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CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Conference Committee	HB 4228	Rep. Ungab	Appropriating funds for the operation of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines from January 1 to December 31, 2020	<p>The Conference Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Isidro Ungab (3rd District, Davao City), Chair of the House Committee on Appropriations, and Sen. Sonny Angara, Chair of the Senate Committee on Finance, approved the Conference Committee Report on HB 4228 or the FY 2020 General Appropriations Bill.</p> <p>Aside from Rep. Ungab, the following conferees from the House of Representatives were present during the conference committee meeting: Majority Leader Ferdinand Martin Romualdez (1st District, Leyte), Deputy Speakers Luis Raymund "LRay" Villafuerte Jr. (2nd District, Camarines Sur), Neptali Gonzales II (Mandaluyong City), and Aurelio "Dong" Gonzales Jr. (3rd District, Pampanga), Minority Leader Bienvenido Abante Jr. (6th District, Manila), Reps. Jesus Crispin Remulla (7th District, Cavite), Cristal Bagatsing (5th District, Manila), Juan Pablo "Rimpy" Bondoc (4th District, Pampanga), Bernadette "BH" Herrera-Dy (Party-List, Bagong Henerasyon), Elenita Milagros "Eileen" Ermita-Buhain (1st District, Batangas), Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), Junie Cua (Quirino), Alfredo Vargas III (5th District, Quezon City), Jose Antonio "Kuya Jonathan" Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), Teodorico Haresco Jr. (2nd District, Aklan), Jocelyn Sy Limkaichong (1st District, Negros Oriental), Michael John Duavit (1st District, Rizal), Romeo Momo Sr. (Party-List, CWS), Gavini "Apol" Pancho (2nd District, Bulacan), Lucy Torres-Gomez (4th District, Leyte), Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), Ronaldo Zamora (San Juan City), and Janette Garin (1st District, Iloilo).</p> <p>On the part of the Senate, other conferees who were present, aside from Sen. Angara, were: Senate President Pro-Tempore Ralph Recto, Minority Leader Franklin Drilon, Senators Panfilo Lacson, Nancy Binay, Win Gatchalian, Pia Cayetano, Joel Villanueva, Imee Marcos, Cynthia Villar, Grace Poe, Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, Richard Gordon, Risa Hontiveros, and Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan.</p>

COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Food Security	HBs 2031, 2186, 3342, 3370, 3849, 3973, 4524 & 4616	Rep. Sy-Alvarado, Deputy Speaker Legarda, Reps. Herrera-Dy, Garin (S.),	Providing for a system of redistributing and recycling food waste to promote food security	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfredo "Willy" Caminero (2 nd District, Cebu), agreed to consolidate the bills, incorporating therein the relevant inputs of the resource persons. Afterwhich, the draft bill will be sent to the authors to get their comments and concurrence.

Continuation... Food Security		Agabas, Deputy Speaker Villafuerte, Reps. Nieto and Peña		Rep. Caminero said that the proposed law seeks to address food security, curb food wastage, promote food recycling, and distribute unused food to indigent families. He added that a bill with similar subject matter was approved on Third Reading during the 17 th Congress.
	HBs 2189, 4450, 4465 & 4903	Reps. Castelo, Salo, Crisologo, and Nieto	Mandating all food establishments and other similar businesses to donate to charitable institutions any and all unsold food and providing penalties for violations thereof	San Miguel Foundation Vice Chair Kin Lichauco said that the Foundation has launched this year its project called “Better World Tondo” as its way of helping address hunger and the growing inequality in so many urban areas in the country. The Project provides healthy meals to 270 families in Tondo, Manila with the help of Rise Against Hunger and food donors such as Diamond Hotel, Conrad Hotel, Sodexo, and canned goods manufacturers.
	HB 5467	Deputy Speaker Villanueva	Establishing the “Pagkain Para Sa Lahat” Program	<p>San Miguel Foundation is the social development and corporate social responsibility arm of San Miguel Corporation. On the other hand, Rise Against Hunger is an international hunger relief organization that distributes food and life-changing aid to the world’s most vulnerable.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Caminero, Lichauco assured that all food items being distributed at the Better World Tondo center are not expired and are safe for consumption.</p> <p>Rep. Joseph Stephen Paduano (Party-List, ABANG LINGKOD) asked how the Foundation selects its program’s beneficiaries. Lichauco said that San Miguel Foundation conducts family profiling in coordination with local government units (LGUs) and schools in depressed areas.</p> <p>Dr. Margarita Lota, chair of the University of the Philippines’ College of Public Health, said that all sectors of society play a crucial role in achieving food security, and that this must be considered in the bill. She advised that the implementation and sustainability of the proposed law must be well-thought out to ensure its success.</p> <p>Representatives from the National Food Authority (NFA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the National Nutrition Council (NNC) expressed their support for the bills.</p> <p>The Committee requested all stakeholders to submit their respective position papers on the proposed law.</p>
Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development	HBs 5 & 5610	Speaker Cayetano and Rep. Sy-Alvarado	Institutionalizing microfinance programs and access to capital to support and grow micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), allocating funds therefor	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Virgilio Lacson (Party-List, MANILA TEACHERS), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to discuss the bills further.
	HB 4878	Rep. Rodriguez	Institutionalizing development, assistance, and microfinance programs for livelihoods, establishing and	Rep. Lacson sponsored HB 5 in behalf of the author Speaker Alan Peter “Compañero” Cayetano (1 st District, Taguig City-Pateros). Rep.

