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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Good Government and Public Accountability	HRs 879 & 882	Reps. Zarate and Lacson	Inquiry into the sudden spike in Manila Electric Company (Meralco) electricity rates and bills during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) and general community quarantine (GCQ) despite the overcapacity of electricity supply	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. "Kuya" Jose Antonio Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), suspended its inquiry relative to HRs 879 and 882 until further notice.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Danilo Ramon Fernandez (1st District, Laguna) asked the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) if it can hold back the P3.2-billion increase it approved for the National Grid Corporation of the Philippines' (NGCP) Interim Maximum Annual Revenue (iMAR). He said that implementing the iMAR would be an additional burden to electric consumers especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The iMAR refers to the maximum revenue that the NGCP is allowed to earn from its transmission operations.</p> <p>ERC Chair Agnes Devanadera informed the Committee that a review will be conducted on the possibility of holding back the P3.2-billion increase in NGCP's iMAR since a motion for reconsideration is pending with the ERC relative to the increase. She explained that the iMAR was approved last February 2020 when the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic was not yet imminent.</p> <p>The NGCP earlier proposed an iMAR of P58.8 billion for this year, but the ERC approved only P47 billion.</p> <p>NGCP Vice President and Head of Revenue and Regulatory Affairs Department Maria Carmen Manrique explained that the increase is intended mostly for grid enforcements and to augment capital expenditures to finance more projects amid an expected increase in demand.</p> <p>Manrique also clarified that the NGCP only collects an average transmission charge of P0.04 for every P1.00 spent for electricity, or P4.00 for every P100.00.</p> <p>On the query of Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS) on the courses of action of Meralco with regard to the overcharging of consumers, Meralco President and Chief Executive Officer Ray Espinosa replied that excess payments will be refunded. He also said that electricity bills falling due within the ECQ and modified ECQ period (March 15 to May 31) may be paid in four to six equal monthly installments</p>

Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability				<p>starting June 15, without interest and penalties.</p> <p>The Committee requested the NGCP to submit its audited financial statements from 2009 to 2018.</p>
Legislative Franchises jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability	HBs 6694 & 6901	Reps. Rodriguez and Salo	Granting ABS-CBN Corporation (formerly ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation) a franchise to construct, install, operate and maintain radio and television broadcasting stations in the Philippines	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Franz "Chicoy" Alvarez (1st District, Palawan), Chair of the Committee on Legislative Franchises, and Rep. "Kuya" Jose Antonio Sy-Alvarado (1st District, Bulacan), Chair of the Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability, will deliberate further on the 18 measures in its next meeting.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the lawmakers took turns in questioning the citizenship of ABS-CBN Chairman Emeritus Eugenio "Gabby" Lopez III, which is one of the major issues confronting the legislative franchise application of the country's biggest media conglomerate.</p> <p>Under Article 16, Section 11 of the Constitution, "the ownership and management of mass media shall be limited to citizens of the Philippines, or to corporations, cooperatives or associations, wholly-owned and managed by such citizens."</p>
	HBs 676, 3521, 3713, 3947, 4305, 5608, 5705, 5753, 6052, 6138 & 6293	Rep. Violago, Deputy Speaker Arenas, Reps. Tambunting, Aragones, Deputy Speakers Santos-Recto and Gonzales (A.), Reps. Rodriguez, Ramirez-Sato, Zarate, Go (M.), and Deputy Speaker Legarda	Renewing for another 25 years the franchise granted to ABS-CBN Corporation under RA 7966	<p>Rep. Claudine Diana Bautista (Party-List, DUMPER PTDA), along with several other House Members, inquired about Lopez's use of his United States passport in his extensive travels abroad and if Lopez ever took the US pledge of allegiance.</p> <p>Lopez admitted that he used his US passport in travelling abroad, but he stressed that he never renounced his Philippine citizenship nor pledged allegiance to the US. Lopez said that he grew up in the Philippines and studied elementary and high school in the country. He only went to the US to take up his college education and Masters degree and when he and his father escaped the Marcos regime during the Martial Law period.</p>
