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Journal

SESSION NO. 80

Tuesday, May 3, 2005

**THIRTEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

SESSION NO. 80
Tuesday, May 3, 2005

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:52 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Franklin M. Drilon, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Panfilo M. Lacson led the prayer, to wit:

Dear Lord,

As leaders of this nation, we rely on You since we recognize You as our source of strength. We will always seek what is best for our people in building our nation. But oftentimes, our own selfish endeavors overshadow what we genuinely seek for our fellowmen. Calm our minds and open our hearts so we may be able to truly listen to You. And that we may heed Your desire in order to bring a true purpose to our deeds.

We seek You, O Lord, to fight corruption and greed. Give us the strength to continuously toil and never seek rest as we labor in building our nation.

This we pray through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, the session was suspended.

It was 3:54 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:56 p.m., the session was resumed.

ROLL CALL

Upon the direction of the Chair, the Secretary of

the Senate, Oscar G. Yabes, called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Cayetano, C. P. S.	Gordon, R. J.
Drilon, F. M.	Lacson, P. M.
Ejercito Estrada, J.	Magsaysay Jr., R. B.
Ejercito Estrada, L. L. P.	Pangilinan, F. N.
Enrile, J. P.	Pimentel Jr., A. Q.
Flavier, J. M.	Roxas, M.

With 12 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Angara, Arroyo, Biazon, Lapid, Lim, Madrigal, Osmeña, Recto, Revilla and Villar arrived after the roll call.

Senator Defensor Santiago was absent on account of illness.

Senator Lapid was earlier inside the session hall before the roll call was made.

APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 79 and considered it approved, subject to the correction made by Senator Ejercito Estrada (J) on page 132, left column, first paragraph after the heading "INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR EJERCITO ESTRADA" to change the word "Augusto" to AGUSTIN.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Roxas acknowledged the presence of visitors from Mambusao, Capiz who were on a "Lakbay-Aral."

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

The Secretary of the Senate read the following matters and the Chair made the corresponding referrals:

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 1983, entitled

AN ACT CREATING THE LAKE LANAO DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY, DEFINING ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS AND DUTIES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREOF AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Biazon

To the Committees on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises; Economic Affairs; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1984, entitled

AN ACT AMENDING SECTION SIXTY-THREE OF REPUBLIC ACT NUMBERED SIXTY-NINE SEVENTY-FIVE OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1990" BY INSERTING THERETO A PARAGRAPH PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTEGRATED JAIL FACILITY IN METROPOLITAN MANILA AND OTHER HIGHLY URBANIZED CENTERS IN THE COUNTRY AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Villar

To the Committees on Public Order and Illegal Drugs; and Justice and Human Rights

Senate Bill No. 1985, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A PROVIDENT PERSONAL SAVINGS PLAN KNOWN AS THE PERSONAL EQUITY AND RETIREMENT ACCOUNT

Introduced by Senator Mar Roxas

To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 1986, entitled

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (DOH)

TO CARRY OUT PROGRAMS AND GRANTS REGARDING THE PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF ASTHMA AND RELATED RESPIRATORY PROBLEMS FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1987, entitled

AN ACT TO FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF MICROBICIDES TO PREVENT SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 1988, entitled

AN ACT TO INCORPORATE CARDIO-PULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR) TRAINING IN THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committee on Education, Arts and Culture

Senate Bill No. 1989, entitled

AN ACT TO PROVIDE EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS, PREVENTION, AND EDUCATION AMONG ELEMENTARY, SECONDARY, AND COLLEGE STUDENTS, THEIR PARENTS, AND GUARDIANS

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committees on Education, Arts and Culture; and Health and Demography

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Senate Bill No. 1990, entitled

AN ACT TO PROVIDE TRAINING ON VIOLENCE PREVENTION TO PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committees on Education, Arts and Culture; Youth, Women and Family Relations; and Finance

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 241, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COMMITTEE ON YOUTH, WOMEN AND FAMILY RELATIONS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, ON THE DELETERIOUS EFFECTS OF DIOXINS ON THE HEALTH OF THE CHILDREN, WOMEN AND THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY ALLEGEDLY EMANATING FROM INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT INC. (IWMI), AN INCINERATOR PLANT OPERATING IN BARANGAY AGUADO, TRECE MARTIRES CITY, CAVITE

Introduced by Senator M. A. Madrigal

To the Committees on Health and Demography; and Youth, Women and Family Relations

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 244, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING AND EXPRESSING GRATITUDE TO THE PARTICIPANTS, ORGANIZERS, AND STAFF OF THE 112TH ASSEMBLY OF THE INTERNATIONAL PARLIAMENTARY UNION FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ASSEMBLY

Introduced by Senator Pangilinan

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 245, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ORDER AND ILLEGAL DRUGS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE NUMEROUS INCIDENTS OF DESTRUCTIVE FIRES IN THE COUNTRY

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committee on Public Order and Illegal Drugs

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 246, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS TO PREPARE FOR AND MITIGATE THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF THE EL NIÑO PHENOMENON, WHICH THE PHILIPPINE ATMOSPHERIC, GEOPHYSICAL AND ASTRO-NOMIC SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (PAG-ASA) FORECASTS TO OCCUR IN THE COMING MONTHS

Introduced by Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Committees on Agriculture and Food; and Environment and Natural Resources

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 247, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT; AND FOREIGN RELATIONS, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE TECHNICAL TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS AND OTHER BILATERAL

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TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER PROGRAM ENTERED INTO BY THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAME AND TO ENSURE THAT THE PROFESSIONAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF FILIPINO TRAINEES ARE UPHELD AT ALL TIMES