Continuation... Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Development			promoting anti-poverty and inclusive growth policies which are supportive of MSMEs, allocating funds therefor	<p>Lacson and Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HB 4878, said that the proposed law aims to create a comprehensive development and assistance program for MSMEs which will allow them to have access to loans that have minimal requirements, with lower interest rates, and do not require a collateral.</p> <p>Expressing support for the bills were representatives from the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Tourism (DOT), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP), Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), and National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC).</p> <p>NEDA Assistant Director Richard Ballester suggested that the government should review its existing programs for MSMEs, explaining that these have not been assessed or evaluated due to lack of comprehensive data and statistics. He underscored the need to synchronize government's efforts, which are now fragmented, towards the welfare of MSMEs. Ballester also suggested that the funding source of the proposed law be properly identified since it entails a significant amount of P125 billion for the next five years upon implementation.</p> <p>Small Business Corporation (SB Corp.) Executive Vice President Melvin Abanto, also expressed support for the bills, adding that the SB Corp. implements the "Pondo sa Pagbabago at Pagasenso" (P3) Program, which extends loans ranging from P5,000-P200,000 to MSMEs with asset size not exceeding P3 million. Abanto said that the program provides MSMEs an alternative loan facility to the 5-6 lending scheme which imposes an interest rate of at least 20% monthly. Loans under the P3 Program only impose an interest rate of 2.5% per month.</p> <p>Likewise, expressing support for the bills, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) legal counsel Rachel Guintang-Malante informed the Committee that there are SEC-registered micro finance non-government organizations (MFNGOs) which are providing loans to MSMEs. She said that as of 2019, loans amounting to about P46 billion were extended to MSMEs, with a 90% repayment rate.</p>
Overseas Workers Affairs	HB 530	Rep. Paduano	Creating the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) Sovereign Fund	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), approved HB 530 subject to style.</p> <p>The bill will be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means for review of its tax provisions.</p>
	HB 826	Deputy Speaker Gonzales (A.)	Providing for protection of the remittances of OFWs	The Committee approved HB 826 subject to style.

Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs	HBs 1812 & 5097	Reps. Pacquiao and Yap (V.)	Expanding the use of the Legal Assistance Fund, amending for the purpose Section 26 of RA 8042, otherwise known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, as amended	The Committee approved HBs 1812 and 5097. The Secretariat was directed to come up with a substitute bill to consolidate and harmonize the two bills, and to prepare the corresponding Committee Report.
	HR 420	Rep. Mendoza	Inquiry into the continued recruitment and deployment of minors and under-aged workers to the Middle East as domestic workers	The Committee will continue its deliberations relative to the issues raised in HR 420. The Committee directed the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to investigate cases of minors being able to secure passports bearing false information regarding their age to make it appear that they are 23 years old or above, the age requirement to qualify for deployment to the Middle East as domestic workers.
Transportation	HBs 333 & 5222	Deputy Speaker Arenas and Rep. Rodriguez	Providing for a Maritime Code for the full and effective implementation and enforcement of international maritime instruments of which the Philippines is a state-party	The Committee, chaired by Rep. Edgar Mary Sarmiento (1 st District, Western Samar), agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to deliberate further on the three measures. Rep. Carlo Lisandro Gonzales (Party-List, MARINO) was designated as TWG chair.
	HR 71	Rep. Gonzales (C.L.)	Calling on the Inter-Agency Council on the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) to provide the appropriate committees of the House of Representatives with regular progress reports on the efforts of national government agencies (NGAs) in implementing the IMO instruments, and the corresponding rules and regulations to implement the same, among others	HBs 333 and 5222 aim to address the difficulties experienced by the Philippine overseas shipping fleet due to the inability of the country to fully and effectively implement five international maritime safety conventions of which it is a state party. These are the International Conventions for the Safety of Life at Sea; for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships; on Load Lines; on the Tonnage Measurement of Ships; and on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea. The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) shall be the lead agency that will implement these international maritime safety conventions. On the other hand, HR 71 directs the Inter-Agency Council on the IMSAS to submit quarterly progress reports on the country's implementation of international maritime instruments in preparation for the IMO audit of the Philippines in October 2021. The Inter-Agency Council was created by virtue of Executive Order No. 84 to ensure full compliance with the country's commitments and obligations as a member-state of the IMO, and to ensure an integrated implementation of the IMO instruments in preparation for the IMSAS. The resource persons, except the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG), expressed their support for the measures. PCG Legal Service Commander Ramon Reblora expressed his objection to the bills as the PCG's mission already involves the implementation and enforcement of all national and international maritime safety, security, search and rescue, and marine environmental protection laws.