	HR 639	Rep. Lagman	Urging the Committee on Legislative Franchises to report out without further delay for plenary action a consolidated version of eight pending bills proposing for the renewal for another 25 years of the legislative franchise of ABS-CBN Corporation	<p>Rep. Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City), author of HBs 5705 and 6694, asked if Lopez ever did any act that might have caused him to renounce his Philippine citizenship, to which Lopez answered in the negative.</p> <p>Nonetheless, Lopez admitted to the lawmakers that he voted in the 2016 US presidential elections.</p>
	HR 839	Rep. Fortun	Condemning the issuance by the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) of a cease and desist order against ABS-CBN in wanton disregard of its commitment to both Houses of Congress to grant the broadcasting network a provisional authority to operate pending renewal of its franchise	<p>On further questioning by the Members, Lopez also confirmed that when he applied for recognition of his Philippine citizenship with the Bureau of Immigration (BI) in 2001, it was because he did not have a Philippine Certificate of Live Birth, which he needed for his application for a Philippine passport. The</p>
	HR 846	Rep. Defensor (M.)	Calling on the appropriate House committees to investigate and file criminal cases as warranted against the Commissioners and officers of the NTC and the Solicitor General and such other officials and individuals for perjury and for violation of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees and the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and other applicable laws	
	HR 853	Deputy Speaker Duterte	Inquiry into the probable violations of ABS-CBN Corporation of its legislative franchise under RA 7966	
	HR 863	Rep. Sarmiento	Urging the House of Representatives, through the Committee on Legislative Franchises, to admonish the NTC on its failure to comply with its commitment under oath and to conduct an inquiry, in	

Continuation... Legislative Franchises jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability			aid of legislation, on the same and on possible measures to be taken on the matter	Department of Justice (DOJ) confirmed Lopez' application.
			Show cause order issued by the Committee on Legislative Franchises to the NTC to explain why it should not be held in contempt	<p>Deputy Speaker Rodante Marcoleta (Party-List, SAGIP) manifested that it took Lopez 48 years before he finally decided to apply for a certificate of recognition of his Philippine citizenship. He claimed that Lopez is more of an American citizen, showing an "alien fingerprint card" which Lopez allegedly submitted to the US authorities in one of his travels to the US.</p> <p>Atty. Mario "Ayo" Bautista, legal counsel for Lopez, argued that Lopez has the status of a dual citizen which is an automatic legal consequence because of two factors. He is both a natural born Filipino citizen, having been born to Filipino parents in 1952 when the 1935 Constitution was still in effect; and also an American citizen, having been born in the US. (The US follows the principle of <i>jus soli</i> wherein the citizenship of a person is determined by the place where a person was born.)</p> <p>Bautista likewise claimed that the 1987 Constitution does not prohibit a dual citizen from owning a media company. He said that what the Constitution requires is 100% Filipino ownership of media companies and it does not specify Filipino citizens only, to the exclusion of persons possessing dual citizenship status.</p> <p>Lopez averred that despite having dual citizenship, his character is purely Filipino and his track record for the past decades would show his commitment to the service of the Filipino people.</p> <p>Rep. Edcel Lagman (1st District, Albay), author of HR 639, declared that the citizenship of Lopez is a non-issue. He said that Lopez is a natural born Filipino by the principle of <i>jus sanguinis</i> or birth by blood. "No amount of interpellation can change that," he asserted.