Introduced by Senator Mar Roxas

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; and Foreign Relations

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 248, entitled

RESOLUTION URGING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, EMPLOYMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT, TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, INTO THE MANDATE OF OVERSEAS WORKERS WELFARE ADMINISTRATION (OWWA) IN EXTENDING THE BENEFITS AND SERVICES PROVIDED FOR UNDER OUR LAWS TO OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKERS (OFWs), TO REVIEW THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAME AND TO ENSURE THAT OWWA REMAINS TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OFWS

Introduced by Senator Mar Roxas

To the Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee Report No. 19, prepared and submitted by the Committee on Foreign Relations on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 242, entitled

RESOLUTION CONCURRING IN THE RATIFICATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS IN THE

WESTERN AND CENTRAL PACIFIC OCEAN AND ITS ANNEXES,

recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsor: Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

Committee Report No. 20, prepared and submitted by the Committee on Foreign Relations on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 243, entitled

RESOLUTION CONCURRING IN THE RATIFICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION CONVENTION CONCERNING FORCED OR COMPULSORY LABOUR (FORCED LABOR CONVENTION),

recommending its approval without amendment.

Sponsor: Senator Defensor Santiago, Miriam

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 249, entitled

RESOLUTION POSTHUMOUSLY COMMENDING FORMER PHIVOLCS DIRECTOR DR. RAYMUNDO S. PUNONGBAYAN AND THE MEMBERS OF THE RESETTLEMENT INVESTIGATION TEAM FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO HUMANITY

Introduced by Senator Gordon

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 250, entitled

RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND COMMERCE TO INVESTIGATE THE ALLEGED WILFULL EVASION BY THE PACIFIC PLANS INCORPORATED OF ITS OBLIGATIONS TO

ITS CREDITORS, WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF PROPOSING LEGISLATION TO PREVENT AND PENALIZE CORPORATE MANEUVERINGS AND OTHER ACTS OF INSURANCE COMPANIES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Pangilinan

To the Committees on Banks, Financial Institutions and Currencies; and Trade and Commerce

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee Report No. 21, submitted by the Committee on National Defense and Security on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 101, introduced by Senators Pimentel Jr., Enrile, Lacson, Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada, Lim and Angara, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE TO CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION IN AID OF LEGISLATION ON THE PROMOTION SYSTEM OF THE ARMED FORCES,

recommending the adoption of this Report and the immediate implementation of its recommendation.

Sponsor: Senator Biazon

To the Calendar for Ordinary Business

QUESTION OF PRIVILEGE OF SENATOR GORDON

Rising to a question of personal and collective privilege, Senator Gordon spoke on the untimely deaths of former director of the Phivolcs and governor of the Philippine National Red Cross, Dr. Raymundo Punongbayan, along with four other people from Phivolcs, as well as four members of the Philippine Air Force.

The full text of his speech follows:

Last April 28, 2005, the group headed by Director Punongbayan as governor of the Philippine National Red Cross and local

coordinator of Earthquake and Mega Cities Initiative went on a mission as part of an investigation team for the assessment of national hazards in Dingalan, Aurora and Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, as well as other areas for the identification of possible safe sites for the resettlement and rehabilitation of communities affected by the 2004 typhoons.

The group took off at 6:58 a.m. from Villamor Air Force Base and refueled at Fort Magsaysay, Laur, Nueva Ecija, and then took off at 8:41 a.m. for Dingalan, Aurora. By 10:14 a.m., the crash was reported at the Philippine Air Force, and by 11:30 a.m., this Representation heard the news and immediately rushed to the Philippine Air Force Headquarters to try and coordinate the rescue, if any, and to handle the funeral arrangements and other assistance to the families of the victims.

The deaths of Dr. Punongbayan and company reflect the hazards which volunteers, scientists and soldiers undertake in order to save lives. They were there because they wanted to make sure that Dingalan, along with other areas in the 13 ravaged provinces, would be safe from harm's way.

Dr. Punongbayan went earlier in the week to Dingalan upon my request to check by land the dangers that would affect the area because the boulders were endangering homes and practically buried other homes. There was an awful lot of illegally cut logs or just debris from the forest as well as big boulders threatening the entire town of Dingalan.

Dr. Punongbayan went directly to Dingalan with other people from Phivolcs and the Red Cross. And when he came back, he reported to me that he would have to have an aerial survey of the area in order to have a hazard map to expedite the transfer of people who were in harm's way as well as find new sites where these people could be transferred so that they would not be in danger.

Somewhere along the way, the helicopter crashed, and together with it died all these

people who were serving our country rather proudly. They left behind their families but their loss also constitutes a major loss to our nation. After all, these people belong to the *crème de la crème* of our geologists.

The experience alone of Dr. Punongbayan is immeasurable. He was the director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology from 1983 to December 13, 2002. He graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Science in Geology from the University of the Philippines and obtained his PhD in Geology from the University of Colorado in 1972. He was a professor, a consultant, a public servant, an author, and a volunteer, as well as father to four children. After retirement, he joined the Red Cross very actively where he was elected governor..

He was into the topics of earth sciences but it is in the fields of volcanology and seismology that he became known far and wide in the local and international geoscientific communities.

Under his stewardship, Phivolcs had evolved from an obscure agency to an institution recognized both locally and internationally as an authority on volcanological and seismological phenomena.

