



Committee Daily Bulletin

18th Congress
Third Regular Session

A publication of the Committee Affairs Department

Vol. III No. 97
November 11, 2021

COMMITTEE MEETINGS ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Basic Education and Culture	Substitute Bill to HB 7621	Rep. De Venecia	Establishing a framework for funding the development and operations of the National Museum of the Philippines through the annual General Appropriations Act to complement and support the development of K-12 education in the country	<p>The Committee, presided by Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon), approved the Substitute Bill to HB 7621 subject to style and amendment. The corresponding Committee Report was likewise approved.</p> <p>At the outset, Deputy Speaker Escudero said that in today's meeting, the Committee will hear the comments and recommendations of the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) in relation to the provision of funds for the development and operations of the National Museum of the Philippines (NMP), an agency attached to the DepEd.</p> <p>DepEd Assistant Secretary Ramon Fiel Abcede said that DepEd proposes that the NMP's annual budget be pegged at one fourth of one percent or 0.25% of DepEd's annual appropriations. However, Abcede emphasized that such funding shall not be part of the Department's budget, explaining that the proposed percentage is meant only as basis for NMP's annual budget in proportion to that of DepEd's.</p> <p>Rep. Rosanna "Ria" Vergara (3rd District, Nueva Ecija), co-author HB 7621, said that she is amenable to the proposal of DepEd. In addition, she said that the proposed law also provides that additional appropriations for the NMP may be sourced from the DepEd subject to the latter's assessment and approval.</p> <p>DBM Supervising Budget and Management Specialist Edelita Ocampo said that DBM's position paper is still being reviewed by the DBM senior officials. Nevertheless, she reiterated that the DBM is constrained from endorsing the proposed law. She said that pegging the NMP's annual budget allocation based on a certain percentage of another agency's budget contradicts the essence of annual budget preparation and congressional review, effectively taking away the power of the purse from Congress.</p> <p>Ocampo also suggested the deletion of Section 6 of the proposed law which pertains to the endowment fund that will be made available to the NMP to fund its needed capital outlays.</p>

<p>Continuation... Basic Education and Culture</p>				<p>Rep. Christopher de Venecia (4th District, Pangasinan), principal author of HB 7621, insisted that the budget allocation of the NMP should be pegged at one fourth of one percent of the DepEd's annual budget allocation to ensure that the agency receives adequate funding. He, however, is amenable to the deletion of Section 6.</p> <p>NMP Director General Jeremy Barns expressed support for the bill. He committed that the NMP will ensure that every peso allocated to the agency under the proposed law will be properly and judiciously spent.</p>
	<p>HB 5905</p>	<p>Rep. Dalipe</p>	<p>Establishing a national high school in Barangay Licomo in Zamboanga City to be known as the Sinoropan National High School and appropriating funds therefor</p>	<p>The Committee approved HB 5905 subject to style and amendment. The corresponding Committee Report was likewise approved.</p> <p>Rep. Manuel Jose "Mannix" Dalipe (2nd District, Zamboanga City), author of HB 5905, said that his bill seeks to establish a national high school in the City of Zamboanga, which will be known as Sinoropan National High School. Rep. Dalipe clarified that the location of the proposed national high school will be situated in Brgy. Licomo instead of Brgy. Vitali which was originally stated in the bill. The proposed law, according to Rep. Dalipe, will benefit the residents of the five adjacent barangays in his district.</p> <p>DepEd Assistant Secretary Abcede and DepEd Zamboanga City Schools Division Superintendent Roy Tuballa expressed support for HB 5905.</p>
<p>Government Enterprises and Privatization jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture</p>	<p>HB 1580</p>	<p>Deputy Speaker Hataman</p>	<p>Providing for the promotion, protection, and conservation of the traditional arts in Mindanao and Sulu, creating for the purpose the Institute for Sulu and Mindanao Traditional Arts, and appropriating funds therefor</p>	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep Eric Olivarez (1st District, Parañaque City), Chair of the Committee on Government Enterprises and Privatization, and Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon) of the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, approved House Bill 1580 subject to style and amendment.</p> <p>Rep. Olivarez said that the proposed law aims to protect and preserve the various physical and visual representations of the distinctive traits, artistry, visions, and experiences of the diverse ethnic groups in Mindanao.</p> <p>Likewise, Deputy Speaker Escudero said that HB 1580 seeks to create a government corporate body that will study how the traditional arts in Sulu and Mindanao, such as weaving, metallurgy, metalsmithing, music, and epic, can be sustained and kept viable as a source of livelihood and means of expression and identity for the people of Mindanao.</p> <p>Rep. Amihilda Sangcopan (Party-List, AMIN), co-author of HB 1580, pushed for the passage of the proposed law. She mentioned that the explanatory note attached to the bill shall serve as her sponsorship speech.</p>