</p> <p>However, Rep. Michael Defensor (Party-List, ANAKALUSUGAN), author of HR 846, noted that dual citizenship may affect one's allegiance. He cited Article IV, Section 5 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, which states that "dual allegiance of citizens is inimical to the national interest and shall be dealt with by law." He also maintained that Lopez could have sworn his allegiance to the US when he applied for a US passport in 1996.</p> <p>Rep. Defensor believes that owners of mass media should be 100% Filipinos and not with a dual citizenship status.</p> <p>Rep. Alfredo Garbin Jr. (Party-List, AKO BICOL) quoted a Supreme Court decision which states that for renunciation to effectively result in the loss of citizenship, the same shall be expressed. The expressed acts are</p>

<p>Continuation... Legislative Franchises jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>application of naturalization in a foreign country, expressly renouncing Philippine citizenship, or subscribing to allegiance to a foreign country. He believes that Lopez has a dual citizenship status but questioned whether the Constitution allows him to own and manage a media company given such status.</p> <p>Recognizing that the Constitution is not clear on whether Filipinos with dual citizenship should be allowed to own and manage mass media companies, Rep. Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA), author of HB 6052, said that it is the duty of Congress to craft a law that would address this matter.</p> <p>The Secretariat was directed to invite members of the Constitutional Commission that crafted the 1987 Constitution to shed light on the true intent of the constitutional restriction on mass media ownership.</p> <p>Meanwhile, DOJ Undersecretary Emmeline Aglipay-Villar said that Lopez, being a US passport holder, does not mean that he has renounced his Philippine citizenship and that having no Philippine passport would mean that he is not a Filipino. Aglipay-Villar maintained that Lopez is a Filipino citizen because his parents are both Filipinos.</p> <p>Likewise, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Commissioner Ephyro Luis Amatong disclosed that as per the records of the SEC, Lopez is identified as a Filipino citizen.</p> <p>The SEC was asked to submit all documents pertaining to ABS-CBN, such as the company's Articles of Incorporation and General Information Sheet.</p> <p>Lopez was asked to submit a copy of his US and Philippine passports from 1986 to present. While the DOJ was directed to submit to the Joint Committee all documents pertaining to Lopez' application of a certificate of recognition of his Philippine citizenship.</p> <p>Earlier in the meeting, the Joint Committee took cognizance of HB 6901 filed by Rep. Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), which was recently referred to it for deliberation with other bills on the legislative franchise of ABS-CBN.</p> <p>In his sponsorship speech, Rep. Salo said that the Philippine Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of speech, but not the freedom to broadcast, which he said is a mere privilege accorded to an entity qualified to be given a franchise by the State.</p> <p>Rep. Salo said his bill seeks to grant ABS-CBN a new franchise anchored primarily on the desire to provide for the Filipinos more democratic space and medium where they can express their ideas and also be informed</p>
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Continuation... Legislative Franchises jt. w/ Good Government and Public Accountability				<p>of worldwide news and developments. This, he said is an essential means for a vibrant democracy.</p> <p>However, Rep. Salo noted that if granted a new franchise the owners and officials of ABS-CBN should not treat it as a mere business arrangement. He said the network must adhere to the principle of accountability and be committed to transform into a responsible institution.</p> <p>Rep. Salo proposed seven specific parameters for compliance by ABS-CBN in furtherance of its general responsibility to the public, thus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict compliance with the Constitution, statutes, rules and regulations, including labor laws and standards; • Promotion of employment and security of tenure; • Impartial and balanced reporting; • Promotion of positive Filipino values; • Provision of public service time; • Strengthened self-regulation of contents; and • Reasonable and equitable rate for election advertisements.