The present status of Phivolcs was made possible through his able leadership and exceptional science-management skills. He accomplished this by restructuring the activities of the institute and directed it to pursue aggressive research and development programs. The infusion of young blood in the roster of Phivolcs personnel, including changes and improvement in staffing pattern, provision of high quality training and education to promising staff, and establishment of linkages, were made possible.

Dr. Punongbayan became known for his outstanding expertise in handling two world events: the July 16, 1990 Luzon earthquake; and the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruptions.

In fact, during the Mt. Pinatubo eruptions, I always called him before we went on top

of the mountains surrounding Mt. Pinatubo to rescue the Aetas.

Throughout his 40 years as Phivolcs director, he managed to infuse his vision and mission to the institute that is now almost synonymous to his name. To date, because of the leadership of Dr. Punongbayan, Phivolcs had been the recipient of three awards from the United States, the Philippines and the United Nations. Dr. Punongbayan himself has been awarded 19 times and recognized for his role in science and disaster management.

In April 2003, in Nice, France, he was awarded the Sergé Soloviev Medal by the European Geophysical Society. The award is for scientists who have shown exceptional contributions to increasing our knowledge of the basic principles of natural hazards as well as their proper assessment with the view of protecting the environment and saving lives and properties. He won the 2001 National Disaster Coordinating Council Special Citation Award; in 1998, Dioscoro L. Umali Medal Outstanding Science Administrator Award; in 1996, the Model Public Servant of the Year, and was also the *Lingkod Bayan* Presidential Awards Winner; and in 1991, the Filipino of the Year Awardee of the *Philippine Daily Inquirer*.

The death of Dr. Punongbayan constitutes a major loss for our country in science, especially for young people who would have learned a lot more, as well as the many services he could have undertaken, in view of the fact that there is a paradigm shift in the way disasters occur today in the matter of tsunamis, for example, or earthquakes or volcanoes, which have oftentimes been a problem in our country.

Other people from Phivolcs died with him. Dr. Jessie Daligdig, 44 years old, Associate Scientist, DOST. He joined Phivolcs in 1983 after graduating from the University of the Philippines with a degree of B.S. Geology in 1983. He received his Post-Graduate Diploma in Geological Survey from International Institute for Aerospace Survey and Earth Sciences (ITC) in The

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Netherlands in 1989. Jess Daligdig also has a PhD from Kyoto University. He was the study leader for the mapping of the ground rupture of the July 16, 1990 Luzon earthquake and eventually led the institute's project on *Active Faults Studies in the Philippines*, including the mapping of the Marikina Valley Fault System in 1991.

In 1991, he was among Phivolcs personnel who were given Individual Citation Award Certificates from the Secretary of the United States Department of Interior in connection with the monitoring of the 1991 eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. He was a Phivolcs Model Employee for the same year.

I also met Jess Daligdig during the time that Mt. Pinatubo was erupting, as well as all the time that we were trying to mitigate the disasters of lahar.

The third gentleman who died was Dr. Norman Tungol, 40 years of age, Chief Science Research Specialist; graduated from UP with a degree of B.S. Geology, placed 4th in the Philippine Licensure Examinations in Geology in 1987. He joined Phivolcs in 1991 as a Science Research Specialist and immediately participated in the monitoring, mapping and assessment of Pinatubo lahars. In 1993, he was part of the mapping and trenching team of the Marikina Valley Fault System again leading to an estimate of the recurrence interval of large earthquakes. Norman also had a PhD from the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. He spent five years of his life in the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. His wife wanted to stay in New Zealand but he insisted on returning home. I spoke with his wife, Malou, and told her that her husband was a hero. And her response was she wanted to stay in New Zealand, but Norman wanted to come back and serve his country. His life was here. He was educated here and he wanted to be able to make his contributions to his country. What was his salary? P22,000 a month.

Mr. Dindo Javier, Science Research Analyst, 41 years old. He worked as part of the audio-visual documentation unit of

Phivolcs. He was part of the Mt. Pinatubo Team. He was also the artist who designed many of Phivolcs' information materials which included the Earthquake Comic Series produced in 1997 so that young people would understand the nature of volcanoes, earthquakes, lahars; and posters such as *What to do Before, During and After an Earthquake* which we in the Philippine National Red Cross use to this day.

As video editor, he produced for Phivolcs three important short video features – *Killer Quake: 16 July 1990*; *Ang Lahar: Pagsubok ba o Paghamon*; and *The Earth Trembled... Then Killer Waves Came: 15 November 1994 Mindoro Earthquake*. These materials greatly helped in the information education campaign of Phivolcs as well as the Red Cross about earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. He designed the first tsunami marker in the Philippines which was erected in Baler, Aurora, on January 2005, by the Association of Barangay Captains and the Office of Mayor Arturo Angara.

Mr. Orlando Abengoza, Science Research Researcher, 49 years old. He joined Phivolcs in 1994 as a Budget Assistant and was promoted to his position as a Science Research Assistant. His main task was to provide technical assistance and accompany most of the institute's technical personnel in their fieldwork. Like most Phivolcs personnel, his itinerary brought him to the most unfriendly terrain at the most inconvenient time such as the monitoring of Mt. Pinatubo lahars during the wet seasons; mapping of active faults, volcanoes and emergency investigations during earthquakes and volcano crises.

These were the scientists, young as they were, and as well-defined in their educational capabilities as they were, who passed away in the helicopter crash that transpired last April 28.

Accompanying them were our soldiers from the Philippine Air Force: 1st Lt. Reynaldo Gerodias, pilot; 1st Lt. Jason Salazar, co-pilot; S/Sgt. Edgar Ramolete who left behind young children who are going to be

taken care of insofar as their daily needs and their scholarships are concerned but their future has become very bleak; and Airman First Class Wilbert Tacata.

