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NINETEENTH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

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SENATE OF THE PHILIPPINES

SESSION NO. 62
Wednesday, March 15, 2023

CALL TO ORDER

At 3:48 p.m., the Senate President, Hon. Juan Miguel "Migz" F. Zubiri, called the session to order.

PRAYER

Sen. Robinhood C. Padilla led the prayer, to wit:

Bismillaahir Rahmaanir Raheem Qul aothu birabbi nnas Maliki nnas

*Ilahi nnas Min sharril waswasil KhannasAllathee yuwaswisu fee Sudoori nnas
Minal jinnati wannas.*

Sa Ngalan ng nag-iisang Diyos, ang Mapagpala at ang Mahabagin, kami po ay nagpapakupkop sa Panginoon, ang mapagpala at ang mahabagin. Ang hari ng mga nilikha at ng mga daigdig. Ang nag-iisang Diyos ng sangkatauhan laban sa bumubulong ng kasamaan at lumalayo pagkatapos bumulong, silang bumubulong ng kasamaan sa puso at isipan ng isang katauhan. Sila ay mula sa mga jinn at tao na nanghihikayat sa kasamaan.

O, aming nag-iisang Diyos, napakabigat po ng inatang po Ninyo sa aming mga balikat. Bagama't hiningi po namin ang biyayang ito na makapaglingkod sa bayan, hindi po namin kakayanin ito kung walang hudyat na kapangyarihan galing po sa Inyong kabanalan.

Huwag Ninyo pong pahintulutan na kami ay maligaw sa paniniwala na kami po ang siyang makapangyarihan. Tanging sa Iyo lamang po ang kapangyarihan upang kaming mga nahirang ay makatupad sa aming sinumpaang tungkuling maging maka-Diyos, makabayan, makakalikasan, at makakapwa-tao.

Amen.



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

With 21 senators present, the Chair declared the presence of a quorum.

Senators Cayetano (A) and Lapid arrived after the roll call.

Senator Binay 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. 61 (March 14, 2023) and considered it approved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of the following guests:

- Atty. Melvin Matibag and Rep. Ann Matibag of the First District of Laguna;
- DTI officials and staff led by Usec. Ruth Castelo and Asec. Mary Jean Pacheco;
- Mayor Lota Manalo and Vice Mayor Jurly Manalo of Lobo, Batangas;
- Eu Jin Chua, Adrian Chung, and Allan Cabrera from Temasek Company;
- Mayor Jose Ramil Arquiza of Alabat, Quezon;
- The delegation from the Municipality of Kabayan, Benguet led by Vice Mayor Mike Badival;
- Officials of the DOH led by Usec. Nestor Santiago Jr. and Asec. Gloria Balboa;
- Officials of the MMDA led by Chairperson Romando Artes;
- Asec. Bernardo Alejandro of Office of the Civil Defense;
- The Philippine contingent composed of 82 personnel who helped in the rescue and recovery operations in Turkey and Syria;
- Mayor Rizalde Bernal of Dasol, Pangasinan;
- Mayor Colin Reyes of Mabini, Pangasinan; and
- AFP Assistant Deputy Chief-of-Staff Brig. Gen. Glenn Jun Calambuhay.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 3:54 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 3:59 p.m., the session was resumed

PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 535

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535, entitled

RESOLUTION COMMENDING THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT CONTINGENT FOR THEIR VALOR AND ACTS OF SERVICE IN THE RESCUE AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS CONDUCTED FOLLOWING THE MAGNITUDE 7.8 EARTHQUAKE IN TURKIYE AND SYRIA.

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

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR EJERCITO

In sponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535, Senator Ejercito delivered the following speech:

It is my honor and privilege to sponsor Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535, commending the Philippine Government contingent for their valor and acts of service in the rescue and recovery operations conducted, following the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that devastated Turkey and Syria.

The Philippine Government sent an inter-agency humanitarian contingent of 82 personnel to Turkey to assist in the rescue and recovery operations following the catastrophic earthquake. The contingent was composed of 12 personnel from the 505th Search and Rescue Group of the Philippine Air Force; 21 from the 525th Engineering Combat Battalion of the Philippine Army; nine from the Metro Manila Development Authority; eight from the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority; 30 from the Department of Health; and two from the Office of Civil Defense.

In the two weeks that they were deployed in Turkey, our brave and heroic men and women completed search and rescue operations in 36 buildings, retrieved six bodies, and served more than 1,000 patients. They also distributed blankets, bonnets, gloves, and hygiene and sanitary kits to the earthquake victims.

Ang atin pong bansa ay madalas dalawin ng mga sakuna: hagupit ng mga bagyo at mga pagyanig dulot ng lindol. Sa mga panahon pong tayo ang nasalanta, hindi tayo pinabayaan ng ibang mga bansa. It was our turn to give back to those who have extended their kindness during our moments of need.

Hindi po matatawaran ang ipinamalas na tapang, dedikasyon, at malasakit ng ating mga kababayan na nagpunta sa Turkey upang tumulong sa mga biktima ng lindol. They are the epitome of selflessness and dedication of service.

Filipinos are known to help each other in times of need. No burden is to be carried by one person alone. We spread the weight in each other's shoulders and push forward together. The true spirit of *bayanihan* lives on, and our *kababayan* have shared it to the people of Turkey and Syria.

Sa 82 na miyembro ng Philippine Inter-Agency Humanitarian Contingent to Turkey, taos-puso po ang aming pasasalamat at paghanga sa inyo.

Mabuhay po kayo! Mabuhay ang lahing Pilipino.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR DELA ROSA

As cosponsor of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535, Senator Dela Rosa delivered the following speech:

As someone who has seen the fair share of destruction and devastation which causes both natural and manmade, I rise today with a bittersweet sense of pride, cosponsoring Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535, "commending the Philippine Government contingent for their valor and acts of service in the rescue and recovery operations conducted following the magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Turkey and Syria."

It was a calamity of epic proportions with seismologists stating that it would likely be one of the deadliest in this decade. With a death toll of over 50,000 people, this earthquake and its wave of damage destroyed buildings, homes, families, and lives. But it also spurred our *bayanihan* spirit into action. Our quick and snappy response was in the form of an 82-personnel contingent coming from the varied sectors. They were composed of the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, the Department of Health, the Office of Civil Defense, the Metro Manila Development Authority, and the Subic Bay Development Authority. Together, they brought goods such as clothing and hygiene kits and even offered assistance in the rescue and recovery operations in Turkey.

There is an idiomatic expression, "to put something on the map." Generally speaking, it means "to make famous, to make popular." Many times in the past, the Philippines has been put on the map through our many talents as well as our hardworking nature, especially that of our OFWs. However, these 82 people have put on the map the meaning of the Filipino spirit in the time of dire need and desperation. We are not only resilient survivors. We rise to the occasion and give our-selves unselfishly. *Dahil sa ating pagbabayanihan, nakikilala rin ang Pilipino bilang bayani.*

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva stated that Senators Lapid, Go, Revilla, and Tolentino had requested that their cosponsorship speeches on Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535 be inserted into the *Journal and Record of the Senate*, to wit:

By Senator Lapid

Hayaan ninyo akong pangunahan ang pagkilala at pagbibigay-pugay sa mga bumubuo ng Philippine government humanitarian contingent para sa kanilang katapangan, dedikasyon, at determinasyon sa pagbibigay ng tulong at suporta sa mga biktima ng lindol sa Turkiye.