<p>Continuation... Government Enterprises and Privatization jt. w/ Basic Education and Culture</p>				<p>HB 1580 provides for the creation of the Institute for Sulu and Mindanao Traditional Arts or INSUMINTRA, which will be tasked to formulate, implement, and monitor policies, plans and cultural programs, projects, and activities that promote, preserve, and develop the traditional arts and culture in Mindanao and Sulu.</p> <p>Expressing support for the bill were Mayor Sitti Djalia Turabin Hataman of Isabela City, Basilan, who was also a former lawmaker, and famed curator Marian Pastor Roces.</p> <p>Deputy Speaker Escudero and Baguio City Rep. Mark Go asked to which agency the proposed INSUMINTRA will be attached for purposes of fund administration. Both noted that the bill does not mention which particular government agency will receive the funding in behalf of the proposed body.</p> <p>Under the bill, the funding necessary for the establishment of INSUMINTRA shall be sourced from any available funds of the National Treasury, and thereafter the funding needed for its continued operations shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.</p> <p>Rep. Go suggested that the INSUMINTRA be attached to the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). He also suggested that a representative from the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) be included in the Board of Trustees of the INSUMINTRA.</p> <p>Rep. Sangcopan was amenable to Rep. Go's suggestions as long as the independence of the proposed Institute remains.</p> <p>The NCCA representative Fatimah Kankan said that although the purpose of the bill is consistent with the mandate of the agency, it will be prudent to study the bill further. She said the NCCA will submit its position paper at the soonest possible time.</p> <p>On the other hand, Bangsamoro Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (BCPCH) Executive Director Ardan Sali said that the functions of the proposed INSUMINTRA will overlap with the functions of the BCPCH. He explained that the BCPCH is mandated to write the history of the Bangsamoro people and to establish and sustain the cultural programs and projects in the BARMM.</p> <p>Rep. Sangcopan, however, commented that INSUMINTRA will not focus on the preservation of the traditional arts and cultural heritage in BARMM alone but in the entire Mindanao.</p>
--	--	--	--	--

<p>Overseas Workers Affairs</p>	<p>HR 2009</p>	<p>Rep. Mendoza</p>	<p>Inquiry into the annual deployment cap on healthcare workers</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), will continue its inquiry into the issues raised in House Resolution 2009 in its next meeting.</p> <p>Rep. Mendoza said that based on what was agreed upon in the last hearing, he wrote the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to formally express the desire of the Committee to increase the deployment cap on healthcare workers (HCWs) from 6,500 to at least 10,000.</p> <p>Department of Health (DOH) Learning and Development Division Chief, Dr. Pretchell Tolentino, informed the body that the DOH has recommended to the IATF the increase in the deployment cap of HCWs to 10,000. However the IATF has not yet responded to the DOH's recommendation.</p> <p>On the other hand, Tolentino said that the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) issued POEA Advisory 144 series of 2021, dated October 26, which temporarily suspends the deployment of HCWs as the 6,500 deployment cap for this year has already been reached.</p> <p>POEA Administrator Bernard Olalia confirmed the issuance of the latest advisory. He, however, said that HCWs who were already issued an Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC) are not covered by the temporary suspension and will be allowed to depart for their overseas employment. Olalia assured the body that POEA, being a member of the technical working group (TWG) reviewing the deployment cap, is also pushing for the increase of the same. However, the POEA, like the DOH, is still awaiting the decision of the IATF on the matter, Olalia added.</p> <p>Rep. Ferdinand Gaité (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA) said that in order to encourage more Filipino nurses to stay and work in the country, they should be given competitive salaries and benefits.</p> <p>In response, Tolentino said that DOH is moving towards standardizing the salaries of nurses in both the public and private hospitals. She disclosed that at present, the entry level for nurses in government hospitals is Salary Grade 15, which is equivalent to a salary of P33,575 monthly.</p> <p>Filipino Nurses United Vice President Eleanor Nolasco lamented that there are some hospitals managed by local government units (LGUs) that are not complying with the DOH-prescribed salary for nurses.</p> <p>Tolentino advised Nolasco to bring the matter up with the Department of Budget and Management because the DOH has no control</p>
--	----------------	---------------------	---	--

Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs				<p>over the LGUs with regard to the delivery of health services as these have already been devolved to the local governments.</p> <p>Philippine Nurses Association National President Melbert Reyes, voicing his objection to the imposition of the deployment cap, asserted that the government should not deny the nurses their right to seek a better life through better paying jobs abroad.</p>
	HR 2198	Rep. Garin (S.)	<p>Inquiry into the Bureau of Quarantine's contract with Pisopay for the issuance of international vaccine certificate as proof of vaccination against COVID-19</p>	<p>The Committee terminated its inquiry into the issues raised in HR 2198. The Secretariat will prepare the corresponding Committee Report.</p> <p>As stated in HR 2198, the Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ), an attached agency of the DOH, was tasked to issue the international vaccine certification (ICV) or "yellow card" as proof of vaccination against COVID-19. However, in order to obtain the ICV, one has to book an appointment through the BOQ website and pay P300 for the issuance of the certificate and another P70 for the convenience fee, thereby adding to the financial burden of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) wishing to return to their work abroad. The BOQ partnered with fintech (financial technology) company PisoPay to receive the payment for the issuance of the ICV.</p> <p>The Chair said that based on the submitted documents by the BOQ, its contract with PisoPay concluded on September 30, 2021. He then asked the BOQ to confirm if the contract has indeed ended.</p> <p>BOQ Director IV Dr. Ferdinand Salcedo said that in deference to the suggestions of the Committee during its previous hearing on the matter, the BOQ ended its Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with PisoPay on September 30. However, its services were extended to ensure continuity of service to international travelers, especially the OFWs, while the BOQ is preparing the new Terms of Reference (TOR) for the new online booking system, which will include a reduction in the cost of issuing the ICV.</p> <p>Salcedo also informed the Committee that the BOQ now realizes that it has to comply with the requirements of Republic Act 9184 or the Government Procurement Reform Act and other laws in procuring services from private entities. In the Committee's previous meeting, the BOQ opined that the questioned contract between BOQ and PisoPay is not covered by RA 9184. Salcedo added that the BOQ, through its legal department, is now consulting with the Government Procurement Policy Board and the Public-Private Partnership Center to make sure that the Bureau strictly adheres to the procurement laws and processes.</p>

Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs				<p>Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) said that while there may be no malicious intent in the transactions of BOQ with PisoPay, he pointed out that BOQ should be aware that all government contracts with private service providers need to comply with legal, financial and technical requirements under existing laws.</p> <p>Rep. Nograles went on to say that the service contracted by BOQ with PisoPay is outside of the company's line of business, which is limited to remittance services, as stated in its Articles of Incorporation. Likewise, Rep. Nograles noted that PisoPay lacks the financial capacity to transact business with BOQ, as the company earlier admitted that it has more liabilities than assets, or a negative Net Financial Contracting Capacity, as of end of 2020.</p> <p>PisoPay President Ariel Surca admitted that his company may not be that financially capable but maintained that PisoPay is technically qualified to perform the services contracted by BOQ. Surca presented to the Committee PisoPay's Certificate of Registration with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas as an operator of payment systems.</p>
Senior Citizens jt. w/ Persons with Disabilities (Special Committees)	HRs 1450 & 1880	Reps. Ordanes and Vargas	Calling/urging the Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Social Welfare and Development, National Commission on Senior Citizens, National Commission on Disability Affairs, and other relevant government agencies to immediately draft and implement guidelines on the applicability of senior citizens and persons with disabilities' (PWD) discounts and privileges on all online transactions	<p>The Joint Committee, co-chaired by Rep. Rodolfo Ordanes (Party-List, Senior Citizens), Chair of the Committee on Senior Citizens, and Rep. Ma. Lourdes Arroyo (5th District, Negros Occidental), Chair of the Committee on Persons with Disabilities, adopted the four House Resolutions. The Secretariat was directed to consolidate the measures.</p> <p>In her opening remarks, Rep. Arroyo stressed that business establishments are required to give 20% discount and exemption from the valued-added tax for goods and services purchased by senior citizens (SCs) and PWDs pursuant to Republic Act 9944 or the Expanded Seniors Citizens Act of 2010 and RA 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. The laws' requirements were largely observed by business establishments before the COVID-19 pandemic, when transactions were being made at their physical stores.</p> <p>However, at the onset of the pandemic, business establishments resorted to the use of e-commerce platforms and online delivery applications, such as Grab and Foodpanda, to sell and deliver their goods to the consumers, ignoring the required discounts for SCs and PWDs.</p> <p>Rep. Arroyo informed the body of the growing complaints coming from the sectors of SCs and PWDs about the non-implementation of the legally-mandated discounts on their online purchases. She pointed out that these sectors remain to be the most vulnerable during this</p>
	HR 1622	Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy	Investigation into the malicious practice of food delivery applications of not applying the senior citizen and PWD discounts in transactions made through them	
	HR 1626	Deputy Speaker Herrera-Dy	Investigation into the failure of food delivery applications to honor the senior citizens discount granted in accordance with RA 9994, otherwise known as the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010	

<p>Continuation... Senior Citizens jt. w/ Persons with Disabilities (Special Committees)</p>				<p>unprecedented time given that restrictions in movement are still in place. Hence, she urged the government, private sector, and stakeholders to work together in ensuring that their rights are upheld and that they receive the benefits due them.</p> <p>Rep. Ordanes agreed with the statement of Rep. Arroyo. He mentioned that HRs 1622 and 1626 call for an investigation of the issue of non-application of discounts for PWDs and SCs, while HRs 1450 and 1880 urge concerned government agencies to immediately draft and implement guidelines on the application of SC and PWD discounts on all online transactions.</p> <p>In today's meeting, the resource persons from Grab Philippines, Foodpanda Philippines, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and various advocacy groups from the SC and PWD sectors gave their insights and recommendations regarding the issues on non-application of discounts by food delivery apps and absence of clear guidelines in applying SC and PWD discounts on all online transactions.</p> <p>PWD Philippines President Arpee Lazaro said that the PWDs need the discounts and privileges even more during the pandemic when life has become more difficult. He added that the discounts must be extended in online transactions as well, saying that majority of consumer purchases are now being done through e-commerce platforms and applications.</p> <p>Acknowledging the fact that there might be some challenges in verifying the identity of PWDs and SCs and the legitimacy of their claims, Lazaro expressed willingness to provide technical assistance in developing the database for these sectors.</p> <p>Grab Public Affairs lawyer Jeifan-Ira Dizon informed the body that Grab provides discount codes for SCs and PWDs for their transport and food delivery services. The SCs and PWDs must manually apply for a discount code via the Grab App Help Center, which outlines a step-by-step procedure and verification of the application of discount codes.</p> <p>Dizon welcomed the creation of a database for the SCs and PWDs which will be of great help in preventing potential fraud and abuse of the discount privileges.</p> <p>On the part of Foodpanda, its Regulatory and Public Affairs Manager Rose Romero said that changes in its system to automatically reflect the discounts may take at least 6 to 12 months since it will require backend coding and programming.</p>
--	--	--	--	--

