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COMMITTEE MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Good Government and Public Accountability	HR 1751	Rep. Aglipay	Inquiry into the alleged irregularities and setbacks on the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project implemented by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) that marred the project and gravely affected the delivery of service to the Filipino people	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Michael Edgar Aglipay (Party-List, DIWA), terminated its deliberation on HR 1751.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Aglipay said that with each hearing on the resolution, the Committee unravels new information regarding the implementation of the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project, and each time, he said, the Committee takes strides towards bringing this project to reality. He thanked the Committee Members who consistently attended the hearings of the Committee even now that Congress is on recess. Likewise, he recognized the efforts of the resource persons who gave their valuable time to shed light on the issues raised.</p> <p>In the Committee's previous hearing on HR 1751, Rep. Aglipay said that the inquiry aims to address the slow rollout of the Free Wi-Fi Internet Access in Public Places Project, also known as the <i>Pipol Konek</i> project, which would fully implement RA 10929 (Free Internet Access in Public Places Act). He stated that <i>Pipol Konek</i> received a funding of P1.3 billion under the 2018 General Appropriations Act and another P500 million under the Bayanihan to Recover as One Act. He maintained that internet access is a basic necessity which must be made available to the people to address digital inequality.</p> <p>It was also mentioned in the previous meeting that in 2018, the DICT entered into a financial agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to accelerate the implementation of <i>Pipol Konek</i> project. The project aims to provide 6,000 free Wi-Fi sites and install very small aperture terminals (VSAT) to last mile communities or the geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDAS) across the country.</p> <p>The <i>Pipol Konek</i> project is divided into three phases, and Phases I and II were awarded by the UNDP to SpeedCast International Limited (SpeedCast). The target completion of Phases I and II is on February 7, 2022 and July 17, 2022, respectively. However, to date, there are only 882 UNDP-activated sites nationwide out of the 3,000 targeted sites for Phase I; while Phase II of the project has not yet started.</p>

<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>DICT Undersecretary Emmanuel Rey Caintic said that the DICT is still in the process of weighing the economic viability as well as the financial sustainability of the proposals of the UNDP and SpeedCast to remediate Phase I of the <i>Pipol Konek</i> project with a contract amount of \$14.4 million.</p> <p>Rep. Aglipay asked Caintic to furnish the Committee a report on the development of DICT's renegotiation with the UNDP and SpeedCast with regard to Phase I of the project.</p> <p>Caintic also reported that the \$5.88 million contract amount for the Phase II of the free Wi-Fi project was already returned by the UNDP to the Philippine government. The Phase II of the project has not commenced yet, hence, the return of the full contract amount, he explained.</p> <p>For Phase III of the <i>Pipol Konek project</i>, Caintic said that DICT is inclined to continue its financial agreement with the UNDP. The Wi-Fi sites to be established under Phase III of the project will provide the much needed internet connectivity to the <i>Bakuna</i> (Vaccination) Centers nationwide. Last April 8, the Phase III of the project (with contract amount of \$2.97 million for 1,000 sites) was awarded to PLDT by the UNDP.</p> <p>In response to the query of Deputy Speaker Johnny Ty Pimentel (2nd District, Surigao del Sur), Caintic said that UNDP already terminated its contract with SpeedCast for Phases I and II of the free internet project.</p> <p>Caintic said that for the remaining balance of the Phase I contract amount, the DICT is contemplating on an amicable solution wherein the UNDP can award the project to a local contractor to continue what has been accomplished. This, he said, will ensure that the funds are not reverted to the National Treasury.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Pimentel concurred with Caintic, explaining that when the fund is returned to the National Treasury, it can no longer be used for the project. He, however, advised DICT to observe due diligence in the selection of local contractors.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Bernadette Herrera-Dy (Party-List, BH) reiterated that the government's free internet project should provide the current needed speed to ensure quality internet service especially during this time of pandemic when people heavily rely on the internet for various activities and transactions.</p> <p>Meanwhile, on allegations that Speedcast was involved in technical smuggling, SpeedCast</p>
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<p>Continuation... Good Government and Public Accountability</p>				<p>Senior Vice President James Trevelyan denied the allegations, pointing out that SpeedCast has no importation license. He said that it was Philippine Communications Satellite Corporation (PHILCOMSAT), Speedcast's consignee-on-record, which directly transacted with the Bureau of Customs (BOC).</p> <p>PHILCOMSAT President Erlinda Bildner, however, claimed that SpeedCast dealt directly with a BOC personnel with regard to the importation of the satellite equipment needed for the project. What PHILCOMSAT was asked to do was just to pay the duties and fees on the said importation, Bildner added.</p> <p>Asked to comment on the investigation report submitted by Customs Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero to DICT Secretary Gregorio Honasan II which pointed at SpeedCast's alleged direct involvement in technical smuggling, Trevelyan replied that his company has not yet received any such report from the BOC.</p> <p>On the issue that SpeedCast did not pay its subcontractor PHILCOMSAT, Trevelyan maintained that SpeedCast has already paid all "valid" invoices from its subcontractor.</p> <p>Early on, Caintic presented the DICT's national digital infrastructure plan which aims to provide a fast, affordable, and reliable internet connectivity so that every Filipino can thrive in the digital economy.</p> <p>The plan involves the following: laying of fiber optic cables to areas where there are none; building or collocating existing towers of telecommunications companies to widen the coverage of internet connectivity in the country; and utilizing satellite technology to provide internet connectivity in remote areas.</p>
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TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
<p>Revision of Laws (Technical Working Group)</p>	<p>HB 5487</p>	<p>Rep. Cuaresma</p>	<p>Allowing the foreign decree of dissolution of marriage to be registered with the Philippine civil registry even in the absence of a judicial recognition to that effect, amending for the purpose EO 209</p>	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Ron Salo (Party-List, KABAYAN), approved HB 5487 subject to style.</p> <p>The TWG agreed that the foreign decree of termination of marriage should be duly "apostillized" or authenticated by the Department of Foreign Affairs-Office of Consular Affairs (DFA-OCA) but should no longer require a judiciary recognition.</p> <p>Apostillization is the issuance of a certificate that authenticates the origin of a public</p>