These are our soldiers who are sometimes maligned because of the malevolence of some officers within the military but we should not generalize. Precisely, these people went in harm's way many times—at the height of many of the disasters, particularly during the last typhoons that ravished our country. These were the people who flew very dangerous missions over Quezon. *Ang tawag nila doon ay ang pabrika ng hangin na delikado talaga sa mga helicopter pilots.* I have gone through those *pabrika ng hangin* mountains in Quezon. Believe me, they are indeed dangerous. They tell me so and they do so knowing that one mistake or one failure of the engine could result in deaths and, in fact, this happened last week.

Today, therefore, we stand before the Senate to rightly give them the recognition that must be due heroes of our country.

Dr. Punongbayan did not have to go to Dingalan. After all, he had already retired and proudly at that. Dr. Punongbayan was a volunteer of the Red Cross. He went to Dingalan on his own, upon our request to examine by land – that was my first request – the dangers of Dingalan. And when he came back, he insisted on going back to draw a hazard mapping plan for these areas.

In fact, I have the last letter that he wrote perhaps in his life. He addressed it to me by e-mail which I did not open that night because I already made up my mind not to go because I had to go to a ceremony where the remains of Mrs. Quezon were to be transferred to Quezon Memorial.

But I did not want to open it because I would have gone with him as we have done so two or three times in the past. At one time we went to Quezon by helicopter and we could not go in because the pilot said it was too dangerous. We wanted to but the pilot said “no” and we did not. At one time we had to be grounded.

Finally, he went on the third and last trip that put him in the pages of our history.

His e-mail said:

“To address your deep concern about unnecessary loss of life and property that may befall on the town of Dingalan, Aurora Province, due to flash floods, a field survey was conducted on 23 April 2005 by a team composed of Dr. Norman Tungol, Chief Geologist of Phivolcs, Mr. Albert Muñoz of Disaster Management of the PNRC, and myself.

The field survey was aimed in assessing the adverse impacts on Dingalan by the December 2004 flash-floods and in determining the vulnerability of the town to future flash floods.”

He made these observations in this report. And the last paragraph that I would like to quote is this:

“The above observations need confirmation via aerial survey.”

Hindi po niya ako tinigilan na humingi ng eroplano at sana makakuha ng helicopter para sa ganoon with the use of a helicopter that will allow us to fully map the areas impacted by flash floods and possibly by debris flows; and document the landslide scars in the watersheds of the above-mentioned rivers. He said, “...map that will serve as basis for isolating areas needing to the evacuated and determining, designing appropriate structural counter measures to protect people and places in Dingalan that can be saved.”

The man died for his country, and along with him four others. The PhDs, 40 years old, 47 years old, some people with kids, who will be insecure as far as their scholarships are concerned.

The soldiers died. They too have kids. They too have flown these missions in the past. Never mind the dangers. It had to be done. And somebody had to do it and they

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all volunteered for it. Although among the soldiers, it was part of the line of duty. And at Phivolcs, they never shirked from their responsibility. They knew the tasks that lay ahead that had to be done and that was to keep our people from harm's way. And they did it gloriously.

Dr. Punongbayan's death was a tremendous loss not only for the Philippine National Red Cross but also for the entire country. His dedication to save lives and alleviate human suffering, his expertise and professionalism, especially in the field of disaster relief, have been invaluable to the Red Cross throughout these many years of volunteer service.

As a member of the Board of Governors, Dr. Punongbayan made remarkable contributions to the PNRC's policies and management. There was never any time and there was never a disaster where this Representation did not consult Dr. Punongbayan.

His inputs, always intelligent, and role throughout were vital to the implementation of the many efforts of the PNRC including where to transfer people who had been affected by landslides.

In his life, Dr. Punongbayan lived by principles and values that allowed him to serve our country and people to the best of his ability, ensuring the continued improvement and modernization of life-saving efforts through scientific and practical methods.

Just last week, he inspired numerous young PNRC volunteers when he spoke before a news conference in Bacolod City with this Representation.

I am privileged to have known Dr. Punongbayan personally for many years, having worked closer with him and other Phivolcs personnel, including some of those who died in the crash, during the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo in 1991, and during several national disasters. From my experience, they are some of the most competent,

professional and dedicated individuals in their field. Their support and assistance to the people of Olongapo and Central Luzon and to our country, in general, were valuable to our rescue and life-saving efforts during those challenging days.

Likewise, I have flown with many Philippine Air Force officers on several mercy missions and I know that they are well-trained, qualified and committed to the safety of their passengers. Like Dr. Punongbayan and the others, these air force officers as well as soldiers do a lot more for very, very little. And practically they risk their lives up to this day, as they fly on those old aircraft to save people from harm's way.

I trust the dedication of our men in uniform will be supported by continued enhancement and improvement of their training and equipment.

We commend and thank the Philippine Air Force for the valued recovery efforts immediately afterwards.