Trade and Industry	Substitute Bill to HB 3366	Rep. Herrera-Dy	Strengthening and modernizing the Warehouse Receipts Law of the Philippines in order to provide a legal framework in the Philippines that shall facilitate trade and commerce	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wes Gatchalian (1st District, Valenzuela City), approved the Substitute Bill to HB 3366 subject to style.</p> <p>The Substitute Bill will be referred to the Committee on Appropriations for review of its funding provision.</p>
	HB 6122	Rep. Gatchalian	Protecting consumers and merchants engaged in internet transactions, creating for this purpose the eCommerce Bureau and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Committee will deliberate further on HB 6122 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija) sat as the presiding officer to give the Chair the opportunity to sponsor his bill.</p> <p>Rep. Gatchalian, author of HB 6122, expressed his optimism about the growth of the country's internet economy. Based on a study by Google and Temasek, an investment company headquartered in Singapore, the Philippine's Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) from the internet economy grew from \$2 billion to \$7 billion in a span of four years from 2015 to 2019. The major contributors were eCommerce, online travel, online media, and ride hailing.</p> <p>With the growing trend in internet transactions, Rep. Gatchalian underscored the need to establish a singular office that will provide policies and guidelines governing eCommerce such as fair business and advertising practices, secured online transactions, data privacy rights protection, product safety standards, and access to effective</p>

Continuation... Trade and Industry				<p>mechanisms for dispute resolutions by all consumers and businesses.</p> <p>He added that his bill seeks to provide an environment founded on trust among consumers and merchants, as a means to increase the number of eCommerce participants and eventually achieve sustainable growth.</p> <p>Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ramon Lopez expressed his support for the bill. He said that eCommerce played a big role during the community quarantine period due to COVID-19 as more people used this platform to acquire goods and supplies.</p> <p>DTI Assistant Secretary Mary Jean Pacheco gave an overview of eCommerce in the country and discussed the status of the Philippine eCommerce Roadmap (PECR) 2016-2020.</p> <p>Based on the Philippine digital economy statistics, only 9.9% of Filipinos make online purchases and pay bills online. Mobile internet usage statistics further revealed that internet users use mobile messaging more than mobile banking. However, Pacheco said that in the PECR, eCommerce is projected to contribute 25% of the country's gross domestic product in 2020, and grow from \$7.1 billion in 2019 to \$25 billion in 2025.</p> <p>Philippine Institute for Development Studies Senior Research Fellow Ramonette Serafica suggested that with the internet landscape continually evolving, policies and regulations to be formulated should be forward-looking. She also said that the government needs to address various constraints such as nationwide connectivity in order to support eCommerce especially for the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).</p> <p>On the issue of online scams not being resolved, DTI Undersecretary for Consumer Protection Group Ruth Castelo informed the body that the DTI seeks the assistance of eCommerce companies such as Lazada in going after online sellers registered with their network for fraudulent transactions. For complaints against independent virtual sellers, the DTI seeks the help of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) for proper investigation and prosecution. However, in most cases, consumers victimized by online scams would rather not pursue the case since they are required to surrender the electronic device used for the purchase.</p> <p>Rep. Vargara emphasized the need for a better system or infrastructure that would promptly address fraudulent online transactions in order to attract more internet users to engage in eCommerce.</p>
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Continuation... Trade and Industry				<p>Rep. Manuel Sagarbarria (2nd District, Negros Oriental) said that for eCommerce to thrive in the country, the first course of action is to establish total internet connectivity.</p> <p>Castelo agreed and said that the Department of Information and Communications Technology will have a key role in further strengthening eCommerce.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFINGS				
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER			DISCUSSIONS
Aquaculture and Fisheries Resources	Briefing by the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) on its plans and programs for the fisheries industry recovery and resiliency in the new normal			<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Leo Rafael Cueva (2nd District, Negros Occidental), listened to the briefing of the BFAR on its plans and programs for the recovery and resiliency of the fisheries industry in the new normal.</p> <p>Department of Agriculture (DA) Undersecretary for Fisheries and BFAR National Director Eduardo Gongona presented to the body the BFAR's Fisheries Program Briefer and Action Plan. He discussed the fisheries production and growth trend from 2010 to 2019. He said that the lowest production recorded was in 2016 at -6.3% due to the passage of the Philippine Fisheries Code (RA 8550) which provided higher penalties and better monitoring systems to stop illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. After 2016, fisheries production significantly increased resulting to a positive growth rate of 1.33% in three years up to 2019.