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BUDGET BRIEFINGS		
COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Appropriations	<p>Briefing on the proposed FY 2022 budget, plans and programs, and accomplishments of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Agrarian Reform 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Eric Go Yap (Party-List, ACT-CIS), listened to the presentations of the DAR and DFA on their respective proposed FY 2022 budgets, plans and programs, and major accomplishments.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Teodorico Haresco Jr. (2nd District, Aklan), sat as the presiding officer during the DAR's budget briefing.</p> <p>Agrarian Reform Secretary John Castriciones stated that based on the FY 2022 National Expenditure Program (NEP), the DAR is set to receive a budget of P12.84 billion, which is 45% higher than this year's budget of P8.17 billion. The proposed budget next year will be distributed as follows: personnel services (PS), P5.2 billion; maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE), P7.22 billion; and capital outlay (CO), P421 million.</p> <p>According to Castriciones, the huge increase in DAR's proposed budget for 2022 accounts for the implementation of the Support to Parcelization of Lands for Individual Titling (SPLIT) Project. The project, according to Castriciones, is funded by the World Bank through a loan amounting to P19.24 billion, with the Philippine government providing its counterpart funding in the amount of P5.36 billion.</p> <p>The SPLIT Project will involve the subdivision of about 1.38 million hectares of collective land titles (Collective Certificate of Land Ownership Awards or CCLOA) into individual land titles which will be issued to agrarian reform beneficiaries (ARBs). <i>(Source: DAR website)</i></p> <p>However, despite its budgetary increase for next year, Castriciones said that DAR's proposed budget under the NEP is way below its original budget proposal of P32.21 billion that was submitted to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).</p> <p>DAR Undersecretary for Support Services Emily Padilla underscored the need to increase the budget for the DAR's Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Development and Sustainability Program (ARB-DSP). She said that the FY 2022 proposed budget for the ARB-DSP amounting to P796 million will be allocated for the DAR's four major programs: supervision and management for effective delivery of support services; climate resilient farm productivity support; social infrastructure building; and enterprise development, economic and physical infrastructure support.</p> <p>Padilla also requested an additional P7.7 billion for DAR's farm productivity assistance for ARBs.</p> <p>Deputy Speakers Henry Oaminal (2nd District, Misamis Occidental) and Loren Legarda (Antique), as well as Rep. Vicente "Ching" Veloso III (3rd District, Leyte) manifested their support for an increase in DAR's budget.</p> <p>Rep. Argel Joseph Cabatbat (Party-List, MAGSASAKA) asked if the proposed budget of DAR includes just compensation of the</p>

<p>Continuation... Appropriations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Foreign Affairs 	<p>landowners whose lands were included in the compulsory acquisition of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP).</p> <p>DAR Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Luis Meinrado Pañgulayan answered in the affirmative stating that P7.4 million was set for the landowners' compensation.</p> <p>Rep. Eufemia "Ka Femia" Cullamat (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) verified if indeed DAR requested a P480 million allocation for the implementation of projects under the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). Castriciones said that the DAR did not request any budget for projects related to the NTF-ELCAC next year.</p> <p>Based on Executive Order 70, series of 2018, the NTF-ELCAC was created to ensure an efficient and effective implementation of the whole-of-nation approach in defeating local communist terrorist groups and obtaining sustainable and inclusive peace throughout the Philippines.</p> <p>Rep. Amihilda Sangcopan (Party-List, AMIN) asked how much of DAR's proposed budget is allocated for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM).</p> <p>Castriciones responded that there is no allocation for the BARMM in the FY 2022 budget of DAR because the BARMM Government is already exercising its mandate of managing and supervising agrarian reform activities in the autonomous region.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Bernadette Herrera-Dy (Party-List, Bagong Henerasyon) asked about the status of DAR's utilization of its 2021 budget.</p> <p>DAR Undersecretary for Finance, Management and Administration Lucius Jun Jun Malsi explained that as of June 30, the DAR already utilized P3.7 billion or 42% of its current budget. He assured the Committee that the DAR will fully utilize its current budget within this year.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA) cited a 2000 study of DAR which revealed that about 70% of lands awarded through voluntary land transfers have ended up in the hands of landlord dummies. She pointed out that the DAR must ensure that the ARBs are still in actual possession and control of the awarded lands. There should be nationwide revalidation of the status of the lands awarded to the ARBs, she stressed.</p> <p>On another point raised by Rep. Brosas, Castriciones replied that 2,210 hectares of agricultural lands were converted into non-agricultural lands by the Land Use Cases Committee (LUCC) – the DAR's collegial body deputized to act on applications for land use conversion. Castriciones further said that the DAR adopted the electronic filing of applications for land conversion in order to ensure continuous delivery of government services during the pandemic. He, however, reported that, to date, no application for land conversion has been submitted electronically.</p> <p>The DAR was asked to submit the pertinent documents that were requested by the Members during this budget briefing.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Micaela Violago (2nd District, Nueva Ecija), sat as the presiding officer during the budget briefing of the DFA.</p> <p>Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. presented the DFA's proposed budget under the FY 2022 NEP amounting to P21.05 billion.</p>
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He said this is 5.43% lower than the current year's budget of the DFA which is P22.26 billion and represents just 0.42% of the total proposed budget of the national government for FY 2022 amounting to P5.02 trillion.