Bilang isang bansa po kung saan nakararanas po tayo ng madalas na lindol, alam po natin ang malalang epekto nito sa mga ari-arian, kabuhayan, kaligtasan, at buhay ng mga tao. Subalit sa kabila po ng malalang trahedyang dinudulot nito sa buong sangkatauhan, ay nagiging oportunidad po ito upang magpakita ng pagmamalasakit at balikatan mula sa iba't-ibang bansa sa buong mundo.

Nalulugod po tayong makita na tuwing may dumarating na trahedyang, ang mga tao ay nagsasama-sama at isinasaisantabi ang kanilang mga pagkakaiba upang tumulong sa isa't-isa. Ang Philippine government humanitarian contingent na dagliang tumulong sa mga biktima ng lindol, kasama ng iba pang mga lahing nandoon ay nagpapaalala sa atin na tayong lahat ay magkakaugnay, magkakapatid at may tungkuling tumulong sa mga nangangailangan, sino man sila o saan man sila nanggaling.

Ang mga bumubuo ng ating Philippine government humanitarian contingent mula sa Office of Civil Defense, Philippine Army, Philippine Air Force, Department of Health, Metro Manila Development Authority, at Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, na dineploy sa Turkiye ay pawang mga professional sa larangan ng disaster response at search and rescue. Sila ay may kasanayan kung paano tutugon sa mga emergency kagaya ng lindol.



Nang mabalita po ang malawakang pinsala na hatid ng lindol sa Turkiye at Syria, agad po nilang tinugon ang tawag ng kanilang tungkulin.

Doon po ay nagtrabaho sila nang walang pagod, nagbigay ng pangangalagang medikal, at nag-alok ng emosyonal na suporta sa mga nawalan ng mga minamahal sa buhay. Araw at gabi, sila po ay tumulong sa paghahanap sa mga taong naipit o nawala sa mga bumagsak na gusali. Ito po ay tuluy-tuloy at madalaing trabaho dahil bawat minuto ay mahalaga sapagkat katumbas nito ay mga buhay na maaari pang masagip.

Maglaan po tayo ng ilang sandali upang pasalamatan ang mga bumubuo ng Philippine government humanitarian contingent na buong-pusong nagbigay ng kanilang oras, lakas, at kakayahan upang matulungan ang mga nangangailangan sa Turkiye. Ating kilalanin ang kanilang kagitingan, ang kanilang kabayanihan na walang-takot na nagtungo sa panganib. Sa halip na lumayo dito, itinaya nila ang kanilang sariling buhay upang iligtas ang ibang bayang nangangailangan.

Kaya ating bigyan ng pagpupugay at pagkilala ang mga bumubuo sa Philippine government contingent na nagtungo sa Turkiye. Ang kanilang walang pag-iimbot na pagtulong upang makapagligtas ng kapwa tao, pagkatapos ng malaks na lindol, at pagtungo sa lugar ng trahedya upang makatulong ay tunay na kahanga-hanga. Ang kanilang tapang, dedikasyon, at katapatan sa sinumpaang tungkilin na paglingkuran ang kanilang kapwa tao ay tunay na inspirasyon sa bawat Pilipino at sa sangkatauhan.

Mabuhay po ang mga bumubuo sa Philippine government humanitarian contingent! Mabuhay ang ating mga bagong bayani!

By Senator Go

Today, I rise to speak about Filipinos who have exemplified the true spirit of heroism and service to humanity, the Philippine contingent sent by the government to Turkey and Syria in the aftermath of the 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the countries on February 6, 2023.

As you all know, the earthquake caused extensive damage to properties and infrastructure and resulted in numerous casualties and injuries. In response to this crisis, the Philippine Government sent a contingent of 82 personnel, comprising members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Department of Health, Office of Civil Defense, Metro Manila Development Authority, and Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, to aid in the rescue and recovery operations.

Through their bravery, dedication, and determination, they were able to significantly contribute to the rescue and recovery operations, providing necessary aid and support to those affected by the earthquake. Their acts of selflessness, sacrifice, and valor in service to humanity are worthy of praise and commendation.

As a Filipino, I am proud of our government's response to this crisis, and I am grateful for the service of our brave men and women who have shown the world the true spirit of *bayanihan*.

To end, let us all express our heartfelt gratitude to the Philippine Government contingent sent to Turkey and Syria and recognize them for their outstanding service and contribution to humanity.

By Senator Revilla

I join our esteemed colleagues in honoring our Philippine Inter-agency Humanitarian Contingent that responded to the 7.8-magnitude earthquake in the Republic of Turkiye. They are our living testimony of the great Filipino spirit of *bayanihan*.

Mabilis pa sa alas-kwatro ang ating naging pagtugon sa pangangailangan ng ating mga kapatid sa Turkiye. Hindi nag-atubili ang ating team. Our brave team members are the 82 strong-willed personnel from:

- Office of Civil Defense, Department of National Defense (DND-OCD);
- Department of Health (DOH);
- 505th Search and Rescue Group (SRG) of the Philippine Air Force;
- 525th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECBn) of the Philippine Army;



- Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA); and
- Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA).

Tunay na maipagmamalaki ang kanilang kabayanihan! Ipinamalas nila sa buong mundo ang natatanging diwa ng pagka-Pilipino ng pagdamay sa kapwa. They certainly have done well in representing our country with their selfless and heroic act. Sadyang ang dugong Pinoy ay may pusong laging handang tumulong sa mga higit na nangangailangan— anumang lahi, anumang oras, at ilang bundok man ang tatawirin.

The aftermath of the earthquake has shown us that we can be each other's rainbow after the storm. Humanity will always prevail even against the worst disaster, especially when we offer a helping hand to our brothers and sisters in need.

As they rise from the rubbles, so too should all of us rise to the challenge of continuously strengthening our disaster prevention, mitigation, response, rehabilitation and recovery efforts.

Muli, sa ating team, maraming salamat sa inyong walang pag-aalinlangang pagtugon sa tawag ng pangangailangan. Ang inyong kabayanihan at taos-pusong paglilingkod ay nakatatak na sa ating kasaysayan, sa bawat isa sa amin, at sa lahat ng inyong mga natulungan.

In closing, I would like to manifest my intent to be a coauthor of this measure.

By Senator Tolentino

Last March 8, I delivered a cosponsorship speech in support of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 480, thereafter adopted as Adopted Resolution No. 49, expressing the deep condolences of the Senate to the people of Turkiye and Syria who had been affected by the devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake that hit the area on February 6, 2023.

Today, this humble Representation is standing up again to express this institution's heartfelt gratitude, and salute to the 82-man team, composed of personnel from the Office of Civil Defense, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Department of Health, Philippine Army, Philippine Air Force, and Metro Manila Development Authority, among others, who brought assistance to those heavily affected by the strong earthquake in Turkiye.

Perhaps my pride and sentiment today in honoring the 82-strong contingent, nine of whom I have worked with when I was the MMDA Chairperson, can be best summed up by the words of William Shakespeare in his immortal play, Henry V:

*"From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered-
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he today that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother..."*

Those words speak to the bond shared by men and women, such as this group we have here today, who have shared the labors, the horrors, the fears, the worries, and most of all, the unbreakable ties of those who have all put their lives in service of a cause.

In this case, the cause does not only serve our country. In fact, their cause is bigger, more encompassing: for it was in the service of humanity, of those ravaged by the force of nature, albeit nameless, and from a place far from hearth and home, the countries of Turkiye and Syria.

As we honor these men and women today, we also continue to pray, and grieve, with the people of Turkiye and Syria as they take on the task of recovery, rebuilding, and rehabilitation. May hope arise among the survivors and the entire people of Turkiye and Syria as they build their lives anew and continue living for the future.

