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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing by the following agencies on their previous years' revenue performance and utilization and their thrusts and targets for FY 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), started its scrutiny of the respective budgets of government agencies, after the culmination of the budget briefings of the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) on the proposed National Expenditure Program (NEP) for fiscal year 2022.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Manuel Jose "Mannix" Dalipe (2nd District, Zamboanga City), sat as the presiding officer during the discussion on the revenue performance and utilization of PCSO and PAGCOR.</p> <p>PCSO Chair Anselmo Simeon Pinili said that today's PCSO briefing will cover the revenue collections and mandatory contributions of the PCSO as well as its revenue target for 2022.</p> <p>PCSO Legislative Liaison Officer Gay Alvor informed the body that PCSO's revenue collections for 2019 and 2020 amounted to P44 billion and P18.63 billion, respectively. For 2021, she said the revenue target is P46.36 billion. She explained that the gross receipts of PCSO plummeted in 2020 as its gaming operations were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic along with the imposition of lockdowns, travel restrictions, and strict health protocols.</p> <p>Alvor also reported that for year 2022, PCSO's estimated gross retail receipts will reach P46.1 billion, of which P13.55 billion will be allocated to the charity fund. For 2020, the amount allocated to the charity fund was P6.73 billion and for the first semester of 2021, over P5.44 billion so far.</p> <p>PCSO asked for relief from the documentary stamp tax (DST) and other mandatory contributions so that the PCSO can recover from its current financial standing and concentrate on providing contributions to health-related programs. At present, Alvor said, aside from providing funds for the implementation of the Universal Health Care Act (Republic Act 11223), the PCSO is also providing support funds to the Commission on Higher Education, Philippine Sports Commission, and Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.</p> <p>Republic Act 10963 (Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Act) increased the DST rates by 100% except the DST on debt instruments which only increased by 50%. The DST on policies of insurance upon property, fidelity bonds and other insurance, indemnity bonds, and deeds of sale, conveyances and donation of real property remain unchanged. <i>(Source: Department of Finance – National Tax Research Center website)</i></p> <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go maintained that the earnings of PCSO are not intended for profit but to finance needed government expenditures for the general welfare.</p> <p>The Committee Chair took note of the recommendations of the PCSO and said that the Committee will look into the matter in order to ensure the sufficiency of PCSO funds for COVID-19 response.</p> <p>At this point, the Members proceeded to raise their concerns in relation to PCSO gaming operations in their respective districts.</p> <p>PAGCOR Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer Andrea Domingo said that one of the major thrusts of PAGCOR is to contribute as much as</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR) 	

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>		<p>70% of its annual revenue to the national coffers. According to Domingo, the target for 2022 is to increase the gross gaming revenues of PAGCOR in order to also increase its contributions to the nation-building efforts of the government.</p> <p>PAGCOR Assistant Vice President (AVP) for Accounting Department Sharon Quintanilla presented the financial standing of PAGCOR from 2016 up to the first semester of 2021. For 2020, she reported that the total income of PAGCOR amounted to P36 billion of which P21.62 billion was allotted to its mandated contributions including the 5% franchise tax and the 50% national government's income share. According to PAGCOR AVP for Corporate Service Department Arnold Ferdinand Salvosa, the 50% national government share from PAGCOR has provided funds for the implementation of the UHC law in the amount of P17.96 billion in 2019, P7.09 billion in 2020, and P3.49 billion for the first half of 2021.</p> <p>Quintanilla said the revenue target for 2021 is P36.84 billion with an estimated mandated contribution of P23.75 billion which would include the benefits and incentives of winning athletes in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. As for 2022, she said the revenue target will be increased to P50.75 billion with an estimated mandated contribution of P33.2 billion.