they would really like to work on the 2018 Budget to ensure that we are really focused on the priorities of the current administration.

REP. ANTONINO. Oho.

REP. SUAREZ. So, the good Secretary does not bend to the idea that it is better to import rather than systematically insist that we can be rice-sufficient because right now, I think the good Secretary will admit that our production cost is higher than our neighboring countries.

In fact, the Secretary has just intimated to me that he came from a Cabinet meeting with President Duterte, and he presented to and convinced po the Cabinet to support a program wherein the 4Ps' rice allocations, the rice allowance to be given to the 4Ps, shall be fully sourced locally, rather than ...

REP. SUAREZ. Imported.

REP. ANTONINO. The Secretary is vehemently against the importation and truly believes that we can achieve rice self-sufficiency. So, he is very supportive of our local rice production po.

REP. ANTONINO. ... imported po. So, that will be done through the LGU corporate farming that we have done before, and it will be funded by the LandBank in order to fully implement this as soon as possible po.

REP. SUAREZ. So, I have somewhat seen it in their key strategies, distinguished Sponsor, and the allocation. I did raise this issue that the proposed budget for 2017 was reduced, but during the Cabinet presentation, the good Secretary mentioned that there are other foreign-funded projects that will be implemented by the Department next year to somewhat balance our apprehension on "Why are you reducing the budget when this is a food security Department?"

REP. SUAREZ. Can we just shift to another subject?

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. I remember that we used to buy goats from the good Governor, when he was still the governor of Cotabato.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker, I have heard much about the goat farm of our Secretary.

REP. SUAREZ. Do you still have your Boers, Mr. Secretary? No more goats?

REP. ANTONINO. Dairy na po daw, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. I would like to rephrase my previous question. The fact that this budget was prepared in February this year and submitted for approval at the end of May and presented to the President in June, ...

REP. SUAREZ. He stopped raising goats?

REP. ANTONINO. Goats pa rin po pero dairy na ang focus po niya rather than meat.

REP. SUAREZ. Milk from goats.

REP. ANTONINO. Opo. Pero dairy goats na po ang nasa farm ng Secretary natin, Mme. Speaker, rather than...

REP. SUAREZ. Can we just raise our experience in buying ...

REP. ANTONINO. Opo.

REP. SUAREZ. ... the goats of Governor Piñol.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, Mme. Speaker.

REP. SUAREZ. It was very good in the beginning, and we even conceptualized a slogan, we called it “Sa-Goat sa Kahirapan” using the goat, Boers coming from the province of the good Governor. But we are having problems with the resistance of this imported breed called “Boers.” They are heavier; they are bigger, lots of meat. Maybe on his call, as the Secretary of Agriculture and with the animal industry under his turf, we can come up with a solution to improve the resistance of this imported variety to mix with the native.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes, the Secretary has just told me that they are looking into how to cross-breed the imported variety with the local variety po.

REP. SUAREZ. Hindi ba iyang breeding seems to be successful, not just on animals, ...

REP. ANTONINO. Yes.

REP. SUAREZ. ... even on humans, distinguished Sponsor, Mme. Speaker, that ...

REP. ANTONINO. Opo.

REP. SUAREZ. ... for instance, we say that, iyong native kapag hinaluan mo ng imported na, let us say, ang ating mga kalalakihan kapag may napangasawang mestisang ibang kuwan, napakaganda po ng labas, hindi ho ba?

REP. ANTONINO. Siguro ho, kapag mas marami po ang lahi, mas maganda ho, e. Ako ho, apat ang lahi, so, siguro magandang-maganda ho ako, Mme. Speaker. *(Laughter)*

REP. SUAREZ. I will not debate with that statement, considering the picture of the distinguished Lady there, those pictures, Mme. Sponsor, larawan ka ng kawalang-malay in that picture. *(Laughter)*

REP. ANTONINO. Marami hong make-up diyan,

Mme. Speaker, kaya siguro mas maganda pa ho ang picture sa tunay na buhay po.

REP. SUAREZ. Okay, let us switch to the BFAR which is—alam po ninyo, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor, ang napakahalagang sangkap sa pamilya, ng isang pangkaraniwang pamilya ng Pilipino ay kanin.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po.

REP. SUAREZ. Ang pangalawa po ay isda.

REP. ANTONINO. Tama po iyon.