REMARKS OF THE CHAIR

In commending the 82 personnel of the Philippine government contingent, Senate President Zubiri made the following statements:

I stand here to proudly commend the Philippine government's 82-person contingent that was sent to aid in the rescue and recovery efforts to the victims of the massive earthquake in Turkiye and Syria. We thank and salute each one of you, every single member of the contingent, from the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Department of Health, Office of Civil Defense, The Metro Manila Development Authority, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority by extending your skill, expertise, courage, and selflessness to the victims of the massive earthquake in Turkiye and Syria. You have carried the country with you and let our Turkiye and Syrian brothers know that they are not alone in this time of crisis and need.

Maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat. Saludo po ako sa inyo!

ADOPTION OF PROPOSED SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 535

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535 was adopted, subject to style by the Body.

COAUTHORS

Senator Villanueva manifested that all Members of the Senate are made coauthors of Proposed Senate Resolution No. 535.

Senate President Zubiri invited the Philippine government contingent for a photo opportunity with the senators.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:08 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:26 p.m., the session was resumed.

HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 9

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered House Concurrent Resolution No. 9, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION GRANTING CONSENT TO MR. DELFIN N. LORENZANA, BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN AND FORMER SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, AND MR. GAMALIEL ASIS CORDOBA, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON AUDIT, AND FORMER COMMISSIONER OF THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION, TO RECEIVE THE AWARDS TO BE CONFERRED ON THEM BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILIPPINE-JAPAN RELATIONS,

taking into consideration Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8.

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*.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

In sponsoring House Concurrent Resolution No. 9, Senator Villanueva delivered the following speech:

The Order of the Rising Sun was established in 1875 as Japan's first award to bestow decorations upon individuals in recognition of their service to the nation or public. It is also conferred on foreigners who have made important contributions to enhance bilateral relations.

And so, Chairman Lorenzana and Chairman Cordoba join other distinguished recipients of similar honors from the government of Japan, and we would like to extend our advance congratulations to both of them for this honor being bestowed upon them.

Lastly, let me urge our distinguished colleagues to adopt this concurrent resolution granting consent to Mr. Lorenzana and Mr. Cordoba to receive the awards to be conferred upon them by the government of Japan, pursuant to Article IX, Section 8 of our Constitution.

COSPONSORS

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, all the Members present were made cosponsors of House Concurrent Resolution No. 9.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Pursuant to the manifestation of Senate President Zubiri, following is the cosponsorship speeches on House Concurrent Resolution No. 9:

By Senator Go

I rise today to express my support for the granting of consent to General Delfin Lorenzana, Chairman of the Bases Conversion and Development Authority and former Secretary of the Department of National Defense, and Attorney Gamaliel Asis Cordoba, Chairman of the Commission on Audit and former Commissioner of the National Telecommunications Commission, to receive the awards to be conferred on them by the Government of Japan for their contributions to Philippine-Japan relations.

General Lorenzana and Attorney Cordoba have made significant contributions to Philippine-Japan relations, and we commend them for their achievements. As former Secretary of National Defense, General Lorenzana has played a crucial role in strengthening our defense cooperation with Japan. He has worked tirelessly to promote security and stability in the region, and his efforts have not gone unnoticed.

Likewise, Attorney Cordoba's contributions to Philippine-Japan relations have been invaluable. As former Commissioner of the National Telecommunications Commission, he has worked to promote telecommunications cooperation between our two countries. His efforts have helped to foster closer ties between our peoples, and we are grateful for his service.

The fact that the Government of Japan has chosen to recognize General Lorenzana and Attorney Cordoba with these awards is a testament to the strength of our bilateral relations. It is also a reflection of the high esteem in which these individuals are held by the Japanese government. I am proud that both served the country during the administration of former President Rodrigo Duterte.

Again, I would like to commend former Secretary Lorenzana and former Commissioner Cordoba for these well-deserved awards. Their contributions to Philippine-Japan relations have been significant, and the Filipino nation is proud to see them recognized in this way. Let us take this opportunity to celebrate their achievements and to strengthen the bonds of friendship between our two nations.

By Senator Dela Rosa

It is with great pride that I rise this afternoon and cosponsor House Concurrent Resolution No. 9, granting consent to Mr. Delfin N. Lorenzana, Bases Conversion Development Authority



chairman and former Secretary of the Department of National Defense, and Mr. Gamaliel Asis Cordoba, chairman of the Commission on Audit and former commissioner of the National Telecommunications Commission, to receive the awards to be conferred on them by the government of Japan for their contributions to Philippine-Japan relations.

Established in 1875 by Emperor Meiji, the Order of the Rising Sun was the first national decoration awarded by the Japanese government. What does the Order of the Rising Sun recognize? To put it quite simply, it recognizes notable figures who have made a significant contribution to strengthening relations with Japan.

We, here in the Philippines, are indebted to former Secretary Lorenzana for taking the lead in matters of defending our territory, as well as for ensuring our disaster preparedness. But the limits of our territory never limited Secretary Lorenzana in the performance of his duty. Strengthening our ties with Japan, he was always in full agreement with the Japanese government in emphasizing that we should maintain a "free and open Indo-Pacific."

As for former Commissioner Gamaliel Cordoba, it was under his leadership of the NTC that we were able to enter into a Japan-Philippines ICT Comprehensive Cooperation Package. The promise of this package is for Japan to offer further support so that we can continue to develop our ICT infrastructure.

All of us here in these halls understand the indispensable role of equitable partnerships, if we are indeed to do our jobs well. *Tayong mga senador*, we need to establish ties with agencies and organizations in order to craft legislation that best address the needs of Filipinos. We are grateful to have people we can look up to, people like Secretary Lorenzana and Commissioner Cordoba, who show us what it means to take partnership and cooperation to greater heights. No longer among individual persons, or among agencies, or offices, but between and among nations, desiring only the best for their people.

While the rules of diplomacy tell us that we are granting them permission to receive these awards, I feel that it is the entire Filipino nation that is reaping the benefits. When Filipinos are recognized for strengthening our ties with our neighboring countries, it becomes one of those many, many moments when we can all say: *ang sarap maging Pilipino*. It is not only more fun, but also full of more genuine partnerships, here in the Philippines.

By Senate President Zubiri

It is my honor to cosponsor this resolution, granting our consent to Japan's conferment of awards on our very own Chairperson Delfin Lorenzana and Chairperson Liel Cordoba.

We have had the great fortune of working alongside these illustrious and industrious men, and we know that they are every bit deserving of this recognition.

Chairperson Lorenzana's efforts to strengthen our defense and security cooperation with Japan is vital, particularly in these politically fraught times, when foreign aggressors are trying to intimidate our fisherfolk and Coast Guard on our own waters.

Chairperson Cordoba's pioneering work in integrating Japanese and Philippine information and technology lays a solid foundation for our ongoing efforts to boost our digital economy, and become a Southeast Asian tiger in this age of globalization.

Thus, we wholeheartedly consent to, and celebrate the conferment of awards on Chairpersons Lorenzana and Cordoba. With these awards, you also raise the Filipino people along with you.

ADOPTION OF HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 9

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, House Concurrent Resolution No. 9, taking into consideration Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8, was adopted subject to style by the Body.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 4:29 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 4:30 p.m., the session was resumed.

REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

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

BILLS ON FIRST READING

Senate Bill No. 2003, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES IN THE COUNTRY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Legarda

**To the Committees on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement; Sustainable
Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking; Ways and Means; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 2004, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING PASSIG ISLET OF BARANGAY BATO IN THE
MUNICIPALITY OF STA. CRUZ, PROVINCE OF DAVAO DEL SUR AS AN
AQUA-ECOTOURISM SITE AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

**To the Committees on Tourism; Environment, Natural Resources and Climate
Change; and Finance**

Senate Bill No. 2005, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DISTRICT HOSPITAL
IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF RAMON MAGSAYSAY, PROVINCE OF
ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR TO BE KNOWN AS RAMON MAGSAYSAY DISTRICT
HOSPITAL AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Rules

Senate Bill No. 2006, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING PROTECTION AND INCENTIVES TO FREELANCE
WORKERS

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development; and Ways and Means

Senate Bill No. 2007, entitled

AN ACT REGULATING AND MODERNIZING THE PRACTICE OF MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; Health and Demography; and Finance

Senate Bill No. 2008, entitled

AN ACT GRANTING FULL INSURANCE COVERAGE TO ALL QUALIFIED AGRARIAN REFORM BENEFICIARIES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 6657, AS AMENDED BY REPUBLIC ACT NO. 9700, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "COMPREHENSIVE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW OF 1988"

Introduced by Senator Ejercito

To the Committees on Agriculture, Food and Agrarian Reform; and Finance

RESOLUTIONS

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8, entitled

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION GRANTING CONSENT TO MR. DELFIN N. LORENZANA, BASES CONVERSION DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY CHAIRMAN AND FORMER SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENSE, AND MR. GAMALIEL ASIS CORDOBA, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON AUDIT, AND FORMER COMMISSIONER OF THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION, TO RECEIVE THE AWARDS TO BE CONFERRED ON THEM BY THE GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO PHILIPPINE-JAPAN RELATIONS

Introduced by Senator Zubiri

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 544, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY IN AID OF LEGISLATION TO REVIEW THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM IN PROCESSING BENEFIT CLAIMS WITH THE END IN VIEW TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF CLAIMING THE BENEFITS ESPECIALLY RETIREMENT CLAIMS

Introduced by Senator Tulfo

To the Committee on Government Corporations and Public Enterprises

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 545, entitled

RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE APPROPRIATE SENATE COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO REVIEW THE EXISTING LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS ON THE SUSPENSION OR REVOCATION OF PHILHEALTH ACCREDITATION OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Introduced by Senator Marcos

To the Committee on Health and Demography

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 546, entitled

RESOLUTION RAISING THE ALARM ON THE IMPENDING SUSPENSION OF CERTAIN ROUTES OF THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL RAILWAYS DUE TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE NORTH-SOUTH COMMUTER RAILWAY (NSCR) WITH THE END IN VIEW OF ENSURING ACCESSIBLE ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL AFFECTED PASSENGERS

Introduced by Senator Legarda

To the Committee on Public Services

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 547, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING LARRY APOLINARIO FOR HIS EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE AND BECOMING THE CHAMPION OF THE FIRST PHILIPPINE TRAIL RUNNING ASSOCIATION (PHILTRA) NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Introduced by Senator Legarda

To the Committee on Rules

Proposed Senate Resolution No. 548, entitled

RESOLUTION CONGRATULATING AND COMMENDING THE AWARDEES OF THE 20TH TEN ACCOMPLISHED YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS (TAYO) AWARDS FOR THEIR INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATION-BUILDING

Introduced by Senator Angara

To the Committee on Rules

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE OF BUSINESS

MESSAGES FROM THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Letter from the House of Representatives, informing the Senate that on 14 March 2023, the House of Representatives passed the following House bills in which it requested the concurrence of the Senate:

House Bill No. 7352, entitled

AN ACT IMPLEMENTING RESOLUTION OF BOTH HOUSES NO. 6 OF THE CONGRESS OF THE PHILIPPINES CALLING FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS TO, OR REVISION OF, THE 1987 CONSTITUTION, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Constitutional Amendments and Revision of Codes; Electoral Reforms and People's Participation; and Finance

House Bill No. 7240, entitled

AN ACT RIGHTSIZING THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

To the Committees on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and Professional Regulation; and Finance

House Bill No. 7006, entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE AUTOMATIC INCOME CLASSIFICATION OF PROVINCES, CITIES, AND MUNICIPALITIES, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE SECTION 8 OF REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7160, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT CODE OF 1991, AS AMENDED

To the Committees on Local Government; and Finance

and House Bill No. 7210, entitled

AN ACT DECLARING FEBRUARY 7 OF EVERY YEAR AS "NATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM APPRECIATION DAY" IN CELEBRATION OF THE WORLD INTERFAITH HARMONY WEEK OF THE UNITED NATIONS

To the Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Letter from the House of Representatives, transmitting to the Senate a copy of Resolution No. 52, entitled

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE IMMEDIATE RATIFICATION OF THE REGIONAL COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT,

which was adopted by the House of Representatives on February 21, 2023.

To the Archives

SPECIAL ORDER

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the transfer of Committee Report No. 43 on Senate Bill No. 2001 from the Calendar for Ordinary Business to the Calendar for Special Orders.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 43 ON SENATE BILL NO. 2001

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body considered, on Second Reading, Senate Bill No. 2001 (Committee Report No. 43), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR A NEW PASSPORT LAW, REPEALING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 8239, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE "PHILIPPINE PASSPORT ACT OF 1996."

Pursuant to Section 67, Rule XXIII of the *Rules of the Senate*, with the permission of the Body, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, only the title of the bill was read without prejudice to the insertion of its full text into the *Record of the Senate*.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Marcos for the sponsorship.

At this juncture, Senate President Zubiri relinquished the Chair to Senator Ejercito.

SPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR MARCOS

In sponsoring Senate Bill No. 2001 for plenary consideration of the Body, Senator Marcos delivered the following speech:

Today, I submit to this Chamber Committee Report No. 43, sponsoring herewith Senate Bill No. 2001, entitled "An Act Providing for a New Passport Law, Repealing for the Purpose Republic Act No. 8239, Otherwise Known as the "Philippine Passport Act of 1996."

The right to travel is a constitutionally protected right under Article III, Section 6, which shall not be impaired in the words of the Constitution except in the interest of national security, public safety, or public health as may be provided by law. Part of the liberty of which civilians cannot be deprived, therefore, without due process of law, is this freedom of movement and travel, never to be limited unless there are clear, compelling grounds as mandated by the Constitution and prescribed by law. This constitutes part of the fundamental guarantees in our Constitution of equality of opportunity and the part of freedom of personal mobility.

In truth, the matter of passports is one of deep and abiding personal importance to me having been deprived of a Filipino passport for over seven years. May such fate not befall any other Filipino.

Today, we have witnessed developments in machine-readable travel documents such as passports. When the Philippine Passport Act of 1996 was passed, the Philippines was still issuing handwritten passports upon which photos were manually affixed. In 2007, we upgraded for the first time to the machine-readable version. Then in 2009, the Philippines adopted the electronic biometric passports, or e-passports, machine-readable travel documents that have electronic microchips embedded in them. With the advancement in technology, there is a need to bring forth a new generation of passports.

The New Philippine Passport Law will be the framework upon which we will build the future reiteration of Philippine passports and contactless technologies. This will provide for a more simplified passport application process, improvements in the general public access, at the same time maintaining the security and integrity of our Philippine passport.

Further, this provision harmonized with the recent laws already passed, particularly RA 101713, otherwise known as The Data Privacy Act; RA 11055, the Philippine ID System (PhilSys Act); RA 11767, or the Foundling Recognition and Protection Act; and RA 11641, or the Department of Migrant Workers Act.

Herewith, the concept of consular offices will be expanded to institutionalize the Temporary Offsite Passport Services (TOPS), recently offered by the DFA all over the country. Senior citizens and migrant workers abroad will be allowed to renew their passports without needing to physically appear before the consular offices.