As we speak here today, we want you all to know that we are still trying to identify the remains of the four people of Phivolcs who died as well as of Dr. Punongbayan's. Policies should really come out of this disaster. One, I submit, is to give importance to our scientists in our country. *Napakadamot ng Pilipinas sa mga scientists ng ating bansa. Tingnan ninyo ang suweldo, P22,000 ang isang tao na may PhD na umalis sa New Zealand na nakapag-aral doon at nandoon na sila ng ilang taon pero bumalik pa rito sa ating bansa para sa ganoon makapagsilbi sa ating bayan. P22,000 a month is too little for these people, not to mention the fact that we all know that Dr. Punongbayan enhanced Phivolcs, using his influence, his expertise and his knowledge and the respect of the international communities to get equipment for Phivolcs, not only from Congress but from the international communities so that he could get the necessary implements to be able to guide our people in times of disaster*

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such as volcanic eruptions or for that matter tsunamis or earthquakes. Not only that, he constantly worked on teaching the young people, some of whom died in that crash, and to this day I am sure he took them over principally because he wanted them to benefit from his experience, share his talent, expertise, knowledge so that there would be continuity in the Phivolcs.

We need, therefore, to increase financial support for Filipino scientists for equipment, research, training and scientific investigations and missions. Part of the reasons why there are less casualties, for example, because of the lahars of yester-years in Mt. Pinatubo was Dr. Punongbayan and company including Dr. Kelvin Rodolfo — and all these young scientists who told the people in that area to prepare for lahar that suddenly might arise. They are responsible for having those people who are monitoring in the mountains so that during the rainy season they would be able to bring down the message to the people that there are rains in the mountain so that the people down below could immediately evacuate.

We must give national recognition to the men and women in the field of science for their outstanding contributions and achievements in their field of specialization.

We must provide venues to scientists to teach and pass on their knowledge and expertise by encouraging the youth to enter the field of science and technology.

Fourth, corollarily, we have to strengthen science education in the elementary, secondary and tertiary curricula.

All these, as leaders of our country, as Senators of the Republic, we must immediately do. Dr. Punongbayan went beyond his circle, beyond his professional expertise and joined organizations such as the Red Cross so that he could continue to serve. He died at the age of 68. This man was still flying helicopters, climbing mountains so that he could save people. And as we all know, Aurora, whose communities were under threat of debris flows which included huge boulders and logs, are perhaps

safer because we intend to continue the study that was left behind by Dr. Punongbayan. These people were men of science who used their knowledge, skills and experience to save lives. They perished in the line of duty and as such deserve our recognition and praise as outstanding Filipinos.

The best way to honor these fine Filipinos is to continue the mission that they began by completing the hazard mapping operations to identify danger zones and ensuring that these are not inhabited and communities in disaster-prone areas are resettled in safe sites.

Let me quote what Dr. Punongbayan said in his lifetime. "Human technology has not progressed to a point where we can influence the behavior of the earth's core. There is a need to build a culture of prevention. Preparedness is the key. The more we know, the more we understand the nature of nature, the more prepared we are." That was Dr. Punongbayan, loyal to his craft, professional down to his last breath.

Immanuel Kant said and I quote: "To yield to every whim of our curiosity and to see no bounds to our passion for research save the limitations of our abilities, demonstrates an enthusiasm that adorns science. But it is wisdom which has the merit to choose, among the innumerable problems that present themselves, precisely the one whose solution serves mankind the most."

All these people I have mentioned today served mankind with their utmost. They gave their lives. If we translate "Raymundo" in Spanish, it would be "King of the World" and Punongbayan in English is "Leader of Men." And I can say that today, the world is better because of people like Dr. Punongbayan and all the others.

Today, therefore, I filed Proposed Resolution No. 249 to honor all these people and I urge the Senate to pass it today. We have not sufficiently identified the people who died, but certainly, we should not wait until they have been all

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identified. And the resolution reads as follows:

Whereas, the provinces of Aurora and Nueva Ecija were hit by typhoons in 2004 which caused floods and landslides that ravaged entire communities and left thousands of families homeless and in need of resettlement;

Whereas, in a continuing effort to aid the members of these communities, the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) is surveying these provinces for safe areas that are not prone to disasters caused by typhoons, as possible locations to rebuild these ravaged communities, to prevent the occurrence of similar disasters;

Whereas, the PNRC requested former Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS) Director Raymundo S. Punongbayan, who is also a volunteer governor of the Philippine National Red Cross (PNRC) to survey barangays in Dingalan, Aurora and Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, which needed to be relocated because of their proximity to paths of the debris flows and the probability that their communities will be overrun by huge boulders and logs;

Whereas, Director Punongbayan formed a team composed of himself, Dr. Jessie A. Daligdig, Associate Scientist of the Department of Science and Technology, Dr. Norman Tungol, Chief Science Research Specialist, Mr. Dindo V. Javier, Science Research Analyst, and Mr. Orlando Abengoza, Science Research Assistant, to scientifically determine which barangays had to be relocated and identify safe sites for relocation;

Whereas, on April 28, 2005, the contingent left Villamor Airbase aboard the Philippine Air Force Huey UH-1H chopper with tail number Stringer 324, accompanied by 1st Lt. Reynaldo Gerodias as their pilot, 1st Lt. Jason Salazar, as co-pilot, S/Sgt. Edgar Ramolete and A1C Wilbert Tacata, to conduct an aerial survey of the Municipality of Dingalan;

Whereas, on the way to Dingalan, the chopper crashed into Mt. Namat, Barangay Ligaya, Nueva Ecija, instantly killing all those on board;

Whereas, Dr. Punongbayan devoted his entire career as a scientist to protecting Filipino communities from disasters and is credited with modernizing the PHIVOLCS to achieve this objective, and despite his retirement, chose to volunteer his services and his experience as a governor for the PNRC, exhibiting his continued commitment to the welfare of the Filipino people through disaster management;

Whereas, Dr. Jessie A. Daligdig, Dr. Norman M. Tungol, Mr. Dindo V. Javier, and Mr. Orlando S. Abengoza, are all veterans in the fight against disasters, in their various capacities as a part of the PHIVOLCS;

Whereas, the entire contingent was on a humanitarian mission to ensure the safety of Filipino communities from disasters, and lost their lives in the line of duty to save the lives of their countrymen, and as such due recognition must be given to their honorable sacrifice;

Now, therefore, be it resolved, as it is hereby resolved, to posthumously commend Dr. Raymundo S. Punongbayan, the above-named members of the PHIVOLCS team, Air Force pilots and soldiers who formed part of the contingent for the identification of resettlement areas in Aurora and Nueva Ecija, for their exemplary service to humanity through the performance of their duty to save lives.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR PIMENTEL

Senator Pimentel asked if the Huey helicopter that crashed was part of the U.S. excess equipment given to the Philippine government several years ago. Senator Gordon replied that it was part of the mission assistance pact.