<p>Continuation... Revision of Laws (Technical Working Group)</p>				<p>document. It is issued by a country that is party to the Apostille Convention to be used in another country which is also a party to the Convention. After the apostillization by the DFA-OCA, there is no more need for authentication (legalization) by the foreign embassies or consulates except for countries that have not acceded to the Convention. For non-Apostille contracting parties, documents still have to be authenticated by the DFA-OCA before they can be used in the Philippines and there is still a need for authentication (legalization) by the concerned foreign embassy or consulate general of the country to which the document originated from. (Source: DFA website)</p> <p>Also adopted by the TWG was the suggestion of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) that the duly authenticated or apostillized foreign decree of termination of marriage should be registered with the local civil registrar of the residence or last known address of either of the spouses.</p>
	<p>HB 6934</p>	<p>Rep. Mariño</p>	<p>Granting members of the House of Representatives the authority to solemnize marriage, amending for the purpose Title I, Chapter 1, Article 7 of EO 209</p>	<p>The TWG approved HB 6934 subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Mario Vittorio “Marvey” Mariño (5th District, Batangas), author of HB 6934, said that his bill seeks to allow House Members to solemnize marriages within their respective legislative districts to make this rite more accessible to their constituents who are getting married. He said most of the times, Members are invited to attend several events in their districts such as barangay or town fiestas as well as individual events including baptisms, birthdays, funerals, and weddings. Thus, he said allowing the Members to solemnize marriages will provide the constituents with a less expensive, convenient, and practical means of getting married.</p> <p>Rep. Salo asked if the bill will only cover district representatives and not include Senators and Party-List Representatives. He said the latter may also solemnize marriages of individuals belonging to the sector which the Member represents.</p> <p>Rep. Mariño said he is amenable to the suggestion that his bill will also cover party-list representatives. As for the Senators, he said it is up to them if they wish to amend the bill to include themselves in its coverage.</p> <p>The University of the Philippines Law Center (UPLC) expressed its support for the bill.</p>
	<p>HB 7042</p>	<p>Rep. Salo</p>	<p>Amending Articles 2, 3, 6 & 10 of EO 209 (by allowing a marriage ceremony to take place with the physical or virtual appearance of the contracting parties before a solemnizing officer)</p>	<p>The TWG approved HB 7042 subject to style.</p> <p>Rep. Salo, author of HB 7042, said his bill allows couples to get married online or virtually, provided that the contracting parties must be physically present together in the same location during the ceremony. He</p>