<p>Continuation... Senior Citizens jt. w/ Persons with Disabilities (Special Committees)</p>				<p>Nevertheless, Grab and Foodpanda said that they both have participated in the public consultations conducted by the DTI and DSWD in connection with the drafting of a Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) on the implementation of the discounts in online transactions.</p> <p>DSWD Program Management Bureau Director Wilma Naviamos confirmed that the DSWD has partnered with DTI in spearheading public consultations among stakeholders for the drafting of a JMC that will outline the guidelines in the grant of discounts to SCs and PWDs for their online purchases.</p> <p>In addition, DSWD Project Development Officer Rigel Kent Villacarlos said that a technical working group, composed of the DSWD, DTI, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Health, Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), National Council on Disability Affairs (NCDA), and National Commission of Senior Citizens, was created to fast-track the drafting of the guidelines.</p> <p>In reply to the query of Rep. Dahlia Loyola (5th District, Cavite) on the timeframe for the issuance of the JMC, DTI Consumer Policy and Advocacy Bureau Director Marcus Valdez II said that the JMC was supposed to have been issued last October. However, this was postponed because there were technical matters that needed to be addressed first, such as on the handling of consumer complaints and the administration of the discounts, which need to be consulted with the BIR and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).</p> <p>Reps. Ordanes, Arroyo, and Loyola urged the resource persons from the government agencies to fast-track the issuance of the JMC at the soonest possible time for the benefit of the vulnerable sectors of society.</p> <p>Expressing their support for the resolutions were representatives from the BSP, NCDA, National Anti-Poverty Commission-Senior Citizens Sectoral Council, Philippine Association of Retired Persons Inc, Angat PWD United, and Laban Konsyumer Inc.</p>
<p>Ways and Means</p>	<p>Draft Substitute Bill to HBs 10438, 10426, 10411, 243, HRs 2318 & 2320</p>	<p>Rep. Salceda, Deputy Speaker Rodriguez, Reps. Defensor, Zarate, Suntay, and Go (M.)</p>	<p>Amending Section 148 of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended, pertaining to the excise taxes on oil and fuel products</p>	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda (2nd District, Albay), approved the draft substitute bill to the six measures subject to style and amendment. The corresponding Committee Report was likewise approved.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Salceda recounted that during the meeting of the Committee last November 08, a technical working group (TWG) was constituted to finalize the substitute bill on the suspension of the excise taxes on fuel. The TWG, together with some authors of the measures, met on November 10</p>

<p>Continuation... Ways and Means</p>				<p>and incorporated in the draft substitute bill the relevant provisions that were discussed or agreed upon during the earlier deliberations on the measures.</p> <p>Committee Vice Chair Rep. Sharon Garin (Party-List, AAMBIS-OWA), head of the TWG, gave a summary of the key provisions of the draft substitute bill, which include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rate of excise tax on regular and premium gasoline shall be reverted to the rates before the Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion (TRAIN) Law was enacted, which is P4.35 per liter and P5.35 per liter, respectively. While, all other petroleum products will not be charged any excise tax during the period of suspension. • The suspension of the imposition of or increase in excise taxes shall be for a period of six months. (The TWG agreed that the exact period of suspension shall not be specified because it is still uncertain when the proposed law will be enacted.) • If the price of crude oil goes down to US\$65 per barrel or lower during the six-month period for four consecutive weeks, the suspension of the excise tax may be lifted. • A social impact stabilization fund (SISF) will be created to provide subsidies for affected sectors such as farmers, fisherfolk, and transport workers when prices of fuel increase. • A price monitoring provision will be included in the proposed law wherein retailers of fuel products shall be required to notify the DOE and DOF of changes in retail prices of their products. <p>Republic Act 10963 or the TRAIN Law raised excise taxes on fuel in three tranches from 2018 to 2020. The tax rates are currently at P10 per liter for gasoline, P6/L for diesel, P5/L for kerosene, and P3/L for the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).</p> <p>The Department of Finance (DOF) did not support the proposal to lower or suspend the fuel excise taxes. DOF Director IV Arvin Quiñones estimated that a six-month suspension of the fuel excise taxes would lead to foregone revenues of about P37.5 billion, which will impede the country's efforts towards economic recovery from the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Rep. Stella Luz Quimbo (2nd District, Marikina City) posited that the impact on revenue, as presented by Quiñones, is overstated because DOF failed to consider the expected increase in sales revenue resulting from the drop in the price of fuel, citing the economic concept of elasticity of demand.</p>
---	--	--	--	--