The new law also empowers the DFA to modify the present requirement of personal appearance for first-time passport applicants whenever technologies become available.

Currently, a Filipino traveling overseas who lost his passport will have to apply for a travel document or certificate at the nearest Philippine embassy or consulate general to expedite his return to the Philippines. In this instance, Filipino travelers go through a lot of inconvenience and incur greater cost.

The New Philippine Passport Act now provides for the issuance of emergency passports by our foreign service post to these travelling Filipinos to ensure that they can continue their intended overseas travel prior to the return to the Philippines or the resident overseas. The issuance of diplomatic passports will also be extended to former Senate Presidents, Speakers of the House of Representatives, Associate Justices of the Supreme Court, Presiding Justices of the Court of Appeals and the Sandiganbayan, Members of Congress, Secretary of the Senate and the Secretary General of the House of Representatives, as well as the Secretaries of all departments of the Executive branch.

A conventional travel document, meanwhile, may be issued to stateless persons who are likewise permanent residents of the Philippines, and refugees who have been granted such status or asylum in the Philippines.

The new law will also introduce a creation of passport databases and safeguards, which will contain all current and, if available, previous passport and travel document records of Filipino citizens, including recognized alien residents. There should also be an established watchlist database containing information on persons whose passport applications have been denied or whose passports have been canceled altogether, as well as those who have committed or attempted to commit offenses under the Passport Act. Safeguards to these databases will be implemented in coordination with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT). The law will also create a passport revolving fund sourced from more than 20% of the gross annual collection of fees from issuances and renewals of passports and travel documents for the improvement of passporting and consular services.

Finally, the new law imposes penalties on offenses relating to the forgery of visas and entry documents and the illegal withholding of passports penalizing DFA officers for unfair and discriminatory practices. I now, therefore, ask for the support of my colleagues in modernizing our passport law.

Having been in exile, deprived of a passport for seven unbearable years, my travails finally resulting in the landmark case of *Marcos vs. Manglapus* where Justice Padilla intoned, that "An individual must be protected against unexpected, irresponsible, or excessive encroachment on his right to travel by the State."

With this new law, perhaps no future citizen will ever have to endure deprivation, injustice, or indeed inconvenience in the right to a Filipino passport.

With this new bill as the basis of the New Philippine Passport Act, I am confident we can further curb discriminatory practices, usher in a new generation of passports, and be at par with international standards of passporting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE PRESENCE OF GUESTS

At this juncture, Senator Villanueva acknowledged the presence in the gallery of DFA Asst. Secretary Henry S. Bensurto Jr.

Senator Ejercito welcomed Assistant Secretary Bensurto to the Senate.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR REVILLA

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 2001, Senator Revilla delivered the following speech:

I rise today to cosponsor Senate Bill No. 2001 seeking to legislate the New Philippine Passport Act.

Alam po natin ang kahalagahan ng passport sa ating mga kababayan. It is our gateway to see the world. With our passports, we are able to fly across continents to travel, whether for



leisure or work. Our passport signifies our inviolable constitutional right to travel. *At ngayon nga na muli nang nagbubukas ang iba't ibang mga bansa, ang pagnanais ng ating mga kababayan na maglakbay ay tuluyan na ring nanunumbalik.* And this is why we endeavor to make our passport law ever more dynamic to respond to the changing times, especially with the advent of technology.

Through this proposed measure, we recognize that we are now living in this digital era which all the more ensures accessibility and convenience in the application processes.

Mahalaga po ito lalo na para sa ating mga kababayang OFWs na itinuturing na susi ang kanilang passport tungo sa mas maalwang pamumuhay.

We also support the proposals instituting safeguards against unauthorized access and disclosure of personal information, as well as the prohibition against unfair and discriminatory practices. We have to make traveling less burdensome for our people.

Ang pagkuha at paggamit ng passport ay hindi na dapat dumagdag pa sa hirap na pinapasan ng ating mga kababayan.

Convenience and securing a passport should not amount to curtailing our people's very right to travel. *Kaya kaisa po ako ng ating komite—at thank you sa ating chairperson, Sen. Imee R. Marcos, para mapabilis ang panukalang ito—at sa lahat ng mamamayang Pilipino sa pagsulong ng mga panukalang umaadhika sa kanilang karapatang makapaglakbay.*

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECH OF SENATOR GO

In cosponsoring Senate Bill No. 2001, Senator Go delivered the following speech:

It is my privilege to cosponsor the bill providing for a new passport law to further improve the passport application process and its accessibility to the general public, and to enhance the security and integrity of the Philippine passport.

I congratulate the chairperson, Sen. Imee R. Marcos, for successfully prioritizing this measure with the advancements in technology. It is just right and proper that we have a more simplified, accessible, and secure Philippine passport; after all, the right to travel is recognized in our Constitution.

The proposed Philippine Passport Act provides new and revised guidelines and requirements for the issuance of a Philippine passport. It also provides the requirements for minor applicants, foundlings, senior citizens, and migrant workers.

The bill also provides that the DFA is mandated to establish and maintain an online application portal and electronic one-stop shop, which must be readily accessible on its official website to facilitate convenience of application and ease in gathering and submission of the requirements.

The bill also reiterates the 10-year validity of regular passports, except for those under 18 years of age.

Noong panahon po ni dating Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte, pinirmahan niya po ang Republic Act No. 10928 to amend the existing Passport Law to extend the validity of passports from five years to 10 years. Napakalaking bagay po noon, lalong-lalo na sa ating mga kababayan na napakahirap pong mag-renew ng passport.

Para hindi na mahirapan ang ating mga kababayan na pumila at magbayad pa para sa panibagong passport, ayaw nating pahirapan ang ating mga kababayan sa pagkuha ng basic government services, I laud that the 10-year validity of passports is carried in this proposed measure.

Another feature of the bill includes a reduction of 20% of the passport application fees for senior citizens and persons with disability (PWDs). The bill also recognizes the special assistance needed by senior citizens, PWDs, pregnant women, and OFWs by mandating accommodations to expedite the application and renewal of passports for these sectors through the creation of special lanes.

Through this measure, we hope we could enhance and protect the unimpaired exercise of our right to travel. It is for these reasons that I request to be considered a coauthor of this measure.

COSPONSORSHIP SPEECHES

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body approved the insertion of the following cosponsorship speeches of Senators Villanueva and Estrada on Senate Bill No. 2001, which were deemed read and inserted into *Journal and Record of the Senate*:

By Senator Villanueva

We commend our dear colleague, Sen. Imee Marcos, for sponsoring this measure. It is my honor and privilege to cosponsor Senate Bill No. 2001 under Committee Report No. 43, entitled "An Act Providing for a New Passport Law, Repealing for the Purpose Republic Act No. 8239, Otherwise Known as the 'Philippine Passport Act of 1996'."

It is about time that we update our Passport Law which was promulgated nearly three decades ago. We need to include into our Passport Law additional features that enhance the security and integrity of this important travel document and reflect changes in our times today. Given the ever-changing and dynamic times, there is a need for a new framework for the Philippine passport to uphold the Filipino citizens' right to travel, as guaranteed under Article III, Section 6 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. It must be noted that this right, along with the freedom of movement, is also a fundamental right under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), to which the Philippines is a signatory.

This bill seeks to repeal the Philippine Passport Act of 1996 and uphold the right to travel and freedom of movement by Filipinos by introducing improvements to our existing rules. Among others, these include: a) enumerating the requirements for the issuance of a passport, including the requirements for minor, foundling, senior citizen, or migrant worker applicants; b) Adding Emergency Travel Document and Convention Travel Document as two more types of passports; c) Extending the validity of passports to a period of ten (10) years; d) Establishing a Passport Revolving Fund consisting of service fees which may be used to improve passporting and consular services; and e) Penalizing acts relating to illegal withholding of passport and pertaining to unfair and discriminatory practice and imposing stiffer penalties.