Continuation... Revision of Laws (Technical Working Group)				<p>explained that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the postponement and cancellation of wedding ceremonies because of the prohibition on mass gatherings, observance of social distancing, and health risks posed to guests particularly the senior citizens. He said his bill will provide an opportunity for couples to be legally married in a safe, convenient, and efficient manner in response to the new normal.</p> <p>For virtual marriages between Filipino citizens abroad, the PSA recommended that the marriage certificate shall be registered with the local civil registrar of the residence or last known address of either of the spouses.</p> <p>Rep. Salo agreed with the suggestion of the PSA.</p>
HBs 1147 & 8674	Rep. Brosas and Deputy Speaker Rodriguez	Amending Title VI of EO 209, as amended, by removing and/or erasing classification between legitimate, illegitimate, and legitimated (filiation of) children		<p>The TWG approved the consolidation of the four bills.</p> <p>The UPLC expressed its support for the bills. It was tasked by the TWG to draft the consolidated bill.</p>
HB 7500	Rep. Alvarez (P.)	Amending EO 209, as amended, insofar as reclassifying legitimate children into children born within wedlock and illegitimate children into children born out of wedlock		
HB 8478	Rep. Villafuerte	Allowing legitimate children to bear the surname of the father or the mother, amending for the purpose Article 174, paragraph 1 of EO 209, as amended		
HBs 2262 & 8672	Rep. Alvarez (P.) and Deputy Speaker Rodriguez	Providing for the regime of complete separation of property/conjugal partnership of gains as the governing regime in the absence of a marriage settlement or when the regime agreed upon is void, amending for the purpose Articles 75 & 147 of Title IV of EO 209, as amended		<p>The TWG approved the consolidation of the four bills.</p> <p>The TWG agreed that the conjugal partnership of gains (CPG) should be the default or governing property regime in the absence of a marriage settlement or when the property regime agreed upon during the application for marriage license becomes void.</p>
HB 8463	Rep. Villafuerte	Amending Article 111 of EO 209, to allow either spouse to mortgage, encumber, alienate or otherwise dispose of his or her exclusive property		<p>Under the CPG regime, each spouse retains ownership of the property they had before the marriage, and it is only the income, fruits or proceeds from said individually owned property that are co-owned by the spouse.</p>
HB 8484	Rep. Villafuerte	Amending Article 73 of EO 209, on the charge against the community property of an obligation of a spouse who practices a profession		
HB 502	Rep. Barbers	Amending Title I, Chapter 3, of EO 209, otherwise known as the Family Code of the Philippines, prescribing additional ground for annulment		<p>The TWG deferred consideration of HB 502.</p> <p>HB 502 provides that a marriage may be annulled if the parties have been separated for at least five years.</p> <p>UPLC objected to the proposed law, stating that five years of separation is a more appropriate ground for legal separation or absolute divorce.</p>

Continuation... Revision of Laws (Technical Working Group)				Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2 nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) agreed with the UPLC.
	HB 5511	Rep. Guico	Amending EO 209, as amended (by suspending the issuance of the marriage license in the absence of the consent of the parents or guardians of the contracting parties)	<p>The TWG deferred consideration of HB 5511 to confer with the author the comments and suggestions of the Members and the resource persons.</p> <p>Under the bill, if the parental or guardian consent for the marriage of individuals aged 18 to 21 is not obtained due to the refusal of the parents or guardians, the local civil registrar will note this down in the application for marriage license and shall issue the said license after the completion of the period of publication.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rodriguez and the UPLC recommended that the requirement of parental or guardian consent in the issuance of the marriage license should be retained for individuals between the ages of 18 and 21.</p>
	HB 8355	Rep. Villafuerte	Amending Article 36 of EO 209, on the definition of psychological incapacity	<p>The TWG deferred consideration of HB 8355.</p> <p>HB 8355 seeks to specify the signs or indications of “psychological incapacity” in Article 36 of EO 209.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rodriguez objected to the proposed bill and said that Article 36 of EO 209 should be retained as it is, which is stated as:</p> <p>“A marriage contracted by any party who, at the time of the celebration, was psychologically incapacitated to comply with the essential marital obligations of marriage, shall likewise be void even if such incapacity becomes manifest only after its solemnization.”</p>

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