</p> <p>As for the dividend incomes and remittances of PAGCOR to the National Treasury, Salvosa said the annual regular cash dividend that the PAGCOR declared was P5.52 billion and P811.29 million for 2019 and 2020, but the Department of Finance (DOF) requested an additional amount pursuant to RA 7656 or the law requiring government-owned or controlled corporations to declare dividends under certain conditions. This raised the total remittance of PAGCOR to the National Treasury to P18 billion in 2019 and P5 billion in 2020. He explained that the DOF ordered PAGCOR to raise the dividends in order to have more funds for the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Meanwhile, PAGCOR Vice President for Enterprise Services Group Ricardo Faraon and AVP for Corporate Social Responsibility Group Ramon Stephen Villaflo stated that PAGCOR's mandated contributions also help fund housing projects nationwide. PAGCOR also launched this year the <i>PAGkain Para sa Masa</i> food caravan project, which aims to provide healthy meals to low-income families in urban communities during this pandemic. The PAGCOR officials added that the agency's Executive Committee members and friends contributed out of their own pockets to buy food items for distribution to households that are in dire need of help.</p> <p>Several Members raised their concerns about the PAGCOR operations in their respective districts which were responded to by other PAGCOR officials who were present during the meeting.</p> <p>On the proliferation of illegal <i>e-Sabong</i> and other illegal online gambling operations, the PAGCOR Chair committed to look into the matter and have these investigated for possible filing of cases by the anti-cybercrime divisions of the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police.</p>
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AGENCY BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
<p>Information and Communications Technology jt. w/ Health jt. w/ Economic Affairs</p>	<p>Briefing by the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) on the Philippine digital COVID-19 vaccination certificate portal (VaxCertPH) and the DICT's response to COVID-19 pandemic</p>	<p>The Joint Committee listened to the presentation of DICT Undersecretary Emmanuel Rey Caintic, on the status of VaxCertPH and the COVID-19 pandemic response of the DICT. The Joint Committee was co-chaired by Deputy Speaker Wes Gatchalian (1stDistrict, Valenzuela City), for the Committee on Information and</p>

<p>Continuation... Information and Communications Technology jt. w/ Health jt. w/ Economic Affairs</p>		<p>Communications Technology, Batanes Rep. Ciriaco Gato Jr., for the Committee on Health, and Rep. Francisco "Kiko" Benitez (3rdDistrict, Negros Occidental), for the Committee on Economic Affairs.</p> <p>Before the start of the briefing, Deputy Speaker Gatchalian said that the Joint Committee would like to be informed about the measures that the government has undertaken to establish a uniform vaccine certification to be issued by a single authorized agency in the Philippines. He explained that as the travel and tourism industries attempt to rebound, it is again being threatened by the emergence of the highly transmissible COVID-19 Delta variant. Because of this, there is a growing clamor and acceptance of the so-called "vaccine passports" and an increased call for its mandated use.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Gatchalian further cited a recent news wherein the Hong Kong Immigration Authority disallowed the entry of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), refusing to recognize vaccine certificates issued by local governments and not by a single authorized agency in the Philippines. With the vaccination card issued by the local governments as the only proof of vaccination at present, the Joint Committee thus sees the need for the urgent rollout of the country's COVID-19 vaccination certificate portal.</p> <p>Rep. Gato opined that the VaxCertPH and other technological innovations present novel breakthroughs in strengthening the country's fight against COVID-19. They may also provide significant contributions towards crafting a legislative framework that will give the impetus to stop COVID-19 transmission and any future threats of such magnitude, he added.</p> <p>Rep. Benitez pointed out the need for a stable and strong system to get the economy back on track as the COVID-19 pandemic has severely hampered economic activities. Since it is the people that carry the virus, Rep. Benitez said that it is crucial to properly and immediately identify who might be infected, especially because of the increasing need for mobility across borders, both domestically and internationally. As the virus shifts and morphs in terms of its strength and transmissibility, the capacities of the government should also increase and innovate as quickly and even faster than the virus can, Rep. Benitez added.</p> <p>Caintic presented the DICT's Vaccine Information Management System (VIMS) which aims to enable the COVID-19 vaccination centers to vaccinate as many people as possible by getting the right information and analytics, tracking vaccine inventory, and monitoring the vaccination status of the populace. The processes included in the VIMS are masterlisting, which includes data management of individual vaccine administration; inventory and supply chain tracking; vaccine administration; line list uploading or the daily submission of collected data to the VIMS data warehouse for consolidation and analytics; and issuance of vaccine certification.</p> <p>According to Caintic, in compliance with Resolution 117 issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases, the DICT, in coordination with the Department of the Interior and Local Government, developed and implemented the DICT Vaccine Administration System (DVAS), which is a component of VIMS. The DVAS automates vaccine data recording and reporting of vaccination sites, expedites the processing of vaccination information, and ensures the daily uploading of line list data in the centralized VIMS data warehouse. DVAS is operational in cities such as San Juan, Pasay, and Caloocan, while 229 other local government units (LGUs) manifested their interest to adopt DVAS. Although the use of DVAS, instead of the database of LGUs, would significantly ease and expedite vaccination data transmission to the centralized VIMS, Caintic posited that there is a need for more monetary support to provide more</p>