Senator Pimentel related that initially, there were over a hundred helicopters but, at present, he noted, there are only about 10 or 13 units flying and the rest have been grounded and cannibalized to

get the serviceable parts. Senator Gordon disclosed that like the Hueys, the C130 planes also do not have available parts anymore. He related that he himself had been taking helicopters since the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo, and his standard answer when asked why he still rides them was, "It must be safe to ride the helicopters because the soldiers still fly them."

Senator Pimentel remarked that these helicopters are flying coffins, adding that the Huey helicopters should have been grounded were it not for the fact that the P7 billion AFP modernization fund disappeared during the Ramos years. Senator Gordon did not concede that the helicopters are unsafe, saying pilots fly them everyday. While he admitted that parts may not be available, he did not believe the military leadership is so irresponsible as to allow the pilots to fly the aircraft if they had not been adequately serviced. He added that, in fact, this might be the reason some of the aircraft had been cannibalized to a certain extent. He, however, conceded that part of the reason the AFP had not been modernized is that the P7 billion remains unaccounted for.

Clarifying that the thrust of his intervention is not to blame the soldiers, Senator Pimentel observed that many of them had been put at risk in situations which should not be allowed by a more prudent policy. He commented that when a pilot is ordered to fly on a mission, he would, in all likelihood, just take off out of sense of duty using a chopper that can still fly despite of all its defects. He surmised that such was the reason the pilots take all the daredevil flights in Aurora. He reiterated that partly to blame for the sad state of affairs and partly to blame for the loss of the lives, including that of Dr. Punongbayan, is the unscrupulous misuse of funds that were intended for the modernization of the AFP. He remarked that had the P7 billion been used properly, the disaster that overtook the lives of Dr. Punongbayan and his companions could have been averted.

Senator Gordon agreed as he stated that when the proper committee starts an investigation into whether there was a negligent misuse of funds, there should also be a decision whether the country needs a credible military capability, in terms of aircraft like helicopters and fighter jets. Noting that the Marchetti trainers were used to bring relief goods to Bicol, he revealed that the same

aircraft are used on missions to interdict the insurgents.

Asked whether the Marchetti refers to the Italian trainer plane, Senator Gordon replied in the affirmative, saying that it is also known as the "widow maker." Senator Pimentel remarked that it is another issue that should be looked into since young pilots are put at risk.

Senator Gordon underscored the need to modernize the capability of the armed forces and he disclosed that during medical missions, while the military has its own operating room equipment, it uses the PNRRC tents.

In closing, Senator Pimentel associated himself with Proposed Senate Resolution No. 249.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR LIM

Agreeing with the spirit of the resolution, Senator Lim wondered, however, whether it was sufficient as he noted that Dr. Punongbayan lost his life in the service of country and people. Senator Gordon underscored that initially such recognition could be accorded through a resolution adopted by the Senate. He pointed out that on the financial side, as chairman of the Philippine National Red Cross, he caused to be set aside P1 million from the membership fund as seed money for the scholarships of the children of those who perished in the incident. He clarified that he wanted the scholarship fund expanded so as to benefit the families of volunteers who either became incapacitated or lost their lives during rescue operations. He stated that earlier, he read that an international community donated P4 million in the name of Dr. Punongbayan.

Asked whether the government had shown the same concern, Senator Gordon bared that Defense Secretary Nonong Cruz had promised to match whatever benefits would be given by the Philippine National Red Cross as well as by the military to the PAF personnel and the Phivolcs volunteers. He asserted that for its part, the Senate could enact a law to institutionalize the fund for rescue volunteers.

Senator Lim stated that the fund could be established provided its source is identified. He decried that while the Bureau of Customs and Bureau of Internal Revenue personnel are rewarded

for meeting their quotas, soldiers and teachers who risk their lives in the performance of their duties remain unrewarded. He pointed out that yearly, government loses P43 billion in taxes on sin products, a portion of which could have spent on new helicopters.

Senator Lim noted that the former finance secretaries have recommended the repeal of the poison pill provision in the sin tax law that they claim has resulted in a P43 billion revenue loss annually. Senator Gordon said that a privilege speech on the matter should be delivered on the floor so that it could be referred to the proper committee for investigation. He stated that one of the conditions to make the new VAT system work is that smuggling and government corruption should be stopped. He underscored that the selflessness of Dr. Punongbayan and the others who perished in the crash should be inculcated in the minds of the people so that they are made aware that there are Filipinos who are willing to sacrifice their lives to help the people.

As to the status of the investigation on illegal logging operations in Aurora and Quezon that caused the death of about 1,000 people last year, Senator Gordon said that he did not know of any development related thereto. He stated that he went with Dr. Punongbayan during the aerial surveys in places like Aurora, Quezon, Nueva Vizcaya and Quirino. Government, he said, should allow the Phivolcs to continue the surveys.