REP. SUAREZ. Wala po akong nakitang magandang programa na ibinibigay ang BFAR kung hindi motherhood statement. But I really cannot see any tangible program being presented by this 2017 Budget to enhance and improve fishery. But as I have said, I will not blame, neither say that this is an incomplete program because this was not prepared by the good Secretary, although I asked him earlier during the Cabinet presentation if the good Secretary tinkered with this proposed budget presented by the previous administration.

REP. ANTONINO. The Secretary has already identified programs that he feels would benefit our poor fisherfolk to the best extent that they can provide under the budget that was provided to them. So, amongst these are the mangrove, the distribution of bancas to our coastal areas and fish-landing ports for the market creation of our fisherfolk.

REP. SUAREZ. If I may intervene, distinguished Sponsor, these are noble programs.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes po.

REP. SUAREZ. No debate, but at the same time, we would like to ask them to take a hard look at aquaculture.

REP. ANTONINO. Yes.

REP. SUAREZ. Aquaculture is something that you can control. You can control production, you can control harvesting, you can control the market.

REP. ANTONINO. The Secretary is very supportive of aquaculture and would like to really focus on that in the coming years.

REP. SUAREZ. We have some manifested ...

REP. ANTONINO. And, he has just asked me to congratulate the Congressman from Quezon for

bringing this to the attention and really fighting for this kind of program because he really believes that this is the future of our fisherfolk.

REP. SUAREZ. Thank you, Mme. Speaker, distinguished Sponsor. Somewhat having a comfort level here that, maybe, this very vital Department has a qualified and responsible leader with a vision of answering the basic requirement of food security.

With that, Mme. Speaker, the Minority does not have any more questions to raise. The good Majority Leader is already giving me the signal to terminate.

Therefore, there being no other Members who would like to raise questions or interpellate, I move that we terminate the period of interpellation and debate on the proposed budget of the Department of Agriculture, including its attached agencies and corporations. *(Applause)*

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

REP. MATUGAS. On behalf of the Majority, Mme. Speaker, we join the Minority in terminating the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Agriculture and its attached agencies and corporations.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Is there any objection to the termination of the period of interpellation and debate on the budget of the Department of Agriculture, including its attached agencies and corporations? *(Silence)* The Chair hears none; the budget is approved. *(Applause)*

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The Floor Leader is recognized.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF H.B. NO. 3408

REP. MATUGAS. Mme. Speaker, I move that we suspend the consideration of House Bill No. 3408.

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

The consideration of House Bill No. 3408 is hereby suspended.

The Majority Leader is recognized.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES

REP. FARIÑAS. Mme. Speaker, may I move

for the election of the following Members to various committees:

The Majority Leader read the names of the House Members elected to the various committees, per Journal No. 31, dated October 3, 2016.

COMMITTEE ON ACCOUNTS

As member:

Rep. Lorna C. Silverio vice Rep. Evelyn P. Mellana

COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Fredenil "Fred" H. Castro

As member:

Rep. Edwin C. Ong vice Rep. Leopoldo N. Bataoil

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

As members:

Rep. Winston "Winnie" Castelo

Rep. Maria Valentina G. Plaza

Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

Rep. Emmi A. De Jesus

COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY

As members:

Rep. Sol Aragonés

Rep. Rose Marie "Baby" J. Arenas

Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba

Rep. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos

Rep. Carlo V. Lopez

Rep. Imelda R. Marcos

Rep. Alfred D. Vargas

Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato

Rep. Jennifer Austria Barzaga

Rep. Enrico A. Pineda

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

As members:

Rep. Dakila Carlo E. Cua vice Rep. Johnny Ty Pimentel

Rep. Carlo V. Lopez

Rep. Frederick W. Siao

Rep. Ron P. Salo

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS AND PRIVILEGES

As members:

Rep. Joaquin M. Chipeco Jr.

Rep. Florencio T. Flores Jr., M.D.
Rep. Geraldine B. Roman
Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma

COMMITTEE ON GOOD GOVERNMENT
AND PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

As members:

Rep. Ferjanel G. Biron, M.D.
Rep. Rodolfo T. Albano III
Rep. Leopoldo N. Bataoil
Rep. Ron P. Salo

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
REORGANIZATION

As member:

Rep. Ron P. Salo

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES
AND PRIVATIZATION

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Yedda Marie K. Romualdez

As members:

Rep. Magnolia C. Antonino
Rep. Allen Jesse C. Mangaoang
Rep. Vini Nola A. Ortega

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

As members:

Rep. Lawrence H. Fortun
Rep. Emmeline Aglipay-Villar
Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma

COMMITTEE ON INDIGENOUS CULTURAL
COMMUNITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Lorna P. Bautista-Bandigan

As member:

Rep. Rogelio "Ruel" D. Pacquiao

COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Erlpe John "Ping" M. Amante

As members:

Rep. Dakila Carlo E. Cua
Rep. Lucy T. Gomez
Rep. Maximo B. Rodriguez Jr.