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Agriculture and Food (Technical Working Group)	HB 869	Deputy Speaker Estrella	Amending certain sections of RA 10068 or the Organic Agriculture Act of 2010 (by promoting, propagating, developing further and implementing the practice of organic farming and other sustainable agricultural practices)	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), will come up with a substitute bill incorporating therein the relevant inputs and recommendations of the resource persons. The substitute bill will be presented to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p> <p>Among the points agreed upon were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Organic Agriculture Board (NOAB) will be composed of 15 members. The Department of Education (DepEd) will be replaced by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) as one of the members of the Board; • The Department of Agriculture (DA), through the Bureau of Agriculture and Fisheries Product Standards (BAFPS), will be the lead agency in setting a standard for the recognition of organic guarantee system providers (OGSP); • Renewal of license for primary and post-harvest organic food, non-food, and input operators will be included in the bill; and • Violators of the proposed law will be penalized in the amount of P50,000 to P500,000, depending on the gravity of the violation. <p>The resource persons were requested to submit their respective position papers on the bills for consideration by the TWG.</p>
	HB 1290	Deputy Speaker Villafuerte	Strengthening sustainable agriculture and enhancing support for small organic farmers, amending for the purpose certain sections of RA 10068	
	HB 1136	Deputy Speaker Estrella	Strengthening the resiliency of small farmers against climate change and extreme weather risks by establishing the regulatory framework and program for a free index-based agriculture insurance, providing the source of funding therefor	
	HBs 2656 & 3599	Reps. Dy (I.P.) and Garin (S.)	Strengthening the implementation of the national organic agriculture program by enhancing regulatory capacity, establishing coordinating offices, augmenting human resource complement, and repealing RA 10068, and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 4483	Deputy Speaker Romero	Amending RA 10068, providing stiffer penalties and sanctions appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 5336	Rep. Cullamat	Recognizing the participatory guarantee system (PGS) as a form for certification for labelling organic products amending for the purpose RA 10068	
	HB 5641	Rep. Mariano-Hernandez	Amending RA 10068 (by recognizing the "participatory guarantee system" in the certification and labeling of organic products and bringing together the appropriate agencies and stakeholder groups to develop and strengthen such alternative certification mechanisms, among others)	
Energy (Technical Working Group)	HB 2099	Rep. Velasco	Strengthening the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) by expanding and streamlining its bureaucracy, upgrading employees skills, augmenting benefits, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC), will deliberate further on HBs 2099 and 2427 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Among the amendments to the bills agreed upon in today's meeting were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ERC will still have five commissioners, who shall have the following qualifications: the chairperson must be a member of the Philippine Bar, while the four other commissioners shall be composed of one lawyer, one accountant, and two representatives
	HB 2427	Rep. Vargas	Enhancing the governance structure of the ERC	