</p> <p>Gongona informed the body of BFAR's Fish Production Enhancement Program for 2020 to 2022 which aims to increase fisheries production through improved aquaculture system and implementation of alternative marine capture fisheries strategies, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalize and rehabilitate existing underutilized mariculture parks and marine cages; • Establish new mariculture parks to increase the number of marine cages; • Rehabilitate and operationalize abandoned, underdeveloped, and undeveloped brackish and freshwater ponds; • Increase productivity of existing fish ponds; • Establish aquaponics - a form of agriculture that combines raising fish in tanks (recirculating aquaculture) with soilless plant culture (hydroponics) - in urban areas; • Optimize production of small pelagic species; • Provide support to municipal fisherfolk; and • Maximize fishing capacity in High Seas Pocket 1 (a common fishing ground among countries and territories adjacent to the Pacific Ocean). <p>Other programs of BFAR include the following: establishment of more fish hatcheries in the country to supply the local fish producers with fish fries and fingerlings; continuous implementation of the Community Fish Landing Centers Program to include ice making machines and selling areas; implementation of science and rules-based fisheries management measures under capture fisheries; provision of incentives for local government units with best conservation, protection and sustainable management practices in their municipal waters; and harmonization of government efforts toward the protection of the country's fishing grounds.</p>
Metro Manila Development jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture	Assessment of the plans and programs of the Department of Education (DepEd) for the opening and conduct of public school classes in Metro Manila for School Year 2020-2021			The Joint Committee, co-presided by Rep. Manuel Luis Lopez (1 st District, Manila), Chair of the Committee on Metro Manila Development, and Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo, Chair of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, listened to the briefing of

<p>Continuation...</p> <p>Metro Manila Development jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture</p>		<p>the DepEd with regard to its readiness for the opening of classes in public schools in Metro Manila on August 24.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Lopez said that it is necessary to assess the preparedness and readiness of the DepEd in resuming classes amidst this COVID-19 pandemic. He also stressed the importance of striking a balance between ensuring the continuity of education and protecting the health and safety of the students, teachers, and non-teaching staff.</p> <p>Rep. Romulo said that adopting to the new normal is better than not having classes at all which will render the students' learning increment stale.</p> <p>DepEd Undersecretary Nepomuceno Malaluan said that there will be no face-to-face learning modality until it is safe for children to go back to school. However, DepEd regional directors are given the leeway to decide on specific learning modalities which they deem appropriate in the context of the local conditions. He said that where the traditional face-to-face classroom learning is allowed, there shall be only 15 to 20 learners in each class in compliance with the social distancing measures set by the Department of Health (DOH).</p> <p>Malaluan also discussed the principles and key components of the Basic Education Learning Continuity Plan, which provides guidance on how to deliver education services in times of crisis, while ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of both learners and teachers.</p> <p>DepEd National Capital Region Regional Director Malcolm Garma reported on the results of the survey conducted in the NCR regarding the preferred learning modality of students, parents, teachers, and school heads. He said that based on the survey, DepEd NCR opted for distance or remote learning modality for the first two grading periods of SY 2020-2021 or until the threat of the pandemic totally subsides.</p> <p>In the distance learning modality, printed learning modules will be delivered to the learners who will study the lessons in their respective homes. The learning materials, he said, are competency-specific materials that cover the key elements of lesson such as motivation, instruction, and assessment. There will also be lesson guides for the parents/guardians to enhance parents' participation in the distance learning process.</p> <p>Likewise, DepEd NCR is currently preparing video lessons that may be uploaded in any media platform. He said that some television networks have submitted their letter of intent to partner with the DepEd NCR in airing educational shows. Malaluan added that the Presidential Communications Operations Office offered the state-owned Intercontinental Broadcasting Corporation (IBC-13) as an educational platform.</p> <p>Rep. Allan Benedict Reyes (3rd District, Quezon City) suggested that DepEd should tap the Philippine Postal Corporation (PhilPost) in the delivery of learning materials.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon) asked if all schools in far-flung areas have internet access.</p> <p>Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Assistant Secretary for Digital Philippines Emmanuel Rey Caintic said that to date, there are 78 public schools in Metro Manila that have free wi-fi connection. To extend the connectivity in other areas, there is a need to partner with private telecommunications companies.</p> <p>Replying to the question of Rep. Precious Hipolito Castelo (2nd District, Quezon City), Malaluan said that the COVID-19 testing for students, teachers and non-teaching school personnel will be</p>