With these changes, we look forward to a modernized, secure, and accessible passport framework that will enhance and at the same time protect our Filipino travelers.

Thank you very much and God bless us all.

By Senator Estrada

According to the Henley and Partners Passport Index for the first quarter of 2023, the Philippine passport ranked 78th among the 199 countries surveyed. The passport index ranks the world's passports according to the number of destinations passport holders can access without a prior visa, giving us an idea on global access and mobility. Our Philippine passport may not be the most powerful, but we should at least make it more accessible for the populace.

While for some, the passport allows one to travel abroad for leisure, *para sa 4.3 milyong* documented migrant workers, it is more than just a mere travel document, it is a means for a better life overseas, a chance to provide a better life for loved ones back home. Also, it is an official ID, which means more people can access basic services and have the ability to participate in the economy.

It is very timely that we amend Republic Act 8239, otherwise known as The Philippine Passport Act of 1996, which will turn 27 years old this year. We need to upgrade our passport law to make it more adept to the times where digitalization is at the forefront of modernization.

One important feature of this bill is that it mandates the Department of Foreign Affairs to implement a system wherein senior citizens and migrant workers abroad do not need to physically appear in a consular office for passport renewal, through the use of available technology, as far as practicable.

With this bill, we are simplifying requirements for obtaining a passport. This bill will also provide a 20% discount on passport fees for senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Even with a new measure on the Philippine passport, this august Chamber under the guidance of our good sponsor, Sen. Imee Marcos, has ensured that this will not result in exorbitant fees. Reasonable fees shall be collected for the processing and issuance of a passport or a travel document. Further, the fee shall not be increased more than once every three (3) years.

In RA 8239, the DFA was allowed to charge a P250 fee for the processing and issuance of passports beyond regular office hours. These fees constituted the passport revolving fund. But that was almost 27 years ago; the value of P250 has dwindled down to P83 pesos. Allowing DFA to retain not more than 20% of the gross annual collection will strengthen the financial capacity of the department, allowing them to provide better passporting and consular services.

To provide better accessibility, the DFA, with the assistance of concerned agencies, is mandated to establish an online application portal and electronic one-stop shop readily accessible on its official website to facilitate convenience of application and ease in gathering and submission of requirements. Also, the DFA will arrange for the easy and expeditious application and renewal of passports for senior citizens, PWDs, pregnant women, OFWs, and individuals with emergency and exceptional cases through the creation of special lanes. From the months of March to June, arrangements will also be made to expedite application and renewal of passports for our Muslim brothers and sisters who will go on the annual hajj pilgrimage.

In the Seventeenth Congress, this Senate sought to extend the validity of the passport, extending it from five (5) years to ten (10). This time, apart from extending its validity, we have ensured that the Philippine passport will be more accessible, while also strengthening the DFA's capacity to provide better and higher quality services that will benefit the people.

We call on our colleagues to support this measure, which is seen to benefit initially 4.8 million applicants targeted for this year, including our dependable OFWs working hard to bring a better life for their family.

COAUTHORS

Upon their request, Senators Villanueva and Go were made coauthors of Senate Bill No. 2001.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 2001

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 20 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1806

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1806 (Committee Report No. 20), entitled

AN ACT PROVIDING FOR THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF TAXPAYERS, CREATING THE OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL TAXPAYER ADVOCATE, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of individual amendments, Senate Bill No. 2001 being a substitute bill.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

GATCHALIAN AMENDMENTS

As proposed by Senator Gatchalian, there being no objection, the Body approved the following amendments:

1. On page 2, line 15, under Section 3 on *Definition of Terms*, between the words “all” and “imposed,” replace the word “taxes” with EXACTIONS;
2. On page 4, line 9, after the words “pursuit of,” delete the words “the case” and replace it with the phrase ANY ASSESSMENT OR MATTER INVOLVING IT;
3. On page 4, line 22, after the words “tax audits,” add the phrase AND TO ADDRESS THE REQUESTS AND OTHER MATTERS PENDING BEFORE THE BIR;
4. On the same page, line 27, after the words “benefit of,” delete the article “an” and in lieu thereof, add the words A PROPER. Also, after the words “audit conducted,” add the phrase BY AUTHORIZED REVENUE EXAMINERS;
5. Still on the same page, line 31, delete the phrase “rules and regulations”;
6. On page 5, paragraph j), line 7, after the word “interests”, add the “SURCHARGES” on the substitute. Likewise, on line 8, after the word “interests”, add a comma (,) and add the word “surcharges.” On the same paragraph, line 9, insert the word “UNJUST OR EXCESSIVE ASSESSMENT” and add a comma (,) before the words “unjustifiable error”. Paragraph j) now read as follows:
 - J) *Right to relief from paying interests, SURCHARGES and penalties.* – The taxpayer shall be entitled to a reduction of interests, SURCHARGES and penalties levied on their tax liabilities in case of any UNJUST OR EXCESSIVE ASSESSMENT, unjustifiable error, or delay caused by the revenue authorities, including instances of loss of records, personnel transfers, entended illness or leaves of absence, and personnel training, resignation, retirement, or termination from service of the concerned personnel.;
7. On page 5, Section 6 on Taxpayer’s Basic Obligation, line 31, after the letter and paragraph a), add a subtitle to read “*OBLIGATION TO COMPLY WITH TAX LAWS.*” – Also on the same line, change to lowercase the word “Observe” and insert the phrase “THE TAXPAYER SHALL” before the word “observe”. The new paragraph a) shall now read as follows:
 - a) *OBLIGATION TO COMPLY WITH TAX LAWS.* – THE TAXPAYER SHALL observe and comply with tax laws, rules and regulations;
8. On page 6, line 1, paragraph (b), add the subtitle OBLIGATION ON TRUTHFUL AND TIMELY DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION; also, change to lower case the word “Truthfully,” before which, add the phrase THE TAXPAYER SHALL;
9. On the same page, line 5, paragraph (c), add the subtitle OBLIGATION TO LODGE AND SUBMIT REQUIRED DOCUMENTS COMPLETELY AND ON TIME; also, change to lowercase the word “Lodge,” before which, add the phrase THE TAXPAYER SHALL;
10. Still on the same page, line 10, paragraph (d), add the subtitle OBLIGATION TO OBSERVE REASONABLE AND DILIGENT CARE IN TAX COMPLIANCE; also, change to lowercase the word “Exercise,” before which, add the phrase THE TAXPAYER SHALL;
11. On the same page, line 12, paragraph (e), add the subtitle OBLIGATION TO KEEP AND MAKE TAX RECORDS AVAILABLE FOR EXAMINATION; also change to lowercase the word “Keep,” before which, and add the phrase THE TAXPAYER SHALL;
12. On the same page 6, line 16, paragraph (f), add the subtitle OBLIGATION TO COOPERATE WITH REVENUE AUTHORITIES IN TAX AUDIT; also, change to lowercase the word “Cooperate,” before which, add the phrase THE TAXPAYER SHALL; and
13. On page 6, line 16, paragraph (g), add the subtitle OBLIGATION TO TIMELY PAY TAXES; also, change to lowercase the word “Timely,” before which, add the phrase THE TAXPAYER SHALL.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1806

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

CLEAN COPY

Senate President Zubiri directed the Secretariat to prepare a clean copy of the bill.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 5:02 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 5:33 p.m., the session resumed.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR VILLANUEVA

Senator Villanueva manifested that relative to the approved amendments on Senate Bill No. 1806, the Secretary was directed to make the necessary corrections on the page and line numbers of the bill.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 22 ON SENATE BILL NO. 1846

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of Senate Bill No. 1846 (Committee Report No. 22), entitled

AN ACT PROTECTING CONSUMERS AND MERCHANTS ENGAGED IN
INTERNET TRANSACTIONS, CREATING FOR THIS PURPOSE THE
ELECTRONIC COMMERCE BUREAU, APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Villar (M), sponsor of the measure, and Senator Gatchalian for his interpellation.