Continuation... Energy (Technical Working Group)				<p>from any of the fields of engineering, economics or finance; and the commissioners must have at least 10 years of relevant knowledge and experience in the power industry and have not been employed in the distribution utility sector for at least one year prior to appointment;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chairperson shall act as the ERC's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) while the Executive Director shall act as the Chief Operating Officer (COO); • The Chairperson and the Commissioners will receive the same salaries, allowances and benefits as those of the Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court (SC), respectively; and • The proposed Office of the People's Counsel will be placed under the administrative supervision of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) instead of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The Office of the People's Counsel shall represent and appear, in behalf of the public or consumers, in all ERC proceedings involving consumer interests. <p>The ERC was requested to submit its proposed organizational structure and salary rates for all ERC positions.</p>
Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples (Technical Working Group)	Substitute Bill to HBs 639 and 2281	Deputy Speaker Legarda and Rep. Acosta-Alba	Recognizing the indigenous cultural communities and indigenous peoples (ICCs/IPs) community conserved territories and areas (ICCA), establishing for the purpose the National ICCA Registry, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Amihilda Sangcopan (Party-List, AMIN), terminated its deliberation on the Substitute Bill to HBs 639 and 2281.</p> <p>The TWG will incorporate in the substitute bill the recommendations of the resource persons, after which it will submit the bill to the mother Committee for its consideration and approval.</p>

AGENCY BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Population and Family Relations	<p>Briefing on the country's health situation by the Department of Health (DOH), and on the country's population management program by the Commission on Population (POPCOM)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOH 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Guimaras Rep. Ma. Lucille Nava, M.D., listened to the briefing conducted by the DOH and the POPCOM on the country's health situation and population management program, respectively.</p> <p>DOH Legislative Liaison Division Chief Maria Soledad Antonio presented the Department's mandate and functions, priority programs and services, and its health executive agenda for legislation (HEAL) for the 18th Congress. Among the major programs of the Department are the Health Facilities Enhancement Program; public health management; and subsidy for health insurance premium payment of indigent families, families in conflict areas, and senior citizens.</p> <p>Antonio reported that the health situation of the country is depicted by the following indicators: increasing average life expectancy; slow decline in maternal mortality ratio; slow decline in infant and under-five mortality rates; and high prevalence of stunting over the years (among children</p>

<p><i>Continuation...</i> Population and Family Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • POPCOM 	<p>under five years old). She also informed the body that some of the challenges being faced by the Department are the low social health insurance support which increases the patients' out-of-pocket expenditures and the overlapping or conflicting mandates between the DOH and the local government units (LGUs).</p> <p>In response to the comment made by Rep. Marisol Panotes (2nd District, Camarines Norte) on the DOH guidelines for health service delivery, Antonio assured the Members that the DOH will update its guidelines to improve its services to the poor and vulnerable sectors of society.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Nava concerning the implementation of the Universal Health Care (UHC) Law, Antonio said that all Filipinos are entitled to appropriate health services under the law. She added that the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) is taking steps to lower, if not remove, the out-of-pocket expenses of underprivileged patients.</p> <p>POPCOM Executive Director Juan Antonio Perez III discussed that while the country's population growth is slowing down, Philippine population is still significantly increasing at a rate of two million per year. To address this, Perez presented the following strategies under the Philippine Population Management Program (PPMP):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible Parenthood and Family Planning (RPFP) - helps couples or parents and individuals achieve their desired number, timing and spacing of children; • Adolescent Health and Development (AHD) - helps adolescents (aged 10-19 years) prevent early and repeat pregnancies; and • Population and Development Integration (POPDEV) - enables and assists government institutions at all levels to effectively use and integrate population variables in their development initiatives towards people-centered interventions. <p>Rep. Nava asked POPCOM on what measures should be undertaken to prevent teenage pregnancy, citing the growing incidence of early pregnancy in the country today. Perez recommended that comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), an interactive peer-to-peer communication strategy, should be implemented in schools and in alternative learning systems (ALS). He also said that the Department of Education (DepEd) should come up with programs that will minimize the youth's exposure to sexual content in the social media. Teenagers' access to reproductive health information should also be promoted and that parents should be involved in the process, Perez added.</p> <p>The Committee requested the DOH and the POPCOM to submit all data relevant to their presentations.</p>
<p>Ways and Means</p>	<p>Briefing by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) on its revenue collection performance for 2019</p>	<p>The Committee, presided by its Senior Vice Chair, Rep. Estrellita Suansing (1st District, Nueva Ecija), listened to the briefing of the BOC on its revenue collection performance for 2019.</p> <p>BOC's Statistical Analysis Division Chief Cecile Soriano reported that for the period January 1 to December 9, 2019, the Bureau has collected P591.1 billion in revenues, which is P31.2 billion short of its P622.3 billion "dynamic target" or internal target. However, she admitted that the amount is P69.9 billion short if compared against the official target revenue collection of P661 billion.</p> <p>BOC Deputy Commissioner Vener Baquiran said that the low revenue collection could be attributed to the decrease in importation of crude oil by as much as 32% or P37 billion in excise taxes.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) chided BOC for using its so-called dynamic target as measurement of its revenue collection efficiency. She stressed the importance of presenting actual data as against the official annual target to avoid any confusion.</p>