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<p>Continuation... Metro Manila Development jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture</p>		<p>incorporated in the guidelines for the minimum health standards that will be issued by the DepEd.</p> <p>Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City) suggested that DepEd must also consider improving school facilities to allow for a face-to-face learning modality which, he said, is still the best learning modality.</p> <p>Likewise, Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) raised the possibility of the country's weakened competitive advantage in the global market in the long run due to distance learning. She suggested that DepEd look into the prospect of holding staggered face-to-face classes in the 26 COVID-19 free provinces.</p> <p>DepEd Undersecretary for Finance Annalyn Sevilla said that teachers should be given appropriate and reasonable cash allowance to cover the expenses that may be incurred because of the new ICT teaching strategies. Rep. France Castro (Party-List, ACT-TEACHERS) requested Sevilla to submit her budget proposal to the Committee.</p> <p>Rep. Francisco Datol Jr. (Party-List, Senior Citizens) argued that schools should not reopen unless a vaccine against COVID-19 has become available.</p> <p>Rep. Sarah Jane Elago (Party-List, KABATAAN) pointed out that there are two million private school students who may not be able to continue schooling because of the closure of their schools. Malaluan said that DepEd will look into the matter and assured that the Department will facilitate the schooling of the displaced students.</p>
<p>Women and Gender Equality</p>	<p>Presentation of concerned government agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) on their respective roles in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Ma. Lourdes Acosta-Alba (1st District, Bukidnon), listened to the presentations of concerned government agencies, NGOs, and CSOs on their respective roles in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>Rep. Acosta-Alba said that at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) period, there lies a much deeper problem that threatens the security of women and children, even inside their homes. She lamented that during the ECQ, gender-based violence increased. There should be a mechanism that will protect the vulnerable members of the society during a national crisis.</p> <p>PCW representative Bianca Aljibe reported that the prolonged imposition of ECQ has put women and girls at a greater risk of experiencing violence at home. During the ECQ, women are constrained from seeking help because of restricted movement, exacerbated by the absence of public transportation. Women also suffer from limited access to necessary care and support services which include clinical management of rape and mental health issues.</p> <p>Aljibe reported that the PCW-Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Their Children (IAC-VAWC) initiated a "call to action" to ensure the continuous delivery of services to women and children in dire situations. There is also a joint statement from the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Department of Health (DOH), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and Commission on Population (POPCOM) on integrating and strengthening the response mechanisms in all levels of government for cases of GBV.</p> <p>Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA) asked how the VAW desk officers in barangays responded to VAWC and GBV cases during the ECQ. Aljibe said that the DILG has issued a circular to barangay VAW desk officers to be in their posts and ready to receive complaints and provide assistance.</p>

<p>Continuation... Women and Gender Equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Department of Justice (DOJ) Philippine National Police (PNP) 	<p>To improve the response capability of barangays, the PCW suggested, among others the following: train barangay officials on how to monitor and detect signs of abuse in their respective localities; establish an effective online help desk; and equip barangays to be able to provide immediate medical assistance to victims of abuse.</p> <p>CHR Commissioner Karen Dumpit presented the documented gaps in the referral of GBV cases. She said that the CHR received reports that during and even after the ECQ period, the PNP women's desks deferred action on GBV cases, including rape, citing the pandemic as reason. Dumpit also said that complaints could not be filed with the prosecutor's office because of the absence of authorized personnel to receive the complaints. Mobility constraints have also made it difficult for the victims to obtain medico-legal examination.</p> <p>Moving forward, the Commission recommends the adoption of a joint circular with the DILG to ensure the local government units' (LGUs) effective and timely response to complaints involving GBV cases. The CHR recommends that LGUs, including the barangays, should be able to provide support and temporary shelter for women and girls, as well as transportation and legal assistance.