INTERPELLATION OF SENATOR GATCHALIAN

At the outset, Senator Gatchalian thanked Senator Villar (M) for sponsoring the measure which he also authored. He stated that the bill had been discussed in the previous Congress, and that it was about time for it to be implemented, given the increase in internet transactions in the country, particularly during the pandemic. He stated that there is a need to address issues of consumer and retailer protection.

Furthermore, he noted that there had been improvements made to the liability provision, and that there were more details enumerated compared to the original form. He then inquired about the concept of the term "subsidiarily liable" mentioned on page 25, Section 26(a), and how it would protect consumers.

Senator Villar (M) responded that the seller is directly liable for any infraction, while the platform provider will be equally liable if the seller is unable to address the consumer's concern, and if the platform provider is found to have lapses in exercising due diligence, resulting in loss or damage to the consumer. Furthermore, he stated that the platform provider is responsible for showing the seller's information and exercising due diligence on the type of service the seller offers, and that failure to do so would result in subsidiary liability.

Asked whether the primary liability lies on the online merchant and retailer, Senator Villar (M) replied in the affirmative.

Senator Gatchalian noted that the online customer would have to go after the merchant first before suing the e-marketplace provider for the liability. Senator Villar (M) stated that, by definition, subsidiarity would imply that the buyer would first go to the seller, and if the latter is unable to address the buyer's request, the e-marketplace or platform provider would bear some liability, assuming that due diligence on the seller was not performed.

Senator Gatchalian pointed out that Shopee has both domestic and international e-retailer partners: China, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia. He expressed concern about instances where products purchased were not as described on the website.

In response, Senator Villar (M) emphasized that requiring foreign retailers to register locally was a crucial part of the proposed legislation. He stated that the DTI needs information on who the consumer can run after. He emphasized that the retailer's information should be easily accessible so that consumers can go after them. In terms of subsidiarity liability, he stated that if the seller is unable to fully compensate the consumer, the platform's liability would kick in, assuming that there were lapses in the conduct of the platform.

Asked for remedies from e-retailers that are available to the consumers, Senator Villar (M) replied that the primary recourse is for the retailer to refund the customer. He added that the bill empowers the DTI, through its new E-Commerce Bureau, to penalize the seller or take down its site if it fails to address the consumer's concern.

Senator Gatchalian stated that Section 26(a) would apply in going after the e-retailers initially. Senator Villar (M) stated that the bill compels platforms to have their own redress mechanism for buyers. He stated that in the event of a fraud, the platform provider is compelled to step in. He also stated that the DTI's E-Commerce Bureau has the power to enforce penalties in case the seller or platform is unable to address consumer issues.

On whether the DTI could be more detailed in terms of shutting down websites, Senator Villar (M) stated that shutting down a site for 30 days would be reserved for extreme cases where the site failed to respond within 48 hours. He emphasized that the measure provides mechanisms that would allow the E-Commerce Bureau to address any consumer complaints. He said that the "subsidiarily liable" provision would apply if the seller is unable to give proper compensation to the buyer, and that in extreme cases, the DTI has the power to shut down a platform if it is unable to address the consumer complaint. He also stated that the shutdown mechanism can be activated for 30 days if the bureau determines that there is an imminent threat or harm to the public, and that any extension would have to go through judicial methods.

Senator Gatchalian highlighted in Section 26(b) that retailers and platforms/e-marketplaces are jointly liable in certain situations, including when the marketplace fails to exercise ordinary diligence, and when the online merchant and the digital platform/e-marketplace are the same. He assumed that the platform is jointly liable rather than subsidiarily liable.

Senator Villar (M) clarified that the term used was "subsidiarily liable" and not "jointly liable," because it only applies if the seller is unable to compensate the buyer, in which case the platform would step in to complete the compensation if it was proven that it did not exercise due diligence. He stated that it would only be subsidiarily liable if the merchant and the platform/e-marketplace are the same. He expressed willingness to accept amendments at the proper time.

Senator Gatchalian believed that since the merchant and the platform/e-marketplace are the same personalities, it is only logical that they should be jointly liable.

On Section 26(b)(iv), Senator Gatchalian noted that both platform/e-marketplace and individual e-retailers should be registered in the Philippines. Senator Villar (M) stated that the DTI will create an online business registry for the purpose.

Being a platinum member of Shopee, Senator Gatchalian noted that there were thousands of retailers located in various countries. He questioned if it was practicable and feasible to register all e-retailers on a single platform. He stated that he supports the registration proposal. However, he questioned the DTI's capability to enforce the registration and to penalize erring e-retailers and, subsidiarily, the platform/e-marketplace.

In reply, Senator Villar (M) believed that it would not be difficult to implement because e-retailers would simply be required to register basic information such as contact number and location. He stated that Shopee should endeavor to implement the online registry since they should know the seller's basic information. He stated that the requirement is not the same as incorporating a company. He emphasized that basic registration of a sellers' information is possible regardless of the quantity of merchants.

Senator Gatchalian believed that registering e-retailers would be easier and more practical with the platform/e-marketplace, as it would be difficult to compel or communicate with individual e-retailers.

Asked about the platform/e-marketplace's responsibility to e-retailers, Senator Villar (M) replied that the DTI would require platforms to submit a list of merchants under its marketplace. He stated that the DTI will ask the platform to remove the e-retailer from their list or website if they commit any violation.

Senator Gatchalian inquired whether the DTI would issue rules, regulations or orders mandating the platform/e-marketplace to register all of its e-retailers, given that the bill mandates the creation of redress mechanisms for buyers through which consumers, businesses, registered online merchants, e-retailers, and digital platforms can seek out-of-court resolution of disputes.

In reply, Senator Villar (M) reiterated that the DTI, under the concept of subsidiary liability, may use its power to compel the digital platforms/e-marketplaces to have their e-retailers register by threatening them with an imposition of penalties or a shutdown of the site. Likewise, he said that the DTI would also mandate the e-marketplaces to maintain the list of all online merchants registered under their platform, regularly verify and update them, and submit the same to the E-Commerce Bureau. He added that the bill, which provided enough leeway for the implementing rules and regulations that would be drafted upon the passage of the bill into law, also mentioned the E-commerce Bureau manpower that would be capable of monitoring e-merchants.

On whether the e-marketplace would be liable to the government if its individual e-retailers do not register in the Philippines, Senator Villar (M) replied affirmatively, saying that the bill, if passed into law, would obligate the e-marketplace to require its e-retailers to register and submit the needed information prior to listing with the platform. He said that failure on the part of the e-marketplace to compel compliance from its retailers would mean that it did not exercise its proper due diligence with its merchants.

Senator Gatchalian then asked what mechanisms or programs would be promulgated by the E-commerce Bureau to assist consumers who seek redress in cases of fraud or misinformation and as to what powers and functions it would exercise in order to protect the consumers.