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<p>Continuation... Information and Communications Technology jt. w/ Health jt. w/ Economic Affairs</p>	<p>equipment and manpower to LGUs that manifested their intent to utilize DVAS.</p> <p>Caintic further said that pursuant to IATF Resolution 134 and previously issued IATF Resolutions, the DICT developed the National Digital Vaccination Certificate system, or the VaxCertPH, which will provide a digitally verifiable COVID-19 vaccination certificate, secured and encrypted with QR code. It can easily be accessed directly by the citizens, especially the OFWs through a self-service portal or mobile application.</p> <p>Caintic maintained that the VaxCertPH is compliant with the standards of the Department of Health (DOH) and World Health Organization (WHO) and is internationally recognized and interoperable across borders. The public launch is in September and a dry run will be conducted in the National Capital Region, specifically for the OFWs, Caintic further said.</p> <p>The DICT likewise provides technical support to COVID-19 response measures including vetting, development, and rollout of various COVID-19 solutions like COVID KAYA and COVID Document Repository System, Tanod Kontra COVID, and COVID Epidemiology Data Insights.</p> <p>DOH Knowledge Management and Information Technology Service Director Enrique Tayag apprised the body that at present, the DOH-Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ) issues Yellow Card for international health regulated vaccines also known as the International Certificate of Vaccination. Nevertheless, Tayag assured the Joint Committee that should the VaxCertPH pushes through, the DOH will work with the DICT to ensure that processes are harmonized and integrated.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Assistant Secretary Eric Gerardo Tamayo conveyed the DFA's support and willingness to assist in the rollout of VaxCertPH. Tamayo elucidated that since there is still no international standard for proof of vaccination, the Yellow Card system with a certification from the BOQ is generally accepted internationally.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Bernadette Herrera-Dy (Party-List, Bagong Henerasyon) raised the issue on connectivity since the DVAS would require internet connection at the LGUs' vaccination sites. She also requested a dialogue with the Department of Budget and Management for the funding and full implementation of RA 10929 or the free Internet Access in Public Places Act.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Ronnie Ong (Party-List, ANG PROBINSYANO) spoke about the plight of the OFWs amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and calls for the issuance of a uniform vaccination certificate.</p> <p>Rep. Janette Garin (1stDistrict, Iloilo), along with Deputy Speaker Gatchalian and Rep. Gato, proposed the waiver of the P300 Yellow Card fee for the benefit of the OFWs.</p> <p>Nueva Ecija Reps. Estrellita Suansing and Micaela Violago inquired how the DICT intends to encourage all other LGUs, especially those in far-flung areas, to utilize DVAS.</p> <p>Caintic said that utilizing the DVAS would require funds to acquire the necessary devices. However, the DICT has sought the assistance of the WHO and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the provision of equipment to the LGUs which expressed willingness to use DVAS.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2ndDistrict, Marikina City) requested the DICT to submit the budgetary requirement for the operation of the DVAS.</p>
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<p>Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>	<p>Briefing by the Commission on Elections on its preparations for the 2022 national and local elections and on the budgetary requirements and guidelines for the conduct of the elections</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Juliet Marie de Leon Ferrer (4th District, Negros Occidental), listened to the briefing of the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) on its plans and programs, preparations, and budgetary requirements for the coming May 2022 local and national elections.</p> <p>At the start of the meeting, Rep. Ferrer said that the Committee would like to be apprised of COMELEC's preparations for the upcoming elections, particularly on the extension of the voters' registration which is scheduled to end on September 30, 2021 and the health and safety measures that will be put in place given the "face-to-face" voting during the May 2022 elections.