Continuation... Ways and Means		<p>The District Collectors of the BOC were each tasked to present their top five imported commodities in terms of volume and the top sources of revenues in terms of duties and taxes being monitored in their respective ports of assignment.</p> <p>The Committee recommended the following to the BOC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discontinue BOC's policy of transferring its employees from one Bureau section to another on a monthly basis; • Set revenue targets based on more relevant factors; and • Stop the "demoralizing" practice of transferring performing district port collectors to ports that are found to be underperforming in terms of revenue collection.
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DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Public Accounts	Discussion with the Manila Water Co. Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc. on the alleged 780% increase in water rates next year and the alleged onerous provisions in the water concession agreements	<p>The Joint Committee, co-presided by Rep. Jesus Crispin Remulla (7th District, Cavite), Senior Vice Chair of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, and Rep. Michael Defensor (Party-List, ANAKALUSUGAN), Chair of the Committee on Public Accounts, will continue with its discussion on the alleged 780% increase in water rates next year and the onerous provisions in the water concession agreements between the government and the two Metro Manila water concessionaires – Manila Water Co. Inc. and Maynilad Water Services Inc.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Defensor asked Maynilad and Manila Water to confirm their position to forgo the combined P10.8 billion arbitral award as compensation for the supposed losses that the two companies incurred arising from the government's refusal to allow water rate hikes for the past several years. The two water concessionaires won the arbitral case they filed before the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Singapore against the government which is compelled to pay P3.4 billion and P7.4 billion to Maynilad and Manila Water, respectively.</p> <p>Maynilad President and CEO Ramoncito Fernandez and Manila Water Board of Director Antonino Aquino confirmed that they would no longer demand for the payment of the arbitral award from the government. They also stated that they will not impose any water rate hike in 2020. Instead, they both expressed their willingness to discuss with government representatives to come up with a workable solution concerning some provisions of their respective contracts deemed onerous by the government.</p> <p>Aquino said Manila Water executed the concession agreement in good faith, explaining that the alleged onerous provisions were a result of the fiscal environment at the time the contracts were forged.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) Deputy Administrator Leonor Cleofas informed the Committee that the agency revoked its board resolution adopted in 2008 extending the concession agreements of the two companies for 15 years.</p> <p>The officials of the water companies warned that the revocation of the contract extension might result in a steep hike in the water rates as they will have to recover huge investments they made within a shorter period of time instead of within 15 more years.</p> <p>Several Members questioned the validity of the concession agreements as they were executed with the MWSS and not the President.</p> <p>Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte) said that under Sec. 6 of RA 8041 or the National Water Crisis Act of 1995, Congress</p>