The bulk of the proposed budget of the DFA goes to the Office of the Secretary amounting to P20.91 billion and the rest to its attached agencies, as follows: Foreign Service Institute (FSI), P68.70 million; Presidential Commission on Visiting Forces (PCVF), P47.02 million; UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, P24.78 million; and Technical Cooperation Council of the Philippines, P4.64 million.

The DFA Secretary said the proposed budget will also fund the operation of DFA's home office, 94 foreign service posts (FSPs), and 26 consular offices that serve about 10.37 million overseas Filipinos in 195 countries and territories worldwide. He further reported on the various actions undertaken by the DFA during the COVID-19 pandemic that included, among others, the repatriation of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs), opening of temporary off-site passport services (TOPS), and the rollout of the DFA's online visa application system (OVAS).

DFA Acting Assistant Secretary Myla Grace Ragenia Macahilig discussed the plans and programs of the DFA for FY 2022 as included in the NEP. She reported that the DFA-OSEC would allot P9.67 billion to its diplomacy program or for reinforcing foreign relations to promote national development and international cooperation; and P8.58 billion for assistance to nationals (ATN) program aimed at providing support and protection to overseas Filipinos.

Rep. Ferdinand Gaité (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) inquired about the presence of military attachés in various FSPs. In reply, Locsin said that there are 16 military attachés deployed worldwide whose functions are not about diplomacy but more on coordination with their military counterparts on matters concerning military assistance and training. Locsin added that expenses for the posting of military attachés abroad are borne by the Department of National Defense (DND) and not by the DFA, but the military attachés stay in the DFA facilities abroad.

Rep. Gaité also asked why the Philippines has an embassy in Greece where there are only about 6,500 overseas Filipinos, but there is none in Cyprus which hosts more than 14,000 Filipinos. Locsin conveyed his commitment to give priority to the establishment of an embassy in Cyprus. He informed the body that his current policy is to stop opening FSPs in so-called luxury sites and start establishing these in "dangerous" sites where Filipinos will most likely need assistance.

Reps. Gaité, Brosas, and France Castro (Party-List, ACT-TEACHERS) sought the comment of the DFA on the red-tagging of OFW organizations allegedly being spread in seminars conducted by military attachés in various embassies abroad. Locsin averred that while the DFA does not encourage OFW organizations to propagandize, it also does not condone red-tagging of OFWs. He said the DFA recognizes and appreciates the assistance of these OFW organizations in protecting the rights and welfare of OFWs.

The members of the Makabayan bloc (composed of several party-list Representatives) also sought clarification about the changes in the terms and conditions of the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) after President Rodrigo Roa Duterte recalled its abrogation in July. Locsin explained that the changes were mere clarifications of procedures in the implementation of the agreement, including the handling of criminal cases involving American military personnel and the

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transmittal of notification and communications through diplomatic channels, among others.

Rep. Brosas manifested that the modifications in the VFA should be scrutinized to ensure the deterrence of crimes or violence that may be committed by US soldiers while in the Philippines.

Replying to Rep. Macnell Lusotan's (Party-List, MARINO) query on the huge backlog in the passport service of the DFA, Undersecretary Brigido Dulay admitted that the current backlog is around three to four million in passport renewals. This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposition of health standard protocols which limited the ability of the DFA to provide regular consular services. Dulay added that the DFA Secretary already ordered the establishment of additional TOPS to address the backlog, which will augment the six TOPS that were already established in July. According to Dulay, the estimated cost minus the rental expense for the establishment of 10 more TOPS in the country is around P53 million.