Further, Senator Gordon stated that he also sent Dr. Punongbayan to Southern Leyte where the PNRC built 444 homes after trees and logs buried homes in Sta. Barbara. He noted that in some instances, the landslides were not caused by illegal logging but over-saturation, especially in areas that have underground streams.

Senator Lim commended Senator Gordon for his efforts in saving the lives of many Filipinos. On another matter, he requested that Senator Gordon, who is a member of the bicameral conference committee on the disagreeing provisions of the VAT bill, propose the repeal of the poison pill provision to enable government to benefit from P43 billion in revenues annually. Senator Gordon gave the assurance that he would echo Senator Lim's concerns to the other members of the committee.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR BIAZON

Senator Biazon stated that the issues in Senator Gordon's speech include the honor and benefits that should be granted to government workers who perform heroic acts; the environmental concerns in devastated areas; and the lack of equipment of the AFP.

Senator Gordon said that more than the environmental concerns, respect for the men and women of science who do great work that requires physical and mental prowess is an important issue. Equally important, he said, is taking care of volunteers in organizations like the PNRC so that more people would be encouraged to volunteer especially during times of difficulties.

Senator Biazon said that he was one of the authors of the AFP modernization law that was enacted in 1995 when the cost of the modernization program was estimated at P331 billion which has reached P650 billion to P700 billion because of the movement of the peso against the dollar. He stated that Joint Resolution No. 28, which was passed in the Tenth Congress, provided for the possible source of funds: P165 billion from Congress and P161 billion from another source. However, he said that government has only been able to provide P10.4 billion for the modernization program recently when the movement of the peso against the dollar reduced the buying power of the P10.4 billion relative to the 1995 requirements. Senator Gordon stated that while government lost the opportunity of a stronger peso in the early days, it is a monument to government's inability to make quick decisions based on national interest.

Senator Biazon pointed out that while the Estrada administration released P5 billion and the Arroyo administration gave P5.4 billion for the AFP modernization program, the Ramos administration failed to release about P7 billion to P8 billion from the proceeds of the disposal of the Fort Bonifacio military camp in Metro Manila.

Asked whether there has been any report on the cause of the helicopter crash that killed Dr. Punongbayan, Senator Gordon replied that the Philippine Air Force does not want to make any statements without basis. He said that the engine is intact but the body of the helicopter was burned to a crisp.

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Senator Biazon said that if the helicopter crashed because of poor weather conditions, it could not be attributed to the problems related to the AFP modernization program. However, he pointed out that if pilot error or mechanical trouble caused the crash, it only proves that pilots need modernized training and government, therefore, should address the issue of modernization.

Senator Gordon stated that there could have been adverse wind conditions at the time of the crash. He said that he still finds confidence in riding a Huey helicopter and a C-130. Nevertheless, he stated that pilots should be trained well and provided with modern equipment. Senator Biazon recalled the time he flew a helicopter with Senate President Drilon in bad weather and he sensed the nervousness not only of the passengers but also of the flight crew.

Upon further queries, Senator Gordon clarified that the helicopter that crashed was not one of the 20 helicopters that were refurbished in Singapore or one of the "20 plus 10" helicopters from the excess defense articles of the United States that was promised to the Philippines when it joined the Coalition of the Willing. He confirmed that the helicopter was part of the old stock and pointed out that although a Huey helicopter is an old aircraft, its engine and other parts are replaceable. He noted that the maintenance capability is good and parts are being replaced on time, adding that the "20 plus 10" meant twenty for the new aircraft and ten for the parts.

Senator Biazon stated that according to Senator Osmeña, one refurbished Huey costs about US\$4 million or P200 million. Senator Gordon confirmed that it is really that expensive.

On the Armed Forces' modernization program, Senator Biazon stated that a CH-43, CH-47 or the CH-53 transport assault helicopter costs about \$17 million to \$25 million and even the cheapest helicopter is still beyond the budget of the military establishment.

Senator Gordon stressed that it is really a question of priorities. He said that it is unfair to call the helicopters "flying coffins," but he cautioned that military men should not make the accident an excuse not to fly the Huey because it is their duty to do so. He remarked that Senator Biazon would know the value of ensuring that the combat

equipment is well-maintained. He stated that a review of maintenance capabilities from time to time would be appreciated.

Asked if the helicopter used last April 28 went through regular inspection, Senator Gordon replied that he would like to think it did since the military personnel ride the aircraft and if there is no inspection done, they would just be putting themselves in harm's way.

Asked if there is a need to wait for the final report of the investigation before attributing the cause of the crash, Senator Gordon replied in the affirmative and stressed that it would be irresponsible for anyone to attribute the accident to a reason other than the result of a proper investigation.

Finally, Senator Biazon asked what committee the resolution would be referred to. Senator Gordon replied it need not be exclusive as the issues may be handled by the different committees: the Committee on Science and Technology may handle the matter of awarding Dr. Punongbayan the respect he deserved, and the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources may study the country's state of preparedness when it comes to disaster-related issues. He said that any study of the Committee on Civil Service and Government Reorganization would also be of help.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR ANGARA

Senator Angara revealed that he was in Aurora, Quezon when news of the crash came and was surprised and saddened because the previous day, he overheard Senator Gordon speaking to Secretary Cruz about the trip.

Senator Gordon revealed that Director Solidum of Phivolcs asked if he was joining the survey team and were it not for his other commitments, he would have probably joined it.