<p>Continuation... Ways and Means</p>				<p>In the meantime, Baguio City Rep. Mark Go said that the government may use its savings from the more than 180,000 unfilled <i>plantilla</i> positions in 2020 and 2021 to counter the possible deficit in the budget due to the proposed reduction in or suspension of excise taxes on fuel.</p> <p>Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Fiscal Planning and Reforms Bureau Director Yolanda Reyes agreed that sourcing the needed funds from savings in the existing budget is an option. Nonetheless, she opined that if the bill is eventually approved, it will definitely have repercussions on the 2022 budget.</p> <p>Reiterating the DBM stand on the matter, Reyes said that a targeted subsidy should be undertaken to address the problems of the affected sector. She added that the Development Budget Coordination Committee has already decided to release the amount of P1 billion to assist the different transport groups affected by the increase in fuel prices. The targeted subsidy will be coursed through the <i>Pantawid Pasada Program</i> being implemented by the Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC) reminded the Department of Energy to strengthen its monitoring of fuel smuggling activities and undertake actions against the perpetrators. He alleged that in his province, motorcycle owners are prompted to buy the 95 octane gasoline, which costs higher, because of claims that the regular gasoline (91 octane) being sold in the area is substandard and might have been smuggled, thus did not pass through quality check.</p> <p>After due deliberations on the substitute bill submitted by the TWG, the Committee agreed to amend certain provisions of the bill. Among the points agreed upon by the Committee were the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use octane ratings as basis for the reduction in excise tax rates of gasoline products; • Retain the pre-TRAIN excise tax of P4.35 per liter for gasoline with octane rating of 91 and below until the suspension is lifted; • Exclude the premium or high-octane gasoline with octane rating of 95 and above, which is currently subject to a P10-per-liter excise tax, from the suspension or reduction of tax rates; and • Reduce excise taxes on diesel, kerosene, and LPG to zero.
---	--	--	--	--

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP MEETING ON HOUSE MEASURES

COMMITTEE	MEASURES		SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/ DISCUSSION
	NO.	PRINCIPAL AUTHOR		
Local Government (Technical Working Group)	Substitute Bill to HBs 259, 2702, 3021, 4085, 5535, 5572, 6366 & 9264	Reps. Sato, Panotes, Palma, Marquez, Daza, Hofer, Yap (E.), and Deloso-Montalla	Converting capital towns into component cities of provinces without a city, amending for the purpose Section 450 of RA 7160, as amended, otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991	<p>The technical working group (TWG), chaired by Rep. Wilter "Sharky" Wee Palma II (1st District, Zamboanga Sibugay), approved the Substitute Bill to the eight bills.</p> <p>The proposed law amends Section 450 of Republic Act 7160 by adding a provision which states that "Notwithstanding the requisites prescribed under this Section, existing capital towns are hereby converted into component cities of provinces without a city upon approval by a majority of the votes cast in a plebiscite to be held in the said capital towns."</p> <p>In the TWG's previous meeting, Rep. Palma mentioned that the 26 provinces in the country that do not have component cities, independent component cities or highly urbanized cities are the following: Batanes, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Aurora, Marinduque, Occidental Mindoro, Romblon, Camarines Norte, Catanduanes, Aklan, Antique, Guimaras, Siguior, Biliran, Northern Samar, Zamboanga Sibugay, Camiguin, Davao de Oro (formerly Compostela Valley), Davao Occidental, Sarangani, Dinagat, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Abra, Apayao, and Ifugao.</p>