</p> <p>DOJ Assistant Secretary Ma. Nerissa Carpio said that the DOJ received reports of sexual advances allegedly committed by police and military personnel at checkpoints during the ECQ. She also disclosed that cases of online sexual exploitation, which involves children as victims, have been reported in the past months.</p> <p>The DOJ has existing offices responsible for safeguarding the rights of women and children. Among these are the Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) which was established pursuant to Section 20 of RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003; the Committee for the Special Protection of Children (CSPC), which was created by virtue of Executive Order No. 275, series of 1995; and the Office of Cybercrime which tracks infractions committed online.</p> <p>The IACAT, pursuant to RA 9208, has the power to create anti-trafficking task forces to ensure immediate response to cases of trafficking. On the other hand, the CSPC is responsible for the assessment, monitoring, and implementation of the State's policy to defend the rights of children to receive assistance, including proper care, health and nutrition, as well as special protection from all forms of neglect, abuse, cruelty, exploitation and discrimination, and other conditions prejudicial to their development.</p> <p>PNP-Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC) Chief Alessandro Abella reported that between March 15 to May 31, cases of rape dropped to 809 from 2,018 in the same period last year; and child abuse cases to 1,055 from 2,641.</p> <p>However, some of the Members doubt the reliability of such data due to the likelihood that the victims were not able to report abuses because of mobility constraints during the lockdown. It is expected that the number of abuses will increase once access to transportation is back to normal.</p> <p>With regard to the PNP's effort to curb online sexual exploitation, Abella reported that the PNP has already blocked Facebook sites suspected to be involved in such crimes like those with names such as "<i>mahilig sa bata</i>" and "<i>batang masarap spotted</i>." The PNP will also secure warrants for the disclosure of computer data from these sites.</p> <p>Rep. Jocelyn Sy-Limkaichong (1st District, Negros Oriental) asked what actions were taken on the reported cases of "sex for pass" allegedly involving members of the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Abella reported that until now, the PNP has not yet</p>
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<p>Continuation... Women and Gender Equality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Health (DOH) • Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) • Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) • Non-government organizations and civil society organizations 	<p>received complaints against police officers allegedly involved in the case mentioned. He encouraged the victims to report, adding that the PNP-WCPC cannot just file a case if there are no complainants.</p> <p>DOH Director for Disease Prevention and Control Bureau Ruby Constantino said that the DOH provides medical assistance to victims of GBV through the establishment of a women and children protection unit (WCPU) in DOH-managed hospitals and other government health facilities.</p> <p>Rep. Ruth Mariano-Hernandez (2nd District, Laguna) asked if there are programs for pregnant women being implemented by the DOH at the barangay level during the quarantine period. Constantino replied that a week after the lockdown, a DOH memorandum was issued announcing the availability of services to pregnant women, including pre-natal care.</p> <p>DSWD Social Welfare Officer IV Miramel Laxa reported that 75% of abused women do not seek help from the police, and sadly the perpetrators of GBV are usually family members and friends.</p> <p>Despite the challenges that the Department has encountered during the lockdown, it still was able to provide case management, counselling and psychosocial support to victims of GBV, Laxa said.</p> <p>The DSWD suggested to put in place an online reporting and response mechanism in cases of abuse of women and children; and improve the capability of its field offices and the LGUs in responding to cases of GBV.</p> <p>DILG Undersecretary Marjorie Jalosjos reported the DILG's initiatives on the prevention of and response to GBV. She said that all barangay VAW desks and barangay councils remained operational during the ECQ. Protocols on dealing with street children and those in conflict with the law were disseminated to the LGUs to serve as their guide.</p> <p>Rep. Brosas said that victims of abuse should be allowed to escape from their homes even without a quarantine pass or after curfew hours to report the abuse committed against them and seek help.</p> <p>Babaylanes Executive Director Claire de Leon said that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex life (LGBTQI) households are often not recognized as families, thereby excluding them from government support. According to De Leon, there were reports that some government authorities imposed inhumane penalties on LGBTQI members who were arrested for violating certain regulations during the quarantine period. (Babaylanes is the alumni organization of the student LGBT organization from the University of the Philippines called UP Babaylan.)</p> <p>Rep. Geraldine Roman (1st District, Bataan) called on government agencies to include the LGBTQI community in their social protection programs especially at this time of crisis, because this group is also oftentimes subjected to violence and discrimination.</p>
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