<p>Continuation...</p> <p>Good Government and Public Accountability jt. w/ Public Accounts</p>		<p>delegates its franchising power to the President allowing him, for a period of one year after the effectivity of the law, to enter into negotiated contracts for the financing, construction, repair, rehabilitation, improvement and operation of water facilities to increase water supply and improve water treatment and distribution. As this was already a delegated power, the President can no longer delegate it further to the MWSS under the principle of <i>delegatus non potest delegare</i> (no delegated powers can be further delegated).</p> <p>Both Aquino and Fernandez insisted that their companies were mere agents of the MWSS and are therefore not required to enter into a contract with the President. The same was stated in their concession agreements, they added.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Prospero Pichay Jr. (1st District, Surigao del Sur) asked the MWSS if it is capable of managing the water distribution services in Metro Manila in the absence of the concessionaires. Cleofas answered in the negative saying that it will require more manpower and resources which the MWSS does not have right now.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Robert Ace Barbers (2nd District, Surigao del Norte), the two water concessionaires claimed that there is no water crisis in Metro Manila, but only a water shortage, and that they are still trying to address this problem.</p> <p>The Secretariat was instructed to invite Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary Margarito Teves, representatives from the Angara Abello Concepcion Regala & Cruz Law Offices (ACCRALAW), and the signatories to the concession agreements in the Committee's next meeting.</p>
<p>Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<p>Letter-communication from Ms. Sorahayda Samporna-Enriquez, wife of an overseas Filipino worker (OFW) in Saudi Arabia who is an alleged victim of illegal recruitment or prohibited act under RA 8042, otherwise known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995, as amended</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), directed the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) to facilitate the immediate repatriation of Jerson Enriquez, the husband of Sorahayda Samporna Enriquez, and five others, who were victims of alleged illegal recruitment in Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>As narrated by Sorahayda, her husband and five of his colleagues were hired by Saudi Arabian firm Saad Al-Marshad Cont. Est., through a Philippine recruitment agency, International Experts for Technical Support Services Incorporated (IETSSI), last October. According to Sorahayda, her husband was supposedly hired as a safety officer but upon arrival in Saudi Arabia, Jerson and his companions found out that the job specification in their contract was to be just a common laborer and that the nature of employment will just be on a "standby mode or rental basis." This means that the availability of a job will be dependent on companies' demand for laborers.</p> <p>Sorahayda is seeking the help of Congress for the immediate repatriation of her husband and his companions, and to hold IETSSI liable for illegal recruitment.</p> <p>POEA Prosecution Division Chief Geraldine Mendez said that her office is already facilitating the repatriation of Jerson and his group.</p> <p>Overseas Workers Welfare Administration's (OWWA) Director of the Administrative and Financial Management Office Andrelyn Gregorio said that OWWA will look into the matter and will check the status of these workers.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Senior Special Assistant Olivia Palala of DFA's Office of the Undersecretary for Migrant Workers Affairs said she will bring the matter to the attention of Philippine Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Saudi Arabia Adnan Alonto.</p>

Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs		The resource persons were requested to submit to the Committee their respective reports on cases of contract alterations, non-payment of salaries and allowances, and other similar cases affecting OFWs.
Transportation	On the status of the Motor Vehicle Inspection System (MVIS) Project	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Edgar Mary Sarmiento (1st District, Western Samar), listened to the report of the Department of Transportation (DOTr) on the status of the MVIS Project.</p> <p>DOTr Undersecretary Mark Richmond de Leon apprised the body of the status of existing motor vehicle inspection centers in the country. MVIS centers conduct tests to ensure the roadworthiness of private and public vehicles and issue the corresponding certification which is a requirement for the registration of vehicles. He said the DOTr has opened the operation of MVIS centers to private sector entities to accommodate increasing demand in view of the significant growth in the number of new vehicles being registered with the Land Transportation Office (LTO). The DOTr, De Leon said, has so far granted conditional and provisional authority to private entities for the operation of 99 MVIS centers, out of the total 138 centers to be established in the country.</p> <p>Rep. Sarmiento urged the DOTr to implement a pilot project first to test the effectiveness of the MVIS equipment and design. He called for a small group meeting with the LTO and the DOTr next year to discuss the result of the MVIS pilot project.</p>
	On the visa policies and processes of the VFS Global Philippines in relation to the attendance of Members in the 31 st International Maritime Organization (IMO) Assembly in London	<p>The Committee Chair briefly reported on the 31st IMO Assembly held this year from November 25 to December 4 in London. Rep. Sarmiento said that the Philippines was pre-elected to the IMO Council through the efforts of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Department of Transportation (DOTr), and the rest of the Philippine delegation.</p> <p>The IMO Assembly, the organization's highest governing body, meets every two years. It is responsible for approving IMO's work program and budget for the next two years and electing the 40-Member IMO Council, which is the executive organ responsible for supervising the work of the IMO. (<i>Source: IMO website</i>)</p> <p>Rep. Sarmiento, along with other Members, proceeded to express their sentiments on the complex visa processing procedure of the VFS Global Philippines that affected the travel arrangements for the members of the official delegation from the House of Representatives to the 31st IMO Assembly in London.</p> <p>According to Rep. Sarmiento, some Members had to shell out personal money to obtain their visas despite being holders of diplomatic passports and despite the official nature of the travel. Other Members opted not to attend the Assembly upon knowledge of the rigorous visa processing.</p> <p>DFA Assistant Secretary Generoso Calonge appealed to VFS Global to extend courtesy to government officials who are obtaining visa for their official travel to another country.</p> <p>VFS Global Philippines General Manager Rahul Chatterji explained that VFS Global is just implementing the policies of each country's respective embassies, in this case, the British Embassy in Manila. However, he assured the body that he will relay the Members' feedback to the British Embassy and report back to the Committee.</p> <p>The VFS Global Philippines was requested to submit its manual for visa policies and processes.</p>