AGENCY BRIEFING

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	ACTION TAKEN/DISCUSSION
Overseas Workers Affairs	Update by concerned government agencies on the situation of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) affected by the COVID-19 pandemic	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Raymond Democrito Mendoza (Party-List, TUCP), continued to check on the condition and well-being of OFWs affected by the COVID-19 pandemic by asking concerned government agencies to give updates on the matter and on what they have done so far to assist the OFWs.</p> <p>Department of Foreign Affairs' Office of the Undersecretary of Migrant Affairs (DFA-OUMWA) Senior Special Assistant Jose Cabrera III reported that as of October 30, the DFA has repatriated a total of 106,666 land-based and sea-based OFWs.</p> <p>Department of Labor and Employment-International Labor Affairs Bureau (DOLE-ILAB) OIC-Director Lamberto Pastrana also reported that as of November 10, a total of 898,846 OFWs have been affected or displaced because of the pandemic. Out of this number, around 773,026 have been repatriated and transported to their hometowns; 78,289 opted to stay on-site; while 47,531 are yet to be repatriated. In providing support to the affected OFWs, the DOLE extends financial assistance through the DOLE-Abot Kamay ang Pagtulong sa OFWs (AKAP). A total of 540,876 OFWs have received a total amount of P5.48 Billion under the AKAP program.</p> <p>On the part of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), Administrator Hans Leo Cacdac said that OWWA has provided assistance to more than 778,000 affected OFWs as of</p>

<p>Continuation... Overseas Workers Affairs</p>		<p>October 2021. He added that that a total of 1.2 million OFWs have benefitted from OWWA's programs for OFWs and their dependents during the pandemic, Taal eruption, and onslaught of typhoons in late 2020. Likewise, livelihood and scholarship grants were extended to the OFWs and their dependents.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Administrator Bernard Olalia said that from January to October 2021, 612,542 OFWs have been deployed compared to 555,667 OFWs who were deployed last year when the pandemic started. With the upward trend in the deployment of OFWs, Olalia is hoping that next year the country would be able to attain the 2019 average monthly deployment of 100,000 OFWs.</p> <p>Replying to the query of Rep. Ferdinand Gaité (Party-List, BAYAN MUNA), Olalia said that there is an upward trend in the deployment of Filipino seafarers. He attributed this to the vaccination program of the government, which gave priority to the OFWs in order to fast-track their deployment abroad. He also acknowledged the efforts of the Committee in urging government agencies and stakeholders to facilitate the deployment of both sea-based and land-based OFWs.</p>
	<p>Update by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration on the case of the five domestic workers rescued from their employer in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia</p>	<p>The POEA Administrator reported on the results of POEA and DOLE's fact-finding investigation into the case of the rescued female domestic workers in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.</p> <p>Administrator Olalia said that based on the investigation, it was found that the employer, Retired General Ayed Thawab Al Jeaid, was not named as the direct employer in the workers' employment contracts and his exact address was also not stated.</p> <p>According to Olalia, the victims testified that they experienced physical and verbal abuse from Al Jeaid and his wife, Fetnah Metrek Al Qahtani, as well as from the head Filipino housekeeper Anita Cielo.</p> <p>After a thorough investigation, Olalia said the POEA recommended the blacklisting of Al Jeaid and his wife from hiring Filipino domestic workers. He added that the POEA filed appropriate cases against the local recruitment agencies involved in the deployment of the five OFWs.</p> <p>Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute President Susan Ople lauded the DOLE and POEA for their comprehensive investigation that confirmed the abusive behavior of the employers and for taking the necessary actions against those involved. Likewise, Ely Mae Ocampo, one of the rescued OFWs, thanked the Committee, POEA, and DOLE for the assistance extended to her and the other victims.</p>