</p> <p>Atty. Franzetta Fae Sanglay, staff of COMELEC Commissioner Marlon Casquejo, reported that to date, there are 61.08 million registered voters. To facilitate the registration of voters in this time of pandemic, Sanglay said that COMELEC launched the iRehistro and Mobile Registration Form App. The COMELEC also extended the registration hours to accommodate more registrants personally appearing at the Office of the Election Officer (OEO) in their area.</p> <p>The IRehistro is an online facility where the registrants/voters may conveniently access the application forms for voter registration purposes and select the appointment date for personal appearance at the OEO. On the other hand, the Mobile Registration Form App is a mobile application that lets the voter fill out registration forms using a smartphone even when offline. <i>(Source: COMELEC website)</i></p> <p>In preparation for overseas voting, Sanglay said that COMELEC conducts virtual and field registration considering that most of the Philippine consulate offices abroad are limited in number and are not accessible to all Filipinos overseas.</p> <p>During the filing of certificates of candidacy (COC), which is on October 1-8, health and safety protocols will also be observed. The filing of COCs shall be done by the candidate or through his or her representative, which means that online filing is not allowed.</p> <p>Sanglay further reported that the COMELEC already conducted the bidding process for the purchase of vote-counting machines (VCMs) and memory cards and will soon be conducting voting test runs.</p> <p>Rep. Elpidio Barzaga Jr. (4th District, Cavite) asked about the number of VCMs that were refurbished and if these are sufficient to accommodate all the voters during the elections.</p> <p>COMELEC Executive Director Bartolome Sinocruz Jr. said that the 97,345 refurbished VCMs are not sufficient, hence the Commission intends to procure 10,000 additional VCMs. Sinocruz further said that there is an available budget to procure this number of VCMs.</p> <p>In reply to the query of Rep. Barzaga, COMELEC Commissioner Casquejo said that the COMELEC expects about 800 voters per cluster precincts. The Commission is conducting a simulation of the voting in a polling center based on the allowable capacity of only 50%. He also said that the start of the voting time may be adjusted to accommodate the expected number of voters while observing health and safety protocols. COMELEC might also extend the election to one more day depending on the COVID-19 situation during the election day. However, there is no budget for the one-day extension, Casquejo added.</p> <p>Rep. Barzaga said that the COMELEC should prepare the budget proposal for the one-day extension so that it can be considered during the upcoming deliberations on the 2022 national budget.</p>
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<p>Continuation... Suffrage and Electoral Reforms</p>	<p>However, Rep. Edgar Erice (2nd District, Caloocan City) recommended that instead of extending the election to one more day, COMELEC should purchase enough number of VCMs to accommodate all the voters within one day even with a reduced number of voters per cluster precincts.</p> <p>Casquejo claimed that the cost of buying additional voting machines is higher than that of extending the election to one day.</p> <p>Rep. Erice said that COMELEC should also consider the expenses the candidates will incur for the one-day extension. He also warned of the danger of an extended voting period during which the possibility of election fraud can likely happen.</p> <p>Party-List Reps. Ferdinand Gaité (BAYAN MUNA), France Castro (ACT-TEACHERS), and Sarah Jane Elago (KABATAAN) suggested the extension of the voters' registration to accommodate more registrants given the difficulties in mobility at this time. They cited the data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) which indicate that there are now about 73 million Filipinos qualified as voters. With only around 61 million registered voters, as reported by COMELEC, this means that there are still about 12 million Filipinos who are expected to register as voters.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Rufus Rodriguez (2nd District, Cagayan de Oro City) also requested that voter-registrants be allowed to input their data online, while the biometrics data will be captured at a later time but before the elections. He also requested that online filing of COC be allowed.</p> <p>Casquejo acknowledged the suggestions of the House Members. However, he said that the COMELEC en banc already decided on the deadline of the registration. He said if the registration will be extended, all other schedules will be affected. Nevertheless, he said the COMELEC will study the extension of the online filling out of forms.</p> <p>With regard to the online filing of COC, Casquejo said that the law does not allow this, thus, only personal or representative filing of COCs can be done.</p> <p>Rep. Barzaga asked if any law was violated with regard to the F2 Logistics winning the bid to transport 2022 election paraphernalia. It was alleged that the winning bidder is associated with Davao businessman Dennis Uy.</p> <p>Casquejo said that according to the discussions of the COMELEC en banc with the COMELEC Law Department, the bidding observed the government's procurement process.</p> <p>The COMELEC was requested to furnish the Committee a copy of the draft of the manual for the conduct of elections under the new normal.</p>
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