Baguio City Rep. Mark Go inquired on the possible impact to the DFA operations of the non-approval of its original 2022 budget proposal amounting to P39.08 billion. Macahilig said this will restrict DFA's capacity to fully accomplish its targets for 2022. Thus, she asked for the support of Congress to reinstate the amount that was slashed by the DBM, especially the funds for the establishment of more TOPS in the country.

Several lawmakers expressed support for the request to augment the 2022 proposed budget of the DFA in order to establish more TOPS in the country. Rep. Lusotan said more off-site offices that will process the renewal of passports will particularly benefit seafarers who are already scheduled to leave the country to fulfill their work contracts.

On the query of Reps. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) and Carlos Isagani Zarate (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) regarding the low budget utilization rate of the DFA for FY 2020, Macahilig explained that the DFA was not able to fully undertake and implement some of its projects in 2020 because of the restrictions imposed relative to the COVID-19 crisis. She said this has affected the international meetings and engagements of the DFA and has either canceled or deferred many consular activities. However, Macahilig said the projects for FY 2021 are on-track and that the DFA is confident to catch up on its usual budget utilization rate of 80% by the end of the year.

Meanwhile, Rep. Yap brought to the attention of the DFA the complaints of some OFWs regarding the poor service received from the Philippine Embassy in Australia. He urged the ambassadors and employees of Philippine embassies to give priority to the welfare of OFWs and accord them the respect that they deserve in recognition of their significant contribution to the economy.

In reply to the query of Rep. Castro concerning overseas Filipinos with criminal cases abroad, DFA Undersecretary for Migrant Workers' Affairs Sarah Lou Arriola reported that based on the DFA's record as of December 2020, there are 62 overseas Filipinos facing death penalty. Arriola added that there are other 5,327 criminal cases against overseas Filipinos worldwide. She assured the body that Philippine embassies and consulates abroad with very high concentration of OFWs have retained lawyers to provide the needed legal assistance. She added that in other places, the DFA also provides lawyers to overseas Filipinos with legal problems or in distress.

The DFA explained that most of the cases which result in death penalty are about murder and drug-related charges. Other criminal

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COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Government Reorganization jt. w/ Youth and Sports Development	HB 214	Deputy Speaker Puno	Declaring a national policy for sports as an engine for nation building, social progress and promotion of total human development, and creating the Department of Sports, defining its powers and functions, and appropriating funds therefor	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Mario Vittorio "Marvey" Mariño (5th District, Batangas), Chair of the Committee on Government Reorganization, and Rep. Faustino Michael Carlos Dy III (5th District, Isabela), Chair of the Committee on Youth and Sports Development, agreed to create a technical working group (TWG) to consolidate the four bills.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Roberto Puno (1st District, Antipolo City) was designated to head the TWG.</p> <p>Rep. Mariño said that the main purpose of the bills is to establish a single, unified, and integrated national sports body responsible for implementing policies on the promotion and development of sports and health fitness programs in the country. He added that the bills ensure the provision of needed support to the Filipino athletes and are expected to boost the sports sector in the country.</p> <p>Rep. Dy stated that while the country remains euphoric over its best-ever Olympic achievements, the popular sentiment now is to give sports development a higher priority in the national agenda. He asked the TWG to consider the following in its deliberations on the bills: determine whether to create a Department of Sports or Department of Youth and Sports; clarify the funding provision of the proposed law; and define the relationship and roles of the various sports agencies.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Michael Romero Ph.D. (Party-List, 1-PACMAN), author of House Bill 920, pushed for the creation of a Department of Sports. He recalled that a bill with similar</p>
	HBs 920 & 2521	Deputy Speaker Romero and Rep. Nograles (J.J.)	Creating the Department of Sports, defining its powers and functions and appropriating funds therefor	
	HB 4812	Rep. Guico	Creating and establishing the Philippine Youth and Sports Department, defining its powers, functions and responsibilities, appropriating funds therefor	

<p>Continuation... Government Reorganization jt. w/ Youth and Sports Development</p>				<p>subject matter was filed during the 17th Congress, but was not passed into law. Hence, he hopes that during this 18th Congress, the proposed law will finally be enacted.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Puno, author of HB 214, underscored the importance of the proposed law. He said that the Philippines has consistently endeavored to declare a national policy for sports but has not effectively done so up to this time. He added that the country is the only ASEAN member without a cabinet-level government sports agency. Thus, he said, it is necessary to establish an independent sports body, such as the Department of Sports, which will oversee efforts to identify, develop, and propagate the number of Filipinos with potential to become world-class athletes.</p> <p>Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA), author of HB 2521, said that the country used to have a cabinet-level agency for sports through the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS). However, with the reorganization of DECS into the Department of Education (DepEd), its sports programs were transferred to the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC). Through the proposed law, Rep. Nograles hopes to return sports development program as a national priority by creating a Department of Sports.</p> <p>Baguio City Rep. Mark Go noticed that in HB 214, the PSC will be abolished and its powers, functions, and facilities will be transferred to the proposed Department of Sports. He then asked what will happen to the different sports organizations/associations in the country once the proposed law is enacted.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Puno said that his bill is silent about the other agencies and organizations that might be affected by the passage of the proposed law. Thus, he wants to hear their side to know their views on the matter.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Romero manifested that instead of abolishing the PSC, it may be allowed to continue to exist but may be placed under the proposed Department of Sports.</p> <p>Sought to comment on the bills, PSC Chairperson William Ramirez said that he supports the intent of the bills. However, he manifested that some sports associations worry that if the PSC will be abolished, the funds that they presently receive from PSC might be affected. Another concern that he brought up to the body was the transfer of facilities to various government offices which will affect the athletes' access to these facilities for their training. He said that these concerns may be deliberated on more thoroughly by the TWG.</p>
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Youth and Sports Development	HR 2124	Rep. Dalipe	Commending the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) led by its Chairman William 'Butch' Ramirez for the historic and exemplary performance of the Philippine delegation in the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Faustino Michael Carlos Dy III, agreed to consolidate House Resolution 2124 with HR 2005, which was previously adopted. Thereafter, the Committee approved the Substitute Resolution and the corresponding Committee Report, subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>Rep. Dy informed the Committee that on August 24, the Committee adopted HR 2005, which commends and supports the 24 Filipino athletes who qualified in the Olympics and Paralympics 2020.</p> <p>It was the Chair who suggested that HR 2124 be consolidated with HR 2005 as these two measures both aim to commend the people behind the exemplary performance of the Philippine delegation in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. He also suggested that Philippine Chef de Mission for the Tokyo Olympics Mariano Araneta be included among those who will receive a commendation.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Jose "Mannix" Dalipe (2nd District, Zamboanga City), author of HR 2124, was amenable to the Chair's suggestions.</p>

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES				
COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Economic Affairs jt. w/ Information and Communications Technology (Technical Working Group)	HBs 6787, 7049 & 7153	Reps. Tutor, Siao, and Vargas	Providing for a national digital transformation policy	The joint technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), will deliberate further on the four House Bills in its next meeting using HB 6874 as the lead bill. The Secretariat was directed to prepare a comparative matrix on the four bills.
	HB 6874	Rep. Benitez	Providing for a comprehensive policy to accelerate and harness the digital revolution to foster inclusive economic growth, sustainable development, and	

<p>Continuation... Economic Affairs jt. w/ Information and Communications Technology (Technical Working Group)</p>			<p>participatory governance</p>	<p>The bills seek to establish a comprehensive national policy on digital transformation to keep up with the increasingly digitalizing world and catalyze economic recovery amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. A National Digital Council will be created which shall formulate and implement plans and strategies to accelerate and harness advances in digital technology.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the TWG continued to hear the position of concerned government agencies on the proposed measures.</p> <p>The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) expressed support for the bills and gave the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the DICT in the list of agencies that will develop the digital literacy framework as proposed in HB 6874; • Establish standards to secure and protect the confidentiality, integrity, and authenticity of data, and to ensure that data users of any platform or online tool for digitalization will be protected; and • Involve the different information and communications technology (ICT) industry players, not just telecommunication companies, in promoting digital innovation and transformation in business and government. <p>Also in favor of the intent of the bills were the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Budget and Management, National Economic and Development Authority, Anti-Red Tape Authority, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority.</p> <p>The resource persons also committed to submit their respective position papers on the bills, for the TWG's consideration.</p>
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