Rep. Lord Allan Jay Q. Velasco
Rep. Sol Aragonés
Rep. Carlo V. Lopez
Rep. Luis Raymund "L-Ray" F. Villafuerte Jr.
Rep. Wes Gatchalian
Rep. Luis "Jon-Jon" A. Ferrer IV
Rep. Enrico A. Pineda

COMMITTEE ON INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
RELATIONS AND DIPLOMACY

As member:

Rep. Johnny Ty Pimentel

COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE

As member:

Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma

COMMITTEE ON LABOR
AND EMPLOYMENT

As member:

Rep. Jesulito A. Manalo vice Rep. Juliette T. Uy

COMMITTEE ON OVERSEAS
WORKERS AFFAIRS

As members:

Rep. Rose Marie "Baby" J. Arenas
Rep. Josephine Ramirez-Sato
Rep. Sabiniano S. Canama
Rep. Ron P. Salo
Rep. Jesulito A. Manalo
Rep. Magnolia C. Antonino

COMMITTEE ON PEOPLE'S
PARTICIPATION

As members:

Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba
Rep. Shernee Abubakar Tan
Rep. Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

COMMITTEE ON POPULATION
AND FAMILY RELATIONS

As members:

Rep. Marisol C. Panotes
Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC INFORMATION

As Vice Chairperson:

Rep. Benhur B. Lopez Jr.

COMMITTEE ON RURAL
DEVELOPMENT

As members:

Rep. Wilfredo S. Caminero
Rep. Fernando V. Gonzalez
Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba
Rep. Elisa “Olga” T. Kho
Rep.. Allen Jesse C. Mangaoang
Rep.. Evelina G. Escudero
Rep.. Rodante D. Marcoleta

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY

As members:

Rep. Maximo B. Rodriguez Jr.
Rep. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos
Rep. Bellaflor J. Angara-Castillo
Rep. Mark Aeron H. Sambar
Rep. Luisa Lloren Cuaresma

COMMITTEE ON TRADE
AND INDUSTRY

As members:

Rep. Ben P. Evardone
Rep. Paolo Everardo S. Javier
Rep. Mercedes “Didi” C. Cagas
Rep. Seth Frederick P. Jalosjos
Rep. Teodoro “Ted” G. Montoro
Rep. Yedda Marie K. Romualdez
Rep. Isidro S. Rodriguez Jr.
Rep. Ramon “Red” H. Durano VI
Rep. Henry C. Ong
Rep. Manuel T. Sagarbarria
Rep. Dennis C. Laogan
Rep. Michael John R. Duavit
Rep. Abdullah D. Dimaporo

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
AND WELFARE

As members:

Rep. Amado T. Espino Jr.
Rep. Benhur B. Lopez Jr.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN
AND GENDER EQUALITY

As member:

Rep. Magnolia C. Antonino

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BASES CONVERSION

As members:

Rep. Manuel Luis T. Lopez
Rep. Magnolia C. Antonino

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON BICOL RECOVERY
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

As members:

Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda
Rep. Christopher S. Co

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

As member:

Rep. Yedda Marie K. Romualdez

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON LAND USE

As members:

Rep. Gil “Kabarangay” P. Acosta
Rep. Peter John D. Calderon
Rep. Benhur B. Lopez Jr.
Rep. Manuel T. Sagarbarria
Rep. Greg G. Gasataya
Rep. Enrico A. Pineda

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

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

REP. NOEL. Mme. Speaker, I move to approve Journal No. 30, dated September 30, 2016.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). Is there any objection? (*Silence*) The Chair hears none; Journal No. 30 dated September 30, 2016, Friday, is approved.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

REP. NOEL. Mme. Speaker, I move to adjourn the session until tomorrow, October 4, 2016 at ten o'clock in the morning.

I so move, Mme. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER (Rep. Garin, S.). The session is adjourned until tomorrow at ten o'clock in the morning.

It was 6:42 p.m.

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