Senator Angara said that he knew Dr. Punongbayan well as he recounted that as then President of U.P., he appointed Dr. Punongbayan as head of the Geology Department which he left later on to serve Phivolcs. He said that he went home to Aurora to advise the Mayor of Dingalan that a survey team was coming over. He stated that the mission of Dr. Punongbayan and the Phivolcs scientists was truly humanitarian as they wanted to

make sure that the geological structure of the resettlement sites is safe although these had been declared safe by the DENR. Senator Gordon added that Dr. Punongbayan went to Aurora upon his request, taking with him Phivolcs scientists whom he wanted to teach how a hazard map is done.

Senator Angara recalled that the Senators donated P5 million which was allocated to resettlement sites in four municipalities – Dingalan, Nakar, Infanta and Real – whose safety concerned local and national officials. He said that he had visited these sites several times and last Friday, a fifth resettlement site in San Luis, another typhoon-devastated area, where ABS-CBN and Red Cross intend to put up 100 houses. He noted that Dr. Punongbayan had given the assurance that the resettlement sites are safe and concluded that the barangay in San Luis was washed away because of the volume of rainfall. He added that there is no illegal logging in the area.

Underscoring the need for disaster preparedness, Senator Angara pointed out that many people in countries devastated by the December tsunami did not know of the forthcoming disaster or, if they did, were unable to cope with it. Because of the experience of other countries, he posited that the Philippines is in a better position to pursue a disaster-preparedness program which could be headed jointly by the Philippine National Red Cross, headed by Senator Gordon, and the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

In reaction, Senator Gordon stated that he has been pursuing that goal for a long time. He revealed that an International Red Cross report has identified the Philippines as one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, for which reason he had proposed 12 years ago during a meeting in Malaysia that Subic be made the site of the Regional Disaster Training Logistic and Reaction Center so that the Philippines could benefit from the studies and the experiences of its neighbors. He added that he had also asked the President to give diplomatic status to the Center just like the International Red Cross. He recalled that the recently held Inter-Parliamentarians Union General Assembly endorsed his resolution on disaster preparedness.

On a related matter, Senator Gordon pointed out that the fact that a very modern helicopter of the U.S. military crashed during the relief operations in

tsunami-devastated areas shows that helicopters are not equipped for this type of mission. He noted that Dr. Punongbayan and the Phivolcs staff were aware of the danger but boarded the helicopter anyway.

Senator Angara surmised that Dr. Punongbayan and the Phivolcs staff might have encountered the same weather condition earlier this day in Quezon wherein the thick clouds caused poor visibility that forced him to travel by land instead of by air.

On the issue of preparing the country for natural calamities, Senator Angara recalled that Phivolcs Director Solidum had suggested the printing and dissemination of a comics-type manual that identifies geological faults and other calamity-prone areas and provide instructions on disaster preparedness. For instance, he said that most people are not aware that they could prepare three hours in advance for a tsunami. He recalled that the lack of disaster preparedness for the tsunami that hit South Cotabato in the '70s caused the deaths of 8,000 people. Relative thereto, he suggested that the Philippine National Red Cross and the National Disaster Coordinating Council take the lead in coming up with such a manual and training videos that can be distributed to schools around the country. Senator Gordon lauded the idea as he noted that many areas such as Marikina and Manila and many parts of the country are prone to disasters since they lie along the so-called ring of fire. Further, he believed that it would be a good investment on the part of every Member to come up with the manual together with the Red Cross and the NDCC.

Senator Angara pointed out that such a project would cost about P9 million. Moreover, he noted that if each Member sponsors a region, the dissemination of these manuals would be realized. He underscored that Dr. Punongbayan and the others perished in the crash while working to prevent disasters and that it would be a good gesture on the part of the government to remember their legacy through this simple, cost-effective project. Senator Gordon said that this undertaking would help prevent unnecessary loss of life and enable the young to cope with disasters. Moreover, he said that such a manual would help people to know where to build their homes and businesses.

For his part, Senator Angara mentioned that Barangay Paltik in Dingalan, Quezon is a riverbed

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and as such, houses erected in the area would be easily washed away during heavy rains. Relative thereto, Senator Gordon added that possible landslides could hit Infanta and Nakar and he suggested that early warning systems be set up to alert the people. He stated that if people could not be prevented from building houses on these dangerous spots, they could at least be forewarned.

On the suggestion that such a project be made part of a national plan, Senator Gordon welcomed the idea as an amendment to Proposed Senate Resolution No. 249 wherein the project could be headed by the Philippine National Red Cross, NDCC and the Phivolcs. Senator Angara asked that he be made a coauthor of the resolution.

REFERRAL OF SPEECH

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, there being no objection, the Chair referred the speech of Senator Gordon and the interpellations thereon to the Committee on Rules.

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 249

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 249, entitled

RESOLUTION POSTHUMOUSLY COMMENDING FORMER PHIVOLCS DIRECTOR DR. RAYMUNDO S. PUNONGBAYAN AND THE MEMBERS OF THE RESETTLEMENT INVESTIGATION TEAM FOR EXEMPLARY SERVICE TO HUMANITY.

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 249

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 249 was approved by the Body, subject to style to include Senator Angara's amendment.

COAUTHORS

At the instance of Senator Pangilinan, all senators were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 249.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, the session was suspended.

It was 5:38 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:39 p.m., the session was resumed.

SPECIAL ORDERS


Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 17 on Senate Bill No. 1956 (rent regulation) to the Calendar for Special Orders.

ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Pangilinan, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

It was 5:40 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.


OSCAR G. YABES
Secretary of the Senate
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Approved on May 4, 2005