Senator Villar (M) replied that the E-Commerce Bureau may impose administrative penalties on the e-marketplace and e-retailer and require them to provide the victimized consumer with monetary compensation which should be significantly higher than the value of the goods involved. The Bureau, he said, would also be empowered to issue a take-down order to any e-marketplace, e-retailer or online merchant, or digital platform found guilty of any deceptive, unfair, or unconscionable sales act or practice. He opined that the Bureau may exercise the take-down power in extreme cases wherein the platform consistently failed to address the needs of its consumers. Another mechanism to protect consumers, he said, would be the E-Commerce Philippine Trustmark or simply "Trustmark" which is given by the DTI on retailers that are considered to be very responsive to the consumers and compliant to the DTI and the Bureau's requirements.

As to whether the DTI or the Bureau would mandate e-platforms to come up with their own respective mechanisms in order to address consumer complaints, Senator Villar (M) replied in the affirmative.

Senator Gatchalian stated that he did not want the consumers' complaints to reach the level of litigation as it would be costly on the part of the small consumers who are majority of the customers of the e-platforms. He asked whether the bill would empower the DTI through the E-Commerce Bureau to mandate all platforms in coming up with their effective dispute resolutions and mechanisms that would address consumer complaints. Senator Villar (M) replied affirmatively, saying that the bill would require the creation of "an online dispute resolution platform which is a point of entry for consumers, businesses, registered online merchants, e-retailers, and digital platforms in seeking out-of-court resolution of disputes." He said that the bill would compel all government agencies to support the program and ensure that complaints would be received, docketed, transmitted, and addressed properly at the proper time.

As to whether the Bureau would have the power to penalize and make the e-platform liable for its lack of an internal dispute resolution or any other mechanism that addresses consumer complaints, Senator Villar (M) replied in the affirmative, saying that there were prescribed penalties in the bill that could be enforced should the Bureau find the platform liable for consumer infractions. As such, he affirmed that a platform that would not follow the requirements of the bill and the government in coming up with the said mechanisms would be penalized and would be liable to the consumer and, under extreme cases, the platform could be taken down by the Bureau.

In closing, Senator Gatchalian thanked Senator Villar (M) for pushing Senate Bill No. 1846 as he had also been working on the passage of the same bill in the previous Congress. He said he was happy that the bill finally reached the plenary debates.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 6:02 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:06 p.m., the session was resumed.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF SENATE BILL NO. 1846

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

COAUTHOR

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, Senator Go was made coauthor of Senate Bill No. 1841.

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 44 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6660

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6660 (Committee Report No. 44), entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE TUKURAN TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – BACLAY EXTENSION IN BARANGAY BACLAY, MUNICIPALITY OF TUKURAN, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR FROM THE TUKURAN TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE BACLAY NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6660 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6660 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6660

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 45 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6661

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6661 (Committee Report No. 45), entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE SAPA ANDING NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – RAMON MAGSAYSAY EXTENSION IN BARANGAY POBLACION, MUNICIPALITY OF RAMON MAGSAYSAY, PROVINCE OF ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR FROM THE SAPA ANDING AGRICULTURAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE RAMON MAGSAYSAY NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6661 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6661 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6661

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 46 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6668

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6668 (Committee Report No. 46), entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE MARIANO PERALTA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL – DATU DANWATA EXTENSION IN BARANGAY DATU DANWATA, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL FROM THE MARIANO PERALTA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE GASPAR DANWATA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6668 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6668 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6668

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 47 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6699

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6699 (Committee Report No. 47), entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE ADDANG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL-AMBATUTONG EXTENSION IN BARANGAY BUNOT, MUNICIPALITY OF PARACELIS, PROVINCE OF MOUNTAIN PROVINCE FROM THE ADDANG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE AMBATUTONG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6699 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6699 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6699

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 48 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6700

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6700 (Committee Report No. 48), entitled

AN ACT SEPARATING THE BACoor NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL-TABING DAGAT ANNEX IN BARANGAY TABING DAGAT, BACoor CITY, PROVINCE OF CAVITE FROM THE BACoor NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, CONVERTING IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS

THE MARIANO GOMES NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6700 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6700 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6700

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 49 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6663

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6663 (Committee Report No. 49), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE BUKID ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY BUKID, MUNICIPALITY OF JOSE ABAD SANTOS, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE BUKID INTEGRATED SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6663 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6663 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6663

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 50 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6664

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6664 (Committee Report No. 50), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE TRIBAL FILIPINO SCHOOL OF TAMBELANG, KNOWN AS THE TFS OF TAMBELANG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, IN BARANGAY DATU DANWATA, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE TFS OF TAMBELANG INTEGRATED SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6664 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6664 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6664

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 51 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6665

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6665 (Committee Report No. 51), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE KIDAMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY KALBAY, MUNICIPALITY OF JOSE ABAD SANTOS, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE KIDAMAN INTEGRATED SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6665 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6665 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6665

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 52 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6695

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6695 (Committee Report No. 52), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE HIBAO-AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY HIBAO-AN SIR, MANDURRIAO DISTRICT, ILOILO CITY INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE HIBAO-AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6695 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6695 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6695

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 53 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6696

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6696 (Committee Report No. 53), entitled

AN ACT CONVERTING THE NABITASAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN BARANGAY NABITASAN, LA PAZ DISTRICT, ILOILO CITY INTO AN INTEGRATED SCHOOL TO BE KNOWN AS THE NABITASAN INTEGRATED SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6696 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6696 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6696

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 54 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6669

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6669 (Committee Report No. 54), entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY MABCA, MUNICIPALITY OF SAGNAY, PROVINCE OF CAMARINES SUR TO BE KNOWN AS THE MABCA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6669 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6669 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6669

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

COMMITTEE REPORT NO. 55 ON HOUSE BILL NO. 6697

(Continuation)

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body resumed consideration, on Second Reading, of House Bill No. 6697 (Committee Report No. 55), entitled

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL IN BARANGAY BOLILA, MUNICIPALITY OF MALITA, PROVINCE OF DAVAO OCCIDENTAL TO BE KNOWN AS THE BOLILA NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR.

Senator Villanueva stated that the parliamentary status was the period of interpellations.

Thereupon, the Chair recognized Senator Gatchalian, sponsor of the measure.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF INTERPELLATIONS

There being no interpellation, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of interpellations and proceeded to the period of amendments.

TERMINATION OF THE PERIOD OF AMENDMENTS

There being no committee or individual amendment, upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Body closed the period of amendments.

APPROVAL OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6697 ON SECOND READING

Submitted to a vote, there being no objection, House Bill No. 6697 was approved on Second Reading.

SUSPENSION OF CONSIDERATION OF HOUSE BILL NO. 6697

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

COSPONSORS

Upon their request, Senators Villanueva and Ejercito were made cosponsors of House Bill Nos. 6660, 6661, 6668, 6699, 6700, 6663, 6664, 6665, 6695, 6696, 6669 and 6697.

SUSPENSION OF SESSION

Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, the session was suspended.

It was 6:24 p.m.

RESUMPTION OF SESSION

At 6:27 p.m., the session was resumed.

PRIVILEGE SPEECH OF SENATOR CAYETANO (P)

Availing herself of the privilege hour, Senator Cayetano (P) delivered the following speech:

I just arrived from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assembly in Manama, Bahrain today, and I would like to report to our colleagues and to the Filipino people what we did there.

I was sent by the Senate President to attend the 146th Inter-Parliamentary Union assembly in Manama, Bahrain. Take note, this is the 146th. I first attended the 112th. So, *marami na*. But *hindi naman iyon* one per year, two per year *naman iyon*. But my first was in 2005.

So, fast forward to today, we attended the ASEAN Plus Three (APT) meetings, then the Asia/Pacific Group (APG) meetings. I took the floor to promote our hosting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) in November. So, I took the opportunity to promote our hosