



**REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES**  
**Senate**  
**Pasay City**

# **Journal**

**SESSION NO. 37**  
Monday, December 12, 2022

**NINETEENTH CONGRESS**  
**FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

Prepared by the  
LEGISLATIVE JOURNAL SERVICE  
Senate of the Philippines

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**SESSION NO. 37**  
Monday, December 12, 2022

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 3:03 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel “Migz” F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

**PRAYER**

Sen. Loren Legarda led the prayer, to wit:

*Ama na mahabagin at pinakamakapangyarihan sa lahat,*

*Una sa lahat, nais naming ilapit ang taos-puso naming pasasalamat sa buhay, lakas, at mga biyaya na patuloy Mong iginagawad sa aming Inyong mga anak. Sa Iyo namin ibinabalik ang lahat ng kapurihan.*

*Sa pagsimula ng linggong ito, aming isinusuko sa Inyo ang patuloy na paggabay sa bawat isa sa amin. Igawad nawa ang linaw ng pag-iisip, ang karunungan, at ang busilak na puso para aming matugunan ang aming tungkulin alang-alang din sa kapurihan ng Inyong napakadakilang Pangalan.*

*Kalingain Mo po ang bawat isa sa amin, balutan ng Iyong pagmamahal at pag-aaruga, at pinapangako namin na ibabalik at patuloy naming pupurihin ang Iyong napakadakilang Pangalan.*

*Sa Iyo namin isinusuko ang aming buhay, at sa Iyo namin ipinagkakatiwala ang lahat.*

*Hinihiling namin ang lahat at ipinagpapasalamat, alang-alang sa aming mananakop na si Kristo Hesus.*

Amen.

**NATIONAL ANTHEM**

Everybody sang the national anthem.



**ROLL CALL**

Upon direction of the Senate President, the Secretary of the Senate, Atty. Renato N. Bantug Jr., called the roll, to which the following senators responded:

Angara, S.	Legarda, L.
Binay, M. L. N. S.	Marcos, I. R.
Cayetano, P. S.	Padilla, R. C.
Dela Rosa, R. B. M.	Pimentel III, A. K.
Ejercito, J. V. G.	Poe, G.
Escudero, F. J. G.	Revilla Jr., R. B.
Estrada, J.	Tolentino, F. T. N.
Gatchalian, W.	Tulfo, R. T.
Go, C. L. T.	Villanueva, J.
Hontiveros, R.	Villar, C. A.
Lapid, M. L. M.	Zubiri, J. M. F.

With 22 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senator Villar (M), in his capacity as Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Trade Commerce and Entrepreneurship, was on official travel as part of the delegation accompanying President Marcos to Brussels, Belgium from December 11 to 15, 2022.

Senators Cayetano (A) was absent.

**APPROVAL OF THE JOURNAL**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body dispensed with the reading of the Journal of Session No. 36 (December 7, 2022) and considered it approved.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS**

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Gold medalist figure skater Sofia Frank and her family;
- Philippine Practical Shooting Association led by Dojo Palines and Edwin Lim;
- Members of the Teduray tribe from Kusiong, Timanan South Upi, Nuro Upi, Maguindanao — Rogelio Egas, Alim Bandara, Roy Bangaban, Leticio Datuwata, and Santos Unsad;
- National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) delegation: Bo-i Jennifer Pia “Limpayen” Sibug-Las, Commissioner for Central Mindanao; Rey Dingal, Bureau Director of Office of Empowerment and Human Rights (OEHR); and Bae Anna Jessa Mae Crisostomo, Mindanao Indigenous Peoples Youth Organization (MIPYO);
- Mr. Justin Brownlee; and
- Mr. Jethro Dionisio.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

**REFERENCE OF BUSINESS**

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

OK

**BILL ON FIRST READING**

Senate Bill No. 1605, entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING AND EXPANDING THE LEYTE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ESTATE INTO THE LEYTE ECOLOGICAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE, CREATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE LEYTE ECOLOGICAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE AUTHORITY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Economic Affairs; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; Ways and Means; and Finance**

**RESOLUTIONS**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 352, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING DANIELLE CLAUDINE "COLEEN" ORTEGA GARCIA FOR WINNING THE BEST ACTRESS AWARD AT THE 2022 EL GRITO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Introduced by Senator Lapid

**To the Committee on Rules**

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 353, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE PHILIPPINE ATHLETICS TEAM FOR THEIR SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN AT THE 2022 THAILAND OPEN TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Introduced by Senator Lapid

**To the Committee on Rules**

**COMMITTEE REPORT**

Committee Report No. 17, prepared and submitted jointly by the Committees on Basic Education; Ways and Means; and Finance, on Senate Bill No. 1604, with Senators Gatchalian and Angara as authors thereof, entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN ACADEMIC RECOVERY AND ACCESSIBLE LEARNING (ARAL) PROGRAM, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES,

recommending its approval in substitution of Senate Bill No. 150.

Sponsor: Senator Gatchalian

**To the Calendar for Ordinary Business**

**APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6224 ON THIRD READING**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Third Reading, House Bill No. 6224, printed copies of which were distributed to the Members on December 6, 2022.

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the *Rules of the Senate*, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Secretary Bantug read only the title of the bill, to wit:

**AN ACT GRANTING PHILIPPINE CITIZENSHIP TO JUSTIN DONTA BROWNLEE.**

Secretary Bantug called the roll for nominal voting.

**RESULT OF THE VOTING**

The result of the voting was as follows:

*In favor*

Angara	Marcos
Binay	Padilla
Cayetano (P)	Pimentel
Dela Rosa	Poe
Ejercito	Revilla
Estrada	Tolentino
Gatchalian	Tulfo
Go	Villanueva
Hontiveros	Villar (C)
Lapid	Zubiri
Legarda	

*Against*

None

*Abstention*

None

With 21 senators voting in favor, none against, and no abstention, the Chair declared House Bill No. 6224 approved on Third Reading.

**EXPLANATIONS OF VOTE**

***By Senator Tolentino***

Explaining his affirmative vote, Senator Tolentino delivered the following statement:

On 10 December 2022, Morocco became the first African Arab team to advance to the semifinals of the World Cup. They are playing right now in Doha, Qatar. Fourteen out of the 26 players in Morocco's lineup were foreign-born players. This goes to show that foreign-born players can help lift the national team to attain success. Having said that, allow me to express my gratitude to all of you in ensuring the swift passage of Committee Report No. 13, recommending the approval of House Bill No. 6224, introduced by Rep. Michael Romero, entitled "An Act Granting Philippine Citizenship to Justin Donta Brownlee," taking into consideration Senate Bill No. 1336, introduced by Senators Dela Rosa and Go; Senate Bill No. 1516, introduced by Senator Angara; and Senate Bill No. 1519, introduced by Senator Villanueva.

Pursuant to the Congress' legislative authority under our Constitution, we can grant Filipino citizenship to certain foreign nationals for their significant contribution or notable service to the country. This measure will grant Philippine citizenship to one exceptional person, Mr. Justin Donta

94

Brownlee, who has certainly exemplified and enshrined the Filipino values of hard work, perseverance, determination, and dedication to his craft.

Mr. Brownlee is currently in the middle of training for the PBA Commissioner's Cup semifinals and only came here to attend the Third Reading of this measure. This shows how significant this is to him. This day, this Body approved the measure granting Filipino citizenship. To say that Mr. Brownlee is an outstanding basketball player is an understatement. He will surely reinforce the Gilas Team in the FIBA World Cup qualifiers next year. As attested by his coaches and colleagues, he has continuously been attending Gilas practices since September, despite knowing that he might not be able to play in the FIBA World Cup come 2023.

I would like to thank Rep. Michael Romero, again for House Bill No. 6224, and, again, Senators Dela Rosa and Go for Senate Bill No. 1336, Senator Angara for filing Senate Bill No. 1516, and Senator Villanueva for filing Senate Bill No. 1519.

With all their assistance and guidance, we were able to pass this measure on Third Reading before our break. Thank you also to our Senate President, to Senators Hontiveros, Binay, Villar (C), Villar (M), and Revilla Jr. for cosponsoring this measure, and Senator Estrada, for interpellating on the measure.

I am excited to see what the future holds for Mr. Brownlee as a citizen of this country. He will also be a reserve officer in the Philippine Army. I am certain that he will be a great addition to this great Republic.

*Malugod ko pong binabati si Mr. Justin Donta Brownlee sa panibagong yugto ng kaniyang buhay bilang isang ganap na Pilipino. Nawa ay iyong isabuhay ang pagka-Pilipino sa isip, sa salita, at sa gawa.*

*Mabuhay ka, Justin.*

Thank you, and may I have the honor as the chairperson of the Committee on Justice and Human Rights to give him the first Filipino flag that he will be unfurling and be part of his living room for the rest of his life.

***By Senator Go***

In explaining his affirmative vote, Senator Go thanked Senator Tolentino and the rest of the Members who coauthored House Bill No. 6224, taking into consideration Senate Bill Nos. 1336, 1516, and 1519, for prioritizing the passage of the measure. He believed that with Justin Brownlee on the side of the Philippine Team, it will bolster its chances in various international competitions, including the FIBA 2023 where the Philippines will be one of the hosts, and hoped that the Philippines would gain a spot in the final eight teams.

He then urged Mr. Brownlee to take to heart his becoming a Filipino and to love the country as it is the duty of every Filipino to serve the land and to put the interest of the Philippines first.

***By Senator Dela Rosa***

In explaining his affirmative vote, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following statement:

Time is running out, the game, or shall we say, the future of Philippine basketball, is on the line, and this Chamber has the opportunity to take the winning shot. Do we take our chance at glory, or do we pass? I say, we go all in! Never say die!

Today, we profess our unwavering support to naturalize Mr. Justin Brownlee. Teams draft and trade for players to improve their chances of winning. The addition of Justin in the Philippine team is not only a win for our basketball program but a win for our nation. A great defender, reliable perimeter shooter, clutch player, and a crowd favorite is added to our team. But most importantly, a good person is added to our citizenry.



Justin may have hailed from Georgia, USA, but would later on become known to be one of the most loved residents of the most popular barangay in the Philippines—Barangay Ginebra. A polite, mild-mannered teammate will now be a fellow Filipino.

We are the best basketball fans in the planet—the most passionate. There is a saying in the world of sports: “Game recognizes game.” Usually, this pertains to high praises and respect of player toward another. The Filipino people acknowledge the accomplishments and honor he has brought to his barangay. Now, he will be doing it for the whole country.

This humble Representation believes that more wins in the international basketball scene are coming our way. However, even before a single game is played by Justin wearing our country’s colors, he has already won in life and so have we, in him. He vowed to use his stature and influence to further our advocacy against illegal drugs—the real MVP through and through.

Thank you, Senator Tolentino. You should be awarded as best team general manager for making all of this happen. I will never think twice of giving you an assist.

### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI**

Senate President Zubiri recalled that he had the opportunity to sponsor the naturalization of Marcus Douthit during the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress as it was a privilege to be able to have Mr. Douthit naturalized so he could play for the Philippines. He reminded Mr. Brownlee that he was being given the opportunity to become a Filipino, which is a very difficult process. He stated that there are two ways to become a Filipino: through legislation and through a lengthy judicial process which could take several years. He stated that Mr. Brownlee’s citizenship was granted quickly due to the need for very good players in the Philippine Team.

Senate President Zubiri advised Mr. Brownlee to take his new citizenship seriously as this would not only allow him to play for the Philippine Basketball Team but would also grant him the right and responsibility to elect the country’s leaders and enjoy the same full civil and political rights as a fellow citizen. As an already adopted Filipino, Senator Zubiri also asked Mr. Brownlee to play with his heart and soul for the country as he would soon find himself more loved by its people, particularly the basketball-loving Filipinos.

He hoped that Mr. Brownlee could also promote the country all over the world. To cite an example, he acknowledged that Ms. Frank, a Filipino-American, proudly carries the Philippine flag with her wherever she competes for figure skating. He expressed hope that Mr. Brownlee would also carry the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of every Filipino.

### **SUSPENSION OF SESSION**

With the permission of the Body, the session was suspended.

*It was 3:26 p.m.*

### **RESUMPTION OF SESSION**

At 3:32 p.m., the session was resumed.

### **PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 360**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 360, entitled

**RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING FILIPINA FIGURE SKATER SOFIA LEXI JACQUELINE FRANK FOR HER STELLAR VICTORY**





IN THE 2022 ASIAN OPEN FIGURE SKATING TROPHY HELD IN JAKARTA,  
INDONESIA,

taking into consideration Proposed Senate Resolution No. 362.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Revilla for the sponsorship.

**SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA**

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 360, Senator Revilla delivered the following speech:

I stand today to sponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 360, congratulating and commending Filipino figure skater Sofia Lexi Jacqueline Frank for her stellar victory in the 2022 Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy held last December 7 to 9, 2022 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

*Walang duda. Basta may dugong Pilipino, laging magwawagi saan mang sulok ng mundo. At si Sofia ang isa sa mga magigiting na patunay nito.*

Our Filipina athlete that we wish to honor today emerged as a champion in the Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy in the Senior Women Category.

During the competition, Sofia bested eight other competitors, thereby earning her the most coveted gold medal in her category. Our country's pride scored 50.19 in the short program and 93.78 in the free skating segment with a topping score of 143.97.

*Dahil sa uwing tagumpay ni Sofia, lalong nakaka-proud maging isang Pilipino. Tunay nga na ang mga manlalaro natin ay hindi lang basta world-class athletes — sila ay mga world-class champions.*

*Hindi ako magtataka kung si Sofia ang ating magiging pambato at kauna-unahang Filipino gold medalist sa Winter Olympics. Apart from her recent win, she has also played for the country in different international figure skating competitions such as the World Junior Figure Skating Championships, Challenger Series Finlandia Trophy, Tallinn Trophy, Colorado Springs Invitational, and US International Classic, among others, and received outstanding distinctions. Sa kanyang angking galing at husay, tiwala ako na mapaparangalan niya ang ating watawat ng mas mataas pang tagumpay!*

Sofia, continue soaring high. We are so proud of you. *Mabuhay ka.* God bless you. *Mabuhay ang atletang Pilipino!*

**COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA**

Senator Villanueva stated that he filed Proposed Senate Resolution No. 362 to commend Sofia Lexi Jacqueline Frank for clinching the gold medal in the Senior Women Category in the 2022 Asian Open Figure Skating Trophy in Jakarta, Indonesia from December 7 to 9, 2022 where she scored 50.19 points in the short program segment and 93.78 points in the free skating segment, tallying a total of 143.97 points.

He said that Ms. Frank broke the Philippine records in women's figure skating at the age of 16 when she joined the Challenger Series Finlandia Trophy in Espoo, Finland by scoring 53.30 points in the short program segment and 94.79 in the free skating segment, tallying a total of 148.09 points.

He added that her exceptional performance is a testament to the perseverance, excellence, and world-class talent of Filipino skaters. He stated that the Filipinos are proud of her and that there is a brighter future for all Filipino figure skaters.

**COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR GO**

As chairperson of the Committee on Sports, Senator Go congratulated Filipina figure skater Sofia Frank for winning the gold in the Asian Open Figure Skating Championship held in Jakarta, Indonesia, from December 7 to 9, 2022.

With a combined score of 143.97 points from the short program and free skating segments, he said that Ms. Frank bested eight other competitors in the senior women's category. He believed that her talent and dedication to her craft were truly inspiring and that she truly embodied the beauty and artistry of figure skating. He described her skating as an absolute pleasure to watch as her graceful movements, impressive jumps, and captivating spins were a joy to behold.

Senator Go stated that she has made the country proud of her victory for she has shown that the Philippines is a nation of talented and dedicated athletes and that her success would inspire many other Filipinos to pursue their dreams and achieve greatness.

He then congratulated her for a well-deserved victory and wished that she would never give up as she keeps on reaching for her dreams. Confident that Ms. Frank would have a bright future ahead of her, he also expressed his excitement of what she would be able to achieve next.

**COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR ESTRADA**

Senator Estrada associated himself with the sponsorship remarks of Senators Revilla, Villanueva, and Go on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 360. He stated that he was proud that the skaters are from San Juan City. He also congratulated all the honorees for that session day.

**COAUTHORS**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all the Members of the Senate were made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 360.

**COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR PADILLA**

Senator Padilla stated that the mother of Ms. Frank was an actress, a former beauty queen, and a former leading lady of Senator Revilla. He said that Ms. Frank and her mother's beauty continue to prove that nothing compares to the beauty of the Filipino women.

**ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 360**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection. Proposed Senate Resolution No. 360 was adopted by the Body, subject to style.

**ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS**

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence of former mayor Jefferson Soriano of Tuguegarao City and Mayor Florante Pascual of Lal-lo, both in the Province of Cagayan Valley.

Senate President Zubiri welcomed the guests to the Senate.

**PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 363**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING ALL FILIPINO DELEGATES AND AWARDEES IN THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL PRACTICAL SHOOTING CONFEDERATION (IPSC), HANDGUN WORLD SHOOT XIX, PATTAYA, THAILAND FOR BRINGING HONOR AND PRIDE TO THE COUNTRY.

With the permission of the Body, only the title of the resolution was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Dela Rosa for the sponsorship.

**SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA**

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following speech:

I am privileged to sponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, congratulating and commending the Filipino delegates and awardees in the 2022 International Practical Shooting Confederation, Handgun World Shoot XIX, in Pattaya, Thailand.

Firearms, depending on who you ask, may be associated with fear or feeling of security.

Hand over a gun to an unstable person and you have given him a weapon of destruction. Entrust it to our law enforcement agents and it will be an instrument of peacekeeping.

We do not often hear people identify guns with sports competitions. The gun, which was customarily used as a deterrent and tool to incapacitate one's enemy, somehow takes on a new purpose.

The Philippine Practical Shooting Association (PPSA) claims that practical shooting is the fastest growing shooting sport in the world to date. It describes practical shooting as a sport that requires combining the elements of speed, power, and accuracy; it is a venue that seeks to develop and test an individual's shooting skills in a controlled sporting environment. Practical shooting matches are realistic, diverse, and fun, mixing pros such as barricades, doors, shooting ports, tunnels, and even everyday objects with full or partially exposed targets, moving targets, penalty-carrying no-shoot targets, and still reactive targets to test the skills and techniques of practical shooting competitors.

Practical shooting competitions are held all over the world to determine the best shooters. Through the years, they have become more and more diverse and inclusive. These competitions have branched out into different categories and divisions and can be considered a sport that is very welcoming to women competitors. I am proud to announce that Filipinos are doing well in this sport.

Modesty aside, this humble Representation was set to compete in the recently concluded IPSC Handgun World Shoot 2022 had it not been for our plenary sessions that are always of greater importance. Nonetheless, our delegation exceeded our expectations.

The Philippine team successfully secured 61 medals in different divisions and categories, five new world records, and five shoot-off champions. Allow me to read the names of our medalists:

Our sharpshooter Jufro Emil Lejano in Classic Division Overall Category; and Kahlil Adrian Viray in Standard Division Overall Category won for us the gold medal. *Sila ang* the best of the best *sa buong mundo. Walang tatalo.*

We bagged the silver medal in Standard Division Overall Category and Open Division Overall Category because of the proficiency and consistency shown by Rolly Tecson and my son-in-law, Edcel John Gino, respectively.

We also brought home bronze medals in Classic Division Overall Category by Alfredo Catalan Jr.; and Production Division Overall Category by Aeron John Lanuza.

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Additional gold medals were won by the Philippine Team under Individual Awards because of the accuracy demonstrated by Jethro "The Jet" Dionisio in Classic Division Senior Category, Jerome Jovane Morales in Production Optics Division Senior Category, Aeron John Lanuza in Production Division Junior Category, Kahlil Adrian Viray in Standard Division Junior Category, and Genesis Pible in Standard Division Lady Category.

Marly Martir, an officer of the Philippine Navy, in Classic Division Lady Category, Johann Abanilla in Production Optics Classic Division Lady Category and in Production Optics Division Light Senior Category, and Rolly Tecson in Standard Division Junior Category bagged us silver medals.

In addition, the following brought us bronze medals: Alex Lao in Classic Division Super Senior Category, James Quing in Classic Division Senior Category, Lydia Cuyong in Production Optics Division Light Lady Category, Arnel Ariate in Production Division Super Senior Category, Robert Po in Standard Division Super Senior Category, Akeen Adrian Viray in Standard Division Junior Category, Luisito Miguel de Guzman in Open Division Super Junior Category, and Jessica Tampoco in Open Division Lady Category.

The professionalism of our athletes was also shown as they won 39 medals in ten categories of different divisions:

The team of Jeufro Emil Lejano, Alfredo Catalan, Jr., Lenard Lopez, and Edrick Eliseo Chan won for us the gold medal in Classic Division Overall Category.

Standard Division Overall Category, our team, composed of Kahlil Adrian Viray, Rolly Nathaniel Tecson, Joseph Bernabe Jr., and Gerard Loy won for us another gold medal.

A silver medal under the Team Awards in Production Division Overall Category was won by Aeron Lanuza, Paul Bryant Yu, Jon Gotamco, and Willard Carrera.

Edcel John Gino, Nino Roberto Leviste, Keo Dayle Tuan, and Enrico Papa also won silver medals under the Team Awards in Open Division Overall Category.

Bronze medals under the Team Awards in Production Optics Light Division Overall Category were also won by Paulo Paulino, Roy Harold Malunda, Johann Abanilla, and Ronald Astillero.

More gold medalists under the Team Awards in Standard Division Super Senior Category were Roberto Po, Israelito Pible, Jose Maochi, and Isagani Buenaflor.

Additional silver medalists under the Team Awards were secured by the following in their respective divisions: James Quing, Gilbert Go, Jesus Andres Soriano and Alex Lao, in Classic Division Senior Category; Evelyn Woods, Rizza Vidallon, Maria Joahna Catalan, and Crystalene Gonzales in Production Division Lady Category.

Anthony Sy, Arnel Ariarte, and Rodolfo Cua, Jr. in Production Division Senior Category, and Jessica Tampoco, Andrea Bernos, Erin Mattea Micor, and Janice Navato in Open Division Lady Category also won for us bronze medals.

The following were the ones who were able to secure new world records for the Philippines: Jeufro Emil Lejano for Individual Classic, Jethro Dionisio for Individual Class Senior Category, Kahlil Adrian Viray for Individual Standard Junior Category, Jeufro Emil Lejano, Alfredo Catalan Jr., Edrick Eliseo Chan, and Lenard Lopez for Team Classic Division, and Robert Po, Israelito Pible, Jose Maochi Suela, and Isagani Buenaflor for Team Standard Division Super Senior Category.

The following were the Shoot-off Winners: Aeron John Lanuza for both Production and Production Junior Divisions, Evelyn Woods for Production Lady, Rolly Nathaniel Tecson for Standard Junior, and Genesis Pible for Standard Lady Division.

This remarkable accomplishment would not be possible without the full support and assistance of the Philippine Practical Shooting Association led by our passionate President and head of the Philippine delegation to the 2022 World Shoot, Edwin Lim, *ang ating* president.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "A good shot must necessarily be a good man since the essence of good marksmanship is self-control, and self-control is the essential quality of a good man." I know from experience that they will not be able to reach these new heights without the

effort, practice, and hard work that they exerted, the preparation that went on for many months—and even years—and the iron will that refuses to give up. These are the things they must go thorough and possess in order to become a champion in practical shooting.

Our soldiers fire their guns to bring honor and glory to our nation. Under a different set of circumstances, our sport shooters have done the same. Today, to all the delegates and awardees, you reap the rewards to all that you have sown, and we congratulate you for bringing honor and glory to your fellow Filipinos.

### **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA**

At the instance of Senator Revilla and upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speech of Senator Revilla on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363 into the *Journal* and the *Record of the Senate*:

I rise today to cosponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, and join Senator Dela Rosa in congratulating and commending our Filipino delegates who bagged medals at the 2022 International Practical Shooting Confederation (IPSC) recently held in Thailand.

*Ang ating saludo sa mga atletang ito na imahe ng husay at disiplina! Ang kanilang pagsisikap at galing ay nag-uwi hindi lamang ng medalya sa ating bayan, kundi ng karangalan.*

The young gold medalist Kahlil Adrian Viray said it best: “Winning is beating your personal best. You need to work for it just as you desire it. You need to challenge yourself each time to be the best in what you do.” Our athletes’ illustrious triumph in the 2022 IPSC only goes to show how the Filipino resilient spirit, when mixed with passion, dedication, and perseverance, can bring us to greater heights.

This sport demands grit and grace, discipline and hard work. And the Philippine delegation’s victory proves that they have all that, and more. Their training, skills, and commitment have allowed them to win these medals, and the support of those who rallied behind them were the very wind beneath their wings that made them soar.

This Representation is no stranger to this sport. I do not only understand the intricacies and the grueling demands of the sport, I have very high regard for the athletes who play it. They gave their best shot, both literally and figuratively, and brought pride and honor to our nation.

*Ang aming pagpupugay po sa inyo! Mananatili tayong saludo sa bawat atletang Pilipino!*

### **COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO**

In cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

As chairperson of the Committee on Sports, it is my great pleasure to cosponsor the resolution congratulating the Filipino team on their victories at the 19th International Practical Shooting Confederation Handgun World Championships held in Thailand.

Khalil Adrian Viray, the sole Filipino and Asian competitor for the esteemed CZ Shooting Team, won three gold medals in the Standard Division. He won the Individual Overall and successfully defended his Junior Championships.

The Standard Junior was also competed in by Khalil’s twin brothers, Akeem Adrian and Kareem Adrian. Akeem Adrian finished in third place, and Kareem Adrian finished in fifth place. This tournament was their very first experience competing internationally.

In addition, the Philippine women’s team’s Crystalene Gonzales, who is a jail chief inspector in the BJMP, finished in second place in the ladies’ category of the shooting competition.

Congratulations also to Jethro Dionisio and, of course, Edcel John Gino, son-in-law of Senator Dela Rosa. *Si Senator Dela Rosa ang coach niyan.*

Other representatives from the Philippine Practical Shooting Association have also won medals for the country in the team competition. The Philippines topped the Classic Overall and the Standard Super Senior, and finished second in the Classic Senior, Production Overall, Production Lady, and Open Overall. It placed third in the Production Optics Light Overall, Production Senior, and Open Lady. This is a fantastic achievement and a testament to the team's dedication and skill. I am sure they worked hard and trained diligently to achieve this success; and their efforts have paid off.

I would also like to congratulate the sponsor, Senator Dela Rosa, for always winning previous cups—Chief PNP Cup, the Bato Cup, the Dela Rosa Cup, and, of course, the soon to be Senate President Cup.

We would also like to take a moment to recognize the hard work and dedication of the team's coaches and support staff who have played a crucial role in the team's success. Their tireless efforts and guidance have undoubtedly been instrumental in the team's victory.

Once again, congratulations!

### **COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR EJERCITO**

At the outset, Senator Ejercito associated himself with the resolutions that were passed honoring the shooters who brought pride and honor to the country.

He then commended his good friend, senior shooter Jethro Dionisio, whom he described as a living Filipino sports legend who was the World Steel Champion for several years since the 1990s.

### **REMARKS OF THE CHAIR**

Senate President Zubiri, who disclosed that he was a shooter himself and a pro-gun advocate, congratulated Mr. Jethro Dionisio, who paved the way for Filipinos to become world champion shooters, and all the winners in the competition, believing that shooting is a sport in which Filipinos will excel. He hoped that combat shooting would eventually be included in the SEA Games, Asian Games, and Olympics. He stated that he felt proud seeing the boys and girls holding the Philippine flag in the podium.

### **COSPONSORSHIP REMARKS OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA**

Senator Villanueva associated himself with the speeches and statements made by his colleagues. He stated that he was honored to have graduated from UST as Mr. Jethro Dionisio. He lauded the Filipino delegates and awardees in the 2022 International Practical Shooting Confederation held in Pattaya, Thailand for bringing honor and pride to the Philippines by winning medals in their respective categories and setting new world records for the Philippines. He hoped that their victories will serve as an inspiration for other Filipino athletes.

### **COAUTHORS**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all senators were made coauthors of the resolution.

### **ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 363**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 363 was adopted by the Body.



## REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

Senate President Zubiri invited the shooting champions to the SP Cup to be held in due time at the ARMSCOR Range, Marikina City.

## SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

*It was 4:04 p.m.*

## RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:58 p.m., the session was resumed.

## PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

On a matter of personal and collective privilege, Senator Cayetano (P) delivered the following speech:

As chairperson of the subcommittee created by the Committee on Health and Demography for the hearing on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), I presided over a hearing last November 24, 2022, on the said measure and also another measure, the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC).

In the course of the hearing, it was revealed that the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) would effectively be absorbed by the newly-created CDC under the bill that I was hearing. In other words, RITM will cease to exist as it was presented to us during the hearing. What will continue to exist are various functions of RITM. *Sa madaling salita, parang na-chop-chop ang function ng RITM, and it will continue to exist within CDC.*

Sen. Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay and I sought further clarification on why RITM would be “chop-chopped,” but then, a virology institute — which we know is part of the priority measures of the President — would be created.

So, the first question that has to be asked is: What is the difference between the RITM and the virology institute mandate? We went to the expert. In our hearing was RITM Director Celia Carlos, who explained that RITM’s focus is on viruses affecting humans and diseases of public health importance. It will also remain in charge of public health laboratory testing.

Meanwhile, the virology institute would include the study of viruses and viral diseases affecting also humans but, in addition, plants and animals. So being a lawyer, not a doctor, not a scientist, I asked a simple question—so, in other words the virology institute in addition to covering what the RITM covers, which is viruses affecting humans, it will also study viruses affecting animals and plants. *Sa madaling salita, dinagdagan? Ang sagot po roon ay “Oo.” So, sa aking pag-iisip, bakit naman kaya hindi na lamang i-amend iyong mandate ng RITM because they have been existing for so long?*

I live also in Alabang, very near RITM, so, very familiar *sa akin iyan. Nadadaan ko iyan. Nagba-bike ako riyan. Na-injection ng anti-rabies ang mga anak ko riyan.* They can do so much if only there is enough funding, which I, as the former chairperson Committee on Health, fought for many years. But not until we were hit by a pandemic did people realize the importance of RITM. So, *ngayon kilala na natin lahat ang RITM and they are about to die in a “chop-chop” manner.*

I bring this up because the hearing I had was for the creation of the CDC; this is not my purpose. The creation of the CDC, I will present to the Body at the proper time, but this is a separate issue because priority measure *po ay ang hearing ng virology institute.* The CDC is also a priority measure. The virology institute, by the way, is in the Committee of Science and Technology.

*A*

So, anyway, Sen. Nancy Binay and I were discussing and we could not understand why we would basically be killing one institute which is possible for the purpose of rightsizing. *Kaya ko tanggapin iyon kung iyon talaga.* If there is a valid reason *ay kaya kong tanggapin iyon* and in this case, *ine-explain.* I defer to the wisdom of the experts, *mas magiging effective sila* under CDC. All right, I can accept that. I will probably ask for more details but I can accept that in principle. *Pero bakit tayo magke-create ng panibago,* which is the virology institute?

*Natapos na ang hearing namin, naubos na iyong oras namin sa RITM and virology institute,* and I can honestly say *hindi ko pa rin maintindihan iyong direction,* which is why I am bringing it to the Body's attention because I know that our Senate President and our Minority Leader would take this very seriously as we do as foot soldiers — the mandates. The prioritization is brought to our attention by no less than Malacañang.

So, we ask the question: If RITM is not going to be chop-chopped, would there really be a chance for them to coexist? The answer given to us again by Dir. Celia Carlos of RITM is "Yes, ideally because in many countries they have various institutes that are funded for research." So, *walang masama* that we have more research. Again, I can accept that, but the reality is funding problems. Will we really be able to fund both or was the CDC, in a way, an easier way to kill and bury RITM?

In a better world, in a hypothetical world, perhaps, we would be able to fund both, but I have not seen that happen in my history in the Senate.

So, as I mentioned, Filipinos and legislators recognized the role of RITM. As the senior vice chairperson of the Finance Committee handling the budget of DOH with the continuous support of our chairperson, Sen. Sonny Angara, I have always ensured that RITM has had enough budget since the time I handled the health budget. The RITM in 2023 would have P1.39 billion. I always ask them, "*May maitutulong pa ba kami?*" *Okey na sila diyan sa funding na iyan.* Under the 2022 GAA, P1.37 billion budget, and under the 2021 GAA P963.87 million, almost P1 billion.

So, what do we do? Well, as I mentioned, the bills creating the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines is filed with the Senate Committee on Science and Technology. After discussing this issue with the chairperson of the Committee on Science and Technology, Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, we agreed that a subcommittee on the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines — of course, subject to submission to the Body— would be created. This representation as vice chairperson of the Committee on Health and Demography, and as vice chairman of the Committee on Science and Technology, can hear both at the same time so that we just have some efficiency in the management of similar bills. So, the proper documentation will be submitted on that note.

And, on a final point, I would just like to mention the timeline of the CDC committee report, which is, as I mentioned, a priority measure. In the news, it was reported for the past month that it is a priority measure. The Senate held a hearing as soon as we got the final draft of DOH because there would really be no point in hearing a very technical bill *na wala naman pong support ng DOH.* So, we proceeded with that and then we were told that they still need to work on it further. Thus, we held a TWG last week and my understanding is there may be a need for further TWGs. So, obviously, with two remaining days, we will not be able to sponsor. But, I think, everybody can accept that it is a very technical bill and we want to do it right and we are giving DOH and the experts the time—it is their timeline. They are part of the administration to come to us with the versions that they want, including reconciling these issues also on RITM and the Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines.

So, on that note, I just really intend to bring this to the Body's attention. In case there is anyone who would like to interpellate, I do not mind if we suspend it because there are so many people who are listed for privileged speeches; I do not think there is any rush. What is important is I brought this to the attention of the Body and we can answer the questions of our colleagues at the proper time, after the other speeches are delivered.



**MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA**

Senator Villanueva stated that he would like to reserve his right to raise some issues regarding Senator Cayetano's (P) privilege speech particularly about rightsizing initiatives vis-à-vis the abolition of functions in the RITM and the establishment of virology institute.

**SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF THE PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body suspended consideration of the privilege speech.

**PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR POE**

Availing herself of the privilege hour, Senator Poe enjoined airport concessionaires to implement cashless and digitalized transactions, and reminded the officials of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport to improve their services for better airport experience and convenience to both local and foreign tourists.

*The full text of her privilege speech follows:*

A major milestone in Philippine aviation reached its 87th Founding Anniversary last month.

On the 29th of November in 1935, a Martin M-130 flying boat, operated by Pan American Airlines landed in Manila Harbor after a 60-hour flight from San Francisco. It was the first-ever regularly scheduled transpacific flight as well as the first commercial contact between the Philippines and the world. The plane which landed that fateful day carried only mail as its cargo. A year later, that same San Francisco-Manila route would carry its first passengers.

Philippine aviation has grown far beyond these humble beginnings. On one hand, vast improvements in fuel capacity and travel time have bridged great distances, effectively shrinking the globe.

What was once a 60-hour long trip from Manila to San Francisco can now be flown in 12 hours. In contrast, the average time spent in EDSA traffic continues to expand while the overall distance remains the same.

On the other hand, the expansion of carrier capacity has led to the democratization of travel. Higher passenger volume has reduced the overhead cost per traveler, and resulting cheaper airfares down the line.

These two factors have created the global Filipino and the globalized Filipino economy. Today, there are 2.2 million overseas Filipinos in 2020. Many more in our shores are seeking to go abroad to study or achieve their #Travelgoals.

Efficient air transportation has become an essential service. In 2019, the last aviation boom period before the pandemic forced us to shut our borders around 737,000 aircraft landed in our country, 29.25 million passengers and 266.03 million units of cargo entered the country on those aircrafts.

By itself, air transportation contributed close to P120 billion to the economy in 2019. Inbound and domestic tourism contributed another P3.7 trillion. The latter alone is a hundredfold return on investment on the Department of Tourism's meager P3-billion budget.

With the constantly growing influx of people, capital, goods, and services, the airfields of the past are now extinct. The airfields of Grace Park are now an industrial estate. The runways of Nielson field have become the thoroughfares of Ayala Avenue and Paseo de Roxas.

Today, the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) remains the primary hub of travel in the country. Of the 8.3 million inbound tourists in 2019, nine out of ten arrived via plane, and six of every ten landed in NAIA.



This means that, for a large number of travelers to our country, NAIA is the court of first impression. Tourists may have been enticed by our sunny coastlines, delicious food, and friendly smiles. But upon landing, it is NAIA which first greets them.

NAIA is where we should be putting our best foot forward. In reality, we have shot ourselves—and continue to shoot ourselves—in the foot. Here is a tour of NAIA's best of the worst in the past decade:

- a) From 2011 to 2015, NAIA was consistently ranked as one of the "World's Worst Airports" by the Sleeping in Airports website, which collects reviews from travelers. In fairness, NAIA was finally removed from the list in 2016 but it did resurface as the 6<sup>th</sup> worst airport to have a layover in 2017.
- b) In 2014, NAIA was rated as 8<sup>th</sup> worst airport by a United States financial website, "Wall Street Cheat Sheet." NAIA was described as having "soup kitchen-style lines that feed into more lines and an overall sense of futility."
- c) In 2019, which was a peak year in travel, NAIA was ranked as the worst airport to fly out from during Christmas as more than 41% of its total flights failed to take off on time.

*Simula pa lamang ito ng litanya.* Just last year, three reviews and a viral video have already poked holes in NAIA:

- a) Last May, a study by worldwide luggage storage app, Bounce, ranked NAIA as the worst business class airport in the world.
- b) Last November, a blog which analyze 1,500 Google reviews for over 500 airports around the world, found NAIA as the third most stressful airport in Asia and Oceania.
- c) Also, in November, a Dutch traveler and TikTok creator found that concessionaires in NAIA Terminal 2 were not accepting cashless transactions. At the same time, the only ATM in the terminal was not working. Let us watch this short video.

*At this point, a video presentation was shown on the screen.*

Apparently, according to Secretary Bautista, not all concessionaires have that "cash only" policy, but I should say that all concessionaires should allow credit card payments or electronic payments. *Napaka-backward naman nito. Dito, kailangan ganyan, bakit, tinatago ba nila iyong kinikita nila* from the BIR or from the MIA management? But MIAA management should know about this. So, there is a reason why. I think an apparent reason why they do not accept cash is to hide, probably, their earnings.

- d) And just last week, journalist Atom Araullo lamented on Twitter his struggle getting a ride home from NAIA. To his words: "Just arrived at the airport from an overseas trip. No coupon taxis, no metered taxis, no Grab. *Wala rin tayong mga bus at tren dito.* Basically, *kung wala kang sundo*, you're dead. It's been an hour and counting. This is what a broken transpo system looks like."

*Simple lamang po ang hatol sa NAIA: tinimbang ngunit kulang pa rin.* Travelers are now discerning and patience is limited. It takes years to build trust but it only takes a 30-second *Tiktok* video, or a 280-character tweet by an irate traveler to destroy it.

Space is becoming increasingly scarce in the whole NAIA complex. As a whole, NAIA has a rated capacity of 35 million passengers and 250,000 flights. But in 2019, actual passenger volume reached 47.88 million, and actual flights reached 277,530. We have breached passenger capacity by over 36%, while flight capacity is exceeded by 11%.

In other words, our primary aerial entry point is now a major chokepoint. Mercifully, the Mactan-Cebu and Clark International Airport provide some relief. But only two of ten inbound tourists fly into the country via the Mactan-Cebu airport every year. On the other hand, the Clark International Airport has a total rated capacity of around 12 million, including its newly-built terminal.

However, the full utilization of the Clark airport depends on the completion of the Malolos-Clark segment of the North-South Commuter Railway. Currently, only 5.28% of inbound tourists enter the country through the Clark airport.

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The Bulacan Airport will have a potential passenger capacity of 35 million. Of course, these numbers remain merely theoretical until it opens its doors in 2027.

All of this means that we will have to persevere with NAIA. But this does not mean “grin and bear it.” It means making the best of a bad situation.

To MIAA, may we respectfully remind you of the laundry list of solutions, commitments, and promises which you submitted during this year’s budget deliberations. Next year, *sisingilin po namin kayo. Hahanapin po namin ang actual outputs ng digitalization and automation at ang capacity building reduction of red tape across all phases of passenger processing.*

*Siguro simulan na natin sa streamlining ng clearance procedures sa NAIA. The DOTr and MIAA should make time-motion studies on the average that the entire procedure takes to clear NAIA involving the two X-ray procedures. Binawasan na raw ng isa. Tingnan natin: immigration lines, actual check in, and the inexplicable numerous checks for flight itineraries at every point—all this tediousness adds to the painfully long three to four hours boarding procedure, which is sometimes even longer than the flight time itself. We should stop this ridiculousness at once, using actual data to improve passenger experience.*

*Dagdag pa, let us make cashless payments available for all of NAIA’s concessionaires, at siguraduhin natin na gumagana ang mga ATM; the same request applies to CAAP and the airports in its ambit.*

For night-rated international airports outside of Metro Manila, *isagad na po natin ang 24 hours of operation, kung commercially viable.*

*Dapat hindi natatapos ang serbisyo sa pagpasok at paglabas ng mga paliparan. This is a good opportunity to look at how airport services can be improved by strengthening interconnectivity with other transportation sectors. For the road sector, we should study adding more airport buses to cater to more routes and more passengers, and decrease the interval time between buses. For the rail sector, once operational, the Metro Manila Subway project will connect to NAIA Terminal 3.*

DOTr Secretary Bautista, let us get the ball rolling on the public-private partnership project to rehabilitate NAIA. May you become the DOTr Secretary to finally make this happen. Please do not let this project remain as a PowerPoint presentation during your time.

We can start by adding more restrooms *na siguradong malinis at may tubig. Iyan lamang, low-hanging fruit, malaking impression na ang mapapalitan kung maaayos man lamang ang mga restrooms natin.*

The Bureau of Immigration should also standardize the immigration clearance procedures. The public must be informed of the real grounds for off-loading; the documents needed to prove legitimacy of travel; and the right of passengers during immigration inspections. *Sino ba talaga ang may kailangan ng CFO, o yung certificate galing sa Commission on Filipinos Overseas; ng affidavit of support kung self-funded naman ang biyahe; at ng travel insurance kung hindi naman required ng country of destination. Maraming nagrereklamo na mas marami pang hinihingi ang Immigration natin kaysa sa visa application na granted naman.*

*Dagdagan natin ang mga immigration officers. Hindi puwede iyong usual shift changes na tatlo. Puede nating dagdagan kapag mas maraming biyahe, at bawasan kapag mayroong lull ng pagpasok. Hindi iyong kahit na gaano karaming passengers, ganoon pa rin karami iyong mga officers na available.*

*Sa aking mga kasamahan dito sa Senado, ipasa na po natin ang e-government at e-governance bills, so that automation and digitization will become a norm, not only in NAIA, but in all government agencies.*

*Tinitingnan na rin natin ang Senate Bill No. 1003 ni Sen. Sonny Angara, so that CAAP will become stronger; and Senate Bill No. 1073, or the proposed Philippine Airports Authority, so that CAAP can focus on regulation, while this new body will focus on building, maintaining, and operating airports throughout the country.*

## INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva thanked Senator Poe for bringing the issue to the attention of the Body. He stated that Filipino travelers would likely feel envious every time they arrived in their destination countries. He added that the video presented by Senator Poe only added to the dismay of seeing that the government could not even provide the most basic airport amenities, given that airports are considered a country's showcase to the world. He added that seeing the current state of NAIA was bound to negate some of the efforts made to promote the country, stating that the Senate President always spoke highly of the country's when he invited officials from other countries to visit the Philippines.

Senator Poe believed that it would be opportune for the Members to directly ask Secretary Bautista the question during the continuation of the hearing on his confirmation regarding the possibility of accomplishing the to-do list during the holiday season and whether airport officials took proper note of said list, given that 13% to 15% in tourist arrivals was anticipated to reach its peak by December 15. On the basis of the list, she opined that the addition of more immigration officers during peak hours and the elimination of a number of burdensome requirements from passengers were feasible if political will would be demonstrated.

She also believed that the deployment of additional public transportation in the area could be achieved in collaboration with the DOTr and the transport groups, and that coordination with ride-sharing application companies, taxi operators, and bus companies should be sufficient to mobilize transportation. She surmised that requests for digitization and the installation of additional restroom cubicles might be possible at the beginning of 2023.

Senator Poe bewailed the current situation, as she questioned whether there was at least one government agency acting on behalf of Overseas Filipino Workers or the tourism sector, that examines the tedious requirements in airports such as vaccination cards, the One Health Pass, as well as fake websites that had been the subject of a privilege speech by Senator Cayetano (P). She stated that despite the tedious number of documents being required, problems such as human trafficking still persisted. She also noted that the same issue regarding requirements continue to plaque the country's seafarers.

At this juncture, she confirmed that immigration officers require a certification from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas in addition to the visa. She opined that, given the existence of other proofs of registration, the certification in question seemed redundant. Senator Villanueva stated that he had been advocating for the abolition of the commission which had been exacting illegal fees, as was revealed in the Senate in August, which revelation should finally put an end to the practice. He also bemoaned the difficulties encountered by returning OFWs due to the cumbersome number of documents required in order for them to enjoy their vacation, as well as the presence of Philippine Coast Guard personnel, whose fatigue uniforms had caused arriving tourists to feel uneasy.

Senator Poe informed the Body that according to the Bureau of Immigration's charter, it is permitted to request whatever documents it deems necessary from individuals with whom it conducts business. She believed that posting a list of prerequisites in advance would be beneficial to the general public. Regarding the requirement for an affidavit of support, she believed that if an individual could prove that such an affidavit was not necessary because he or she was paying for the trip, it would free many people from an unnecessary requirement, saving travelers approximately four hours of waiting time if there were 200 people in line at the time. She noted that the one hour-and-ten-minute flight to Hong Kong was even shorter.

She also informed the Body that according to Secretary Bautista, the x-ray machines at the airport's entrance had already been removed, as there was a second x-ray requirement at the immigration counters.



At this juncture, Senator Dela Rosa agreed that the presence of PCG personnel in airports may not be a welcome sight, especially to foreign tourists. He also stated that the PCG was utilized to enforce certain protocols at the onset of the pandemic, just as it was under the DOTr. In light of this, he believed that PCG personnel would be more useful patrolling the West Philippine Sea than being in airports. He hoped that the PCG would be able to put its resources to good use.

Further, Senator Villanueva described what he observed at NAIA Terminal 3 where a large number of elderly passengers had difficulty waiting for wheelchairs. He recalled asking if there were any carts that could transport the elderly citizens, and he was informed that prior to the pandemic, there was only one cart in good working condition, which had since fallen into disrepair. He described what he saw as heartbreaking.

He also confirmed Senator Poe's observation that after a long flight, passengers had to wait two to three hours at the tarmac. He then informed the Body that he would continue to press on the issue, as he believed that it ran counter to what some government officials have been doing to promote the country to boost the tourism industry.

Senate President Zubiri believed that the tourism industry would benefit from direct flights to Boracay, Davao, and Clark from neighboring countries such as Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore without having to pass through NAIA Terminals I to 4. He expressed relief that the New Manila International Airport (NMIA) being constructed in Bulacan would significantly alleviate the burden on the four airports, which he deemed to have reached their respective carrying capacity limits. He then expressed gratitude to individuals, such as Mr. Ramon Ang, who were willing to fund an undertaking such as NMIA; otherwise, it would take the government even longer to complete the task.

Senator Poe likened the situation to the living situation of an expanded family, stating that despite efforts to keep in good condition, there would always be plans to move to a new home. She stated that although the modifications might be considered merely cosmetic, the effort would nevertheless provide the general public a certain degree of comfort and convenience. Relative thereto, she opined that having only five stalls inside a comfort room in an international airport was absurd. She then expressed hope that the construction of additional stalls would be undertaken while the NMIA was being built.

Furthermore, she disclosed that 25,000 PCG personnel would be deployed in airports during the holiday season. Senate President Zubiri concurred with Senator Dela Rosa's stance that PCG personnel should be manning the country's ships that patrol Philippine waters. Senator Dela Rosa observed that airport security was already in disarray as a result of the ongoing turf war between the PNP Aviation Security Group and the Airport Police.

He thanked the members of the Philippine Coast Guard for implementing the COVID-19 health protocols during the pandemic. However, he believed that with the easing of restrictions on the health protocols, they could be deployed to the West Philippine Sea to prevent Chinese harassment of Filipino fishermen.

Senator President Zubiri recalled that upon his return from a recent trip to Singapore, a member of the Office for Transportation Security (OTS) informed him that their employees had not been paid their salaries for nearly a month. He stated that he had brought up the issue with Transportation Secretary Jimmy Bautista during the hearing of the Commission on Appointments who assured him that he would investigate the matter and ensure that the OTS personnel received what was owed them. He wondered how anyone can expect good service at the airport if its personnel are not being paid properly. He expressed hope that Secretary Bautista, who comes from the airline industry, would be able to resolve the problems at the airport.

He emphasized the need for a temporary solution while the Bulacan airport is being constructed and made operational. In addition, he stated that the lack of available public transport should be

addressed, including the shortage of taxicabs and Grab services to and from the airport, as it is a major hindrance to promoting the country's tourism industry.

He then expressed his full support for Senator Poe's privilege speech and hoped that it would be referred to the appropriate committee so that the DOTr would be reminded to work harder. He added that he would discuss the issue with Secretary Bautista the following day during the CA hearing.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA**

Senator Villanueva emphasized that connecting flights between airlines must also be studied due to the long walking distance between gates. He also noted that the traffic congestion at NAIA could be alleviated if more flights were offered at the world-class Clark Airport, which is more accessible to those travelling from northern areas such as Pangasinan, Bataan, Zambales, and Baguio. However, he lamented that only a few flights are available.

On another matter, Senator Villanueva expressed concern over the low 23.5% disbursement rate of the DOTr-Office of the Secretary, which had available appropriations of P152.6 billion as of September 30 of that year, despite having a huge allocation of P82.06 billion for 2023. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that all funds allocated to the department are utilized properly, or else NAIA will not improve.

Finally, he stated that he agreed with Senator Poe on the importance of maintaining the airports, as they are the first and last places that tourists will see in the Philippines.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR EJERCITO**

Senator Ejercito said that the inability to seamlessly transfer from one terminal to the other was another concern that must be addressed. He stated that under the current setup, passengers would certainly miss their flights if they were located in a different terminal under the current arrangement. He suggested that the airport provide a shuttle service to transport passengers with connecting flights to terminals. Senator Poe responded that the Mactan-Cebu International Airport (MCIA) provides shuttle service between terminals.

Noting that the country was already at a lower alert level for COVID-19, Senator Ejercito suggested that the PCG currently manning the health pass booths at the airport should be deployed elsewhere, as visitors might be intimidated by the presence of men in uniform. He stated that they would be more useful if they are assigned to the West Philippine Sea.

In addition, he agreed with the earlier statement that the P12 billion Clark Airport was unutilized during the pandemic because all airline flights had been transferred to NAIA. He suggested asking Secretary Bautista to compel the airlines to use Clark Airport, adding that it is one of the "band-aid" solutions that could be implemented until the Bulacan becomes operational.

On another matter, he thanked Senator Angara for including funding for the North-South Commuter Line and the Metro Manila Subway System in the unprogrammed funds, as the projects were crucial to the operation of the new airports. He said that it was important to prioritize the projects because they would not only improve commuter convenience but would also help stimulate economic growth. Similarly, he thanked Senator Poe for her efforts to secure funding for the two programs.

In response, Senator Poe expressed her appreciation to Senator Ejercito for his insightful analysis and solutions pertaining to the transportation sector.



## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

Senator Dela Rosa manifested his support to the proposal of Senators Villanueva and Ejercito to fully utilize Clark International Airport in order to decongest NAIA. He stated that whenever he traveled to Davao, he would prefer to take the longer route from his home in the southern part of Cavite to Clark Airport via Skyway Stage 3, as the airport is less congested than the three terminals in NAIA. He then suggested that the DOTr compel the airline companies to offer flights in Clark as well.

Senator Poe, concurring with Senator Dela Rosa's suggestion, remarked that the situation at NAIA has deteriorated to the point where the time aircraft are required to maintain a pattern while awaiting their turn to land on the runway would be longer than the duration of the actual flight itself.

## MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva informed the Body that Senator Padilla had expressed his support for the speech of Senator Poe.

## REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Poe as well as the manifestations thereon to the Committee on Public Services.

## PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

Availing himself of the privilege hour, Senator Dela Rosa spoke on the need for the entire nation to continue its fight against illegal drugs.

*Following is the full text of Senator Dela Rosa's privilege speech:*

*Tumindig ako ngayon bilang isang magulang at kapuwa ninyo Pilipino na nagmamahal sa pamilya at nagmamahal sa ating bayan. Ilan na po ba sa Bulwagang ito ang katulad ko at marami sa ating mga kababayan ang walang ibang nais kung hindi makauwi nang matiwasyang ang kanilang mga anak sa tuwing sasapit ang gabi?*

Before President Duterte took office in 2016, every parent had to endure being sick with worry because their children are still out on the streets at night. Every child has never felt secure going home alone and every family had a story or two of a crime committed in their neighborhood because of drugs. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte was the only president of this Republic who dared to wage an all-out war against the proliferation of illegal drugs in the country. One might say that it was like opening a can of worms. Yes, this argument might be true. However, waging the war on drugs has also opened our eyes to a reality we refused to acknowledge or was it merely hiding in plain sight?

At the start of his term, then President Duterte made us realize that the drug problem was massive and complex—a web of intricate systems that branched out into other different criminal activities. Fortunately for the Philippines, our President was ready and willing to be the first to do the dirty and difficult work in order to untangle the knots of the criminal web.

During his administration, President Duterte was indeed both feared and loved. He was feared by drug cartels, syndicates, and even lowly drug neighborhood drug pushers. But he was loved by those who understood the relevance of his campaign.

*Malapit po at personal sa bawat pamilyang Pilipino ang isyu ng droga. Kaya nga siguro naging madali sa lahat upang tanggapin ang panawagan na tuluyan nang sugpuin ito. Halos lahat siguro sa atin ay may kaniya-kaniyang kuwento o karanasan tungkol sa pagiging biktima ng salot na ito. How many of our kababayans have been victimized by snatchers, robbers, rapists*

who would later on turn out to be under the influence of illegal substances after they were tested. Some of them, when interviewed by the arresting officers, would even say that they resorted to robbery because they needed to fund their drug addiction. How many of us knew someone who squandered all their family's wealth just to maintain their lifestyle of vices? *Ilang beses na po tayong nakabasa ng mga headlines sa ating pahayagan o nakarining sa radyo, o nakapanood ng balita sa telebisyon, tungkol sa mga krimen na bunga ng iligal na droga. Masakit din po sa kalooban na mabalitaan na may mga kababaihan na hinalay o ginahasa ng mga nilalang na lulong pala sa mga ipinagbabawal na gamot.*

Then-Mayor Rodrigo Duterte, with his unorthodox leadership, somewhat struck a chord in every Filipino's consciousness. The message was straight and simple: "The drug menace is destroying our country and it has to be stopped."

When the Filipino people voted in 2016, we did not only vote for Rodrigo Duterte as President, we voted for his advocacy. The Filipinos accepted the campaign against drugs and embraced it. To the credit of our law enforcement agencies, they readily responded to the call of President Duterte.

To the credit of our law enforcement agencies, they readily responded to the call of President Duterte. I was privileged enough to be in the leadership of the Philippine National Police when we ramped up our efforts to rid our streets of illegal drugs. As we continued to do so, it was quite remarkable that almost all other crimes that were related to it began to decline in number.

In February of this year, Secretary Año of the Department of Interior and Local Government claimed that index crimes in the country dropped to 34,552 in 2021 from 131,699 in 2016.

It was for the PNP as a whole, and for me personally, a validation of our claim. Illegal drugs were almost always involved in other crimes. But more importantly, it was a vindication of President Duterte. He was right when, from the very beginning, we have been slowly becoming a narco-state. But here, in front of us, was the opportunity to prevent it from happening. Needless to say, we grabbed this opportunity and acted on it. Time was, and still is, of the essence.

*Upang malinis po ang ating bayan, kinailangan po na simulan ito sa mismong bakuran ng ating pamahalaan. Sa hanay po ng ating law enforcement, hindi po tayo nagdalawang-isip na imbistigahan at kasuhan ang mga tinaguriang "ninja cops" na siyang sumisira sa imaheng ating kapulisan.*

*Hindi rin po nakaligtas ang mga local elective officials na nagkukubli sa kanilang mga posisyon para mapagtakpan ang kanilang mga iligal na gawain. Marami pong mga public relation efforts na ginagawa ang ating pamahalaan upang mapaganda ang reputasyon ng PNP. Pero, modesty aside po, dahil po ako ay naging PNP chief, noong panahon po na ipinatupad natin ang war on drugs, nanumbalik po ang respeto ng ating mga mamamayan sa ating mga pulis. At iyon po siguro ang pinakamatamis at pinakamasarap na gantimpala para sa isang nageserbisyo—publiko—ang tiwala ng ating mga kababayan.*

We engaged in the drug war not because we love war. On the contrary, we Filipinos have always loved peace. Our goal then, and until now, has always been to have a safe and peaceful community. And if being relentless in pursuing this goal meant heading toward a collision course with killers, monsters, and heartless criminals, so be it. We marched head-on into battle and pushed further.

Presidents, governments, administrations—none of these will ever be perfect. But fortunately for us, there is something more important than perfection. What matters more is how much we try to make our nation better. Criminals of all forms, from street thugs to syndicate leaders, would do everything in their power for the government not to succeed. But they always end up on the losing end of this fight, because our police and other law enforcement agencies have a formidable ally—our people.

The same way that Filipinos welcomed President Duterte's war on drugs, I honor and salute its continuance during President Bong Bong Marcos' term. Under the current leadership of the DILG and the PNP, they have established creative programs that also aim to address the drug problem.

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Among those programs, there are two that I wish to highlight. The first one is the Buhay Ingatan, Droga'y Ayawan (BIDA) program of the DILG, which was launched in October of this year.

*Layunin ng programang ito na magkaisa ang lahat ng ahensya ng gobyerno, kasama rin ang bawat LGU, sa pagsugpo sa iligal na droga. Sa ilalim ng BIDA program, mas lalong nabigyan ng diin na ang bawat isa sa atin ay kaisa ng ating gobyerno – ang ating mga simbahan, eskwelahan, at lahat ng lokal na institusyon.*

“Life is Beautiful, Kaligtasan Niyo, Sagot Ko! Tulong-tulong tayo.” This is the second program that I want to give emphasis on; the newest slogan of the Philippine National Police. The slogan emphasizes the beauty of life despite the trials that our country may face. But, of course, life will only be more beautiful if we choose to make it so. *Tulong-tulong po tayo.*

I admire and support these innovative programs. I know that with their full and proper implementation, we will continue to see our country improve its law and order. When I see our men and women in uniform, I cannot help but feel proud of what we have achieved in President Duterte's tenure but also look forward to what we can accomplish in the years to come. But while I anticipate, I admit that I also worry.

*Marami po tayong mga sindikato na nabuwag at mga kriminal na naipakulong dahil sa kanilang pagkakasangkot sa iligal na droga noong panahon ni Pangulong Duterte. Maganda po itong pamana para sa administrasyon ni PBBM. Ngunit, sa kasamaang-palad, mayroon pa rin mga matitigas ang ulo at tila sinusubukan nilang makabalik sa kanilang mga dating gawi.*

*Kaya naman po hindi tayo dapat magpakampante. Kamakailan lamang, may mga ulat tayong natanggap na may mga grupo na naman ng mga ninja cops na mukhang gustong gumawa ng pangalan sa larangan ng krimen. Habang nakatuon ang atensyon nating lahat para masugpo at mapugutan ng ulo ang mga sindikato, tahimik na gumagalaw ang kanilang mga galamay.*

*Kumikilos sila dahil sa pakiramdam nila ay hindi sila mapapansin o matutukoy. Naglalakas loob ang mga tiwaling pulis at PDEA agents na ito dahil akala nila ay walang nakatingin at walang nagbabantay.*

*Nitong nakaraang linggo lamang, pitong PDEA agents ang nahuli sa isang buy-bust operation sa Taguig. The estimated amounts of drugs seized from them was more or less 100 grams, worth P680,000. Uulitin ko po, mga PDEA agents ang mga ito kasama ang kanilang chief ng Southern District Office na nahuling nagbebenta ng droga sa loob mismo ng kanilang opisina.*

On October 8, 2020, PDEG-SOU conducted an anti-drug operation, which resulted in the arrest of PMSgt. Rodolfo B. Mayo Jr., an active member of the Police Drug Enforcement Group, Special Operation Unit, National Capital Region. Subsequently, police operatives raided the place where the suspect came from during the buy-bust operation. The WPD Lending Incorporated at 1742 Jose Abad Santos Avenue, Sta. Cruz, Manila led to the discovery of a whopping 990 kilos of shabu. *Ang monetary value ng 990 kilos, ayon sa report, ay P6.7 billion. Habang tayo rito sa Senado ay hirap na hirap kung saan tayo maghahagilap ng pondo para mas maayos na maipatupad ang mga proyekto at programa ng pamahalaan sa taong 2023, tila madali lamang kumita ng bilyon-bilyon para sa mga ninja cops. Isa itong si PMSgt. Rodolfo Mayo Jr. sa mga ninja cops na ni-reassign natin sa Mindanao noong 2016. Ako ngayon ay nagtataka bakit ito naibalik sa Metro Manila at ginawa pang intelligence officer ng PDEG SOU-NCR at tuluyang lumaki pa ang kaniyang papel in the proliferation of illegal drugs. Indeed, drug syndicates are back and they are coming back with a vengeance.*

*Isa pang kagulat-gulat na pangyayari noong nakaraang linggo: dalawang pulis na kagagaling lang sa isang anti-illegal drug operation ang in-ambush at pinatay sa Pampanga ng hini-hinalang Flores Drug Syndicate. Sino kaya itong sinasabing Flores Drug Syndicate ng Dau, Pampanga? These two policemen died on the spot. Nahuli na ang tatlong suspek. But the point remains: it seems the criminals are becoming bolder, shooting policemen at point blank range, ending the lives of our operatives in an ambush attack. Ang hamon ko ngayon sa ating kapulisan, papayag ba kayong ganyan na lamang ang gagawin sa inyong mga kabaro? Needless to say, the full force of the law should be applied to them.*



*Minsan may isang mayor ang nakapagtanong po sa akin at nagsabi: "Sir, bumabalik na po sila. They are back in business. Ano po ang gagawin namin, Senador?" Ang tanging sagot ko: "Huwag ninyo silang patayin." Of course, we value life. Life is indeed beautiful. But this also means that we cannot get complacent, when the lives of our families, our children, are threatened; when the lives of those whom we love are no longer beautiful.*

*Wala pong panahon para maging kampante ang ating kapulisan sapagkat ito po ang hinihintay ng ating mga kalaban. The slightest distraction that we commit, these traitors among our ranks will grab all the opportunities to enrich themselves even though this would entail the destruction of lives—theirs included.*

*Hindi po sila tumitigil, kaya ganoon din dapat tayo. Ipagpatuloy natin ang ating mga nasimulan na at gamitin ang mga natutunan mula sa mga karanasang napulot natin mula sa nakaraang administrasyon.*

The Supreme Court in the case of *People vs. Ameril* showed their disappointment when it declared in March 2019: "We are swamped with cases involving small fry who have been arrested for miniscule amounts. While they are certainly a bane to our society, small retailers are but low-lying fruits in an exceedingly vast network of drug cartels. Both law enforcers and prosecutors should realize that the more effective and efficient strategy is to focus resources more on the source and true leadership of nefarious organizations or the drug cartels."

While the Supreme Court's suggestion is not entirely devoid of error, we express our utmost admiration that our government is going after what we call "big fishes." However, we should not lose focus on the petty and common crimes that happen because of drugs. As experience will tell us, a holistic and all-encompassing approach to this problem is needed to beat our enemies.

The fact that the ninja cop behind the P6 billion worth of shabu was arrested is in itself a victory. For this arrest and for the many others, we rightly applaud our Philippine National Police. I hope more arrests will follow since *alam nating hindi kaya ng isang police master sergeant lamang na magpatakbo ng ganito kalaking drug empire.*

Strategically, we have made our attacks from multiple angles and on different fronts. Through our awareness campaigns, we have continued to win the hearts of our people and involved them in our noble cause. Simultaneously, we have conducted investigations, made arrests, and filed cases against drug lords, small or big—there was no distinction. All of them are answerable to our laws.

Yes, we must go after the source of this evil, but we must not forget the seeds they have sown in our society. *May kasabihan po tayo: "Walang malaki na nakapupuwing." These small-time drug dealers and criminals are potential cartel leaders and would-be enemies of the State. Huwag po nating isnabin ang mga small fish in our campaign, kasi maliliit na isda nga lamang sila pero sila po ang mga piranha na kayang kumain ng isang buong baka in a matter of seconds.*

*Sila po ang nagho-hold up, nang-ii-snatch, nananaksak, at nangre-rape. Ang hamon ko sa ating mga kapulisan ay hayaan nilang maglakad sa kalsada ang kanilang mga anak na babae sa dis-oras ng gabi at kung sila ay nakakauwing hindi napagsamatalahan o namolestiya, saka natin masasabing safe na tayo. We know we are safe when we, the peace-loving people, are the ones who really own the streets and not the other way around.*

Recent data from the PNP boasted a decrease in crime incidence. In the period January 1 to November 13, 2022, there were 33,844 recorded incidents of these crimes. This translated to a decrease of 2.72% year on year than the 34,792 recorded in the same period in 2021. We thank the PNP and the PDEA for their relentless pursuit in making our streets safer in every successful anti-drug operation that we accomplished. We do not simply congratulate our operatives, we say, "Keep up the good work!"

The success of anti-drug and anti-criminality campaigns are measured differently by ordinary people on the ground. They do not just look at the numbers. *Kung umabot na po sa punto na hindi na natin isinusukbit sa ating harapan ang ating mga backpack, at puwede na tayong mag-text kahit saan nang hindi nahahablot ang ating mga cellphone, palagay ko po ay ganap nang nagtagumpay tayo. And, ultimately, as I said at the beginning of this speech, if parents are no longer afraid of allowing their children to go home alone at night, therein lies the true measure of success.*

*Ramdam na po natin ang presensiya ng Kapaskuhan. Marami sa ating mga mamamayan ang excited bumili ng regalo at pagkain para sa Pasko. Ngunit sigurado po akong nakikita rin itong oportunidad ng mga masasamang-loob. The coldness of the weather brings out the coldness of hearts. We are calling for more vigilance to the drug problem. More money is circulating in the community and we expect an increase in illegal drug activities that would translate to more crime incidence. Iparamdam po natin ang presensiya ng kapulisan sa ating mga kalsada.*

*Muli, sa atin pong kapulisan, wasto ang ating giyera laban sa droga. Ipagpatuloy natin ang ating mabuting hangarin. Naimulat na natin ang ating mga kababayan, at buong-buo ang pagtanggap nila sa atin. Tandaan natin na katuwang natin sila sa patuloy na pagpapaganda ng ating bayan. Paghusayan pa natin. The nation is ecstatic with our progress. Let us keep our spirits high and our dedication to serve strong. Let us always strive to make life beautiful for our children and for the generations to come.*

Let us continue our relentless fight against illegal drugs. If we hit hard on illegal drugs, we hit hard on criminality and, as a reminder, *dahil baka po nakalimutan na ng ilan, ako po si "Bato" na galit sa mga gumagamit at nagbebenta ng bato.* A wise man once said: "My God, I hate drugs!"

Allow me to end with a Visayan word that best captures today's message to sustain the good we have started: "*Padayon!*"

## **INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS**

Senator Hontiveros stated that problematic drug use has been a massive and complex problem in the country. She then inquired about the number of Filipinos with problematic drug use and who were considered illegal drug addicts and illegal drug peddlers. Senator Dela Rosa responded that he was only aware of the 1.6 million drug surrenderees and approximately 300,000 drug offenders who had been arrested and were all still alive, while approximately 6,000 drug offenders had died, for a total of approximately two million. He confirmed that majority of the 1.6 million drug surrenderees was the result of operation *Tokhang* or *Toktok Hangyo*.

Senator Hontiveros recalled that the official statistics from the PNP in early 2022 indicated that there were approximately 6,000 deaths in the war on drugs, while figures from the various human rights organizations on the ground estimated that there were approximately 30,000 deaths based on anecdotal evidence of bodies found in the streets and recovered from different funeral parlors and based on accounts of families who had not officially filed complaints after their family members disappeared after a drug operation in their area. She stated that another question that should be answered in time is who among those who died in the war on drugs were guilty and who were innocent of drug crimes, as it would bring justice and peace of mind to the widowed and orphaned children.

She recalled that the PDEA and the Dangerous Drugs Board provided the same range of figures in 2016 as mentioned by Senator Dela Rosa: between 1.6 million and 2 million problematic drug users. In the subsequent months, however, she noted that the number of problematic drug users had increased from three million to four million to an official high of seven million to eight million. She stated that the PDEA and DDB under the previous administration had noted that the prevalence of illegal drugs in the country was 2.8% amphetamines and .01% Ecstasy, which drug supply suppression experts and law enforcement agencies deemed to be lower than the global average of 3.5% percent to 5.7%.

In addition, she stated that index crimes decreased to 34,000 in 2021 and 33,000 in 2022 from January to November, representing a 2.2% annual decline. She stated that she also wanted to know the cost of the war on drugs and whether or not the fight against illegal drugs had contributed to the decline in index crimes, or whether other factors were responsible.



Regarding the number of identified “ninja cops” or corrupt policemen and PDEA agents during the previous administration, as well as the number of those arrested, with cases filed against them, jailed, and convicted of their crimes, Senator Dela Rosa admitted that he did not yet have the figures and would have to request the records from the PNP in order to provide accurate data. Senator Hontiveros stated that she would be looking forward to be given a copy of the data as the AFP and PNP continue their reform efforts within their respective ranks. She opined that no government could successfully run a good government without pushing for modern, reformed, professional, and rights-based institutions such as the AFP and the PNP; thus, the importance of the requested data in establishing the facts.

As to the number of local government officials in the previous administration who were identified as accomplices or parties to the illegal drug problem in the country, and the number of those arrested, with cases filed against them, jailed, and convicted of an illegal drug crime, Senator Dela Rosa replied that he did not have the records. However, he mentioned the case of a former Ozamis City mayor who died during a police anti-drug operation and whose two children have since been imprisoned. He added that the authorities would also have a list of those who had fled to other countries, some of whom were slowly returning, and were expected to cause future problems for the government.

Senator Hontiveros stated that the PNP would need the approval and cooperation of the DILG in order to prosecute local government officials who commit drug-related offenses. She noted that other local executives who were the subject of law enforcement operations, had died, been arrested, been incarcerated due to conviction, or been incarcerated but had not yet been convicted of their crimes, citing the country’s problems and issues with its penal and criminal justice systems. She opined that it would be important to monitor the progression of cases and the speedy solution of mysteries surrounding certain cases, especially when drug suspects die during police operations or when drug inmates die in prison. She stated that such deaths made it difficult for cases to advance in court and for victims to receive justice.

Senator Dela Rosa provided the following breakdown of government workers involved in illegal drug-related crimes: 408 elected officials; 552 uniformed personnel; and 357 government employees. In addition, he mentioned that 12,628 children were involved in illegal drug activity or rescued during anti-drug operations.

Senator Hontiveros stated in her capacity as chairperson of the Committee on Women, Children, Family Relations and Gender Equality, that the high number of rescued children was something to be celebrated because people would want their children to be safe from any harm — from problematic drug use and from becoming involved and used for illegal drug activities — through a proper anti-drug program. However, she expressed sadness that children such as Kian Delos Santos, Carl, and Kulot, had been killed in the war on drugs. She stated that she was somehow comforted by the fact that the children were at least given a glimpse of justice with the conviction and imprisonment of the ground personnel involved in their deaths, but not the mastermind or those with command responsibility. She emphasized that the convictions served as recognition that the children’s violent deaths were unjustified. ✓

She then expressed her dismay at the number of government officials and employees who were supposed to protect the citizens but ended up being involved in criminal activities related to drugs. As to the total number of government officials involved in drug-related crimes in the previous administration, Senator Dela Rosa replied that there were 408 government officials from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2022, including barangay officials, congressmen, mayors, governors, board members, municipal councilors, city councilors, and officials in almost all elective positions.

Senator Hontiveros opined that while the figures could be considered large, they represented only a fraction of the thousands of elected officials, uniformed personnel, and government

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employees in the Philippines. Despite the fact that she did not consider it a complete victory, she stated that any positive result on the country's law enforcement deserves recognition, as the law enforcement authorities fought and worked hard to do their jobs, showing that the Philippines was still far from becoming a narco-state.

Senator Dela Rosa clarified that the numbers only included those who had been arrested. He explained that he based his statement that "the country was about to become a narco-state" on the experience in municipalities and other areas where drug lords could determine who would become the mayor and the representative in Congress.

Senator Hontiveros surmised that those charged, arrested, and imprisoned may not represent the total number of government officials involved. She stated that according to the Civil Service Commission, there are approximately 1.7 million government workers, which meant that the 1,400 personnel, or 0.1%, who had been arrested did not represent a significant portion of their total number.

She stated that future examination of the principle of proportionality, which she believed national defense and public safety experts knew better than legislators, could be beneficial. She stated that definitely no one would desire for the country to become a narco-state.

She asserted that she would like to see creative programs with a holistic and all-encompassing approach because the Philippines was not the only country grappling with the issue of illegal drug use. She stated that many other countries were experiencing difficulties in determining the best way to combat drug cartels and rehabilitate addicted drug addicts.

On Senator Dela Rosa's claim that many syndicates had been dismantled and many criminals had been imprisoned, Senator Hontiveros requested information regarding the number of criminal syndicates that had been dissolved during the previous administration. Senator Dela Rosa surmised that out of the 300,000 drug offenders arrested during the war on drugs, many were syndicate members. He stated that between January 2021 to June 2022, there were 4,699 high-value targets, either mid-level drug lords or high-level drug traffickers, who were arrested.

Senator Hontiveros expressed optimism that, at least, some data were available for evaluating the previous administration's war on drugs. She then noted that Senator Dela Rosa earlier mentioned the continuation of the war on drugs under the current administration. However, she expressed concern about the continuation of the war on drugs in the same manner as under the previous administration. She stated that she expected the government to address problematic drug use in a different manner, specifically through innovative programs and a holistic and comprehensive approach, such as those mentioned by Senator Dela Rosa: the *Buhay Ingatan, Droga'y Ayawan* (BIDA) and the Life is Beautiful programs. She added that another innovative program being discussed with the PDEA and DDB during the previous administration was the division of labor on the suppression of problematic drug-use demand, to be led by the DOH focusing on education, rehabilitation, and similar programs, and the DDB, PDEA, and PNP leading law enforcement operations.

Senator Hontiveros emphasized that her understanding of holistic and all-encompassing approach was to address problematic drug use through a public health approach, but with effective law enforcement to address the drug supply side, and based on the harm reduction principle.

Senator Dela Rosa assumed that Senator Hontiveros was receptive to decriminalizing drug use. Senator Hontiveros replied in the negative. She admitted that she was interested in interpellating Senator Padilla on his privilege speech on the compassionate use of marijuana, in which he mentioned strict regulation in the purchase of the substance, which could be purchased only with

a physician's prescription, limited to specific cases, and only available at certain pharmacies. Regarding the war on drugs, she underscored the possibility of a division of labor between law enforcement and a public health approach based on the principle of harm reduction in the suppression of drug supply.

Senator Dela Rosa contended that the war on drugs was not a complete failure, although he agreed that some of the war's negative aspects should be discontinued. He stated that incidents like the killing of Kian delos Santos should never occur again. He emphasized that he does not condone the abusive behavior of some law enforcement officers.

Finally, Senator Hontiveros reiterated her call for a holistic and all-encompassing approach to the country's drug problem.

#### **MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA**

Senator Villanueva expressed his support to the law enforcement officers who were doing their best to combat the nationwide drug menace. He lamented, however, that some of them get in trouble with the law, such as the PDEA agents who were recently arrested in Taguig for selling confiscated drugs. He hoped for an increase in the number of law enforcers with unquestionable integrity.

#### **REFERRAL OF SPEECH TO COMMITTEE**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair referred the privilege speech of Senator Dela Rosa and the interpellations and manifestations thereon to the Committee on Public Order and Dangerous Drugs.

#### **CONFEREES**

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Senate President designated the members of the the Senate panel in the Philippine Congress-Bangsamoro Parliament Forum: Senate President Pro Tempore Legarda as chairperson, and Senators Ejercito, Tolentino, Padilla, and Pimentel as members.

#### **ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION**

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

*It was 6:58 p.m.*

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

Atty. **RENATO N. BANTUG Jr.**  
Secretary of the Senate

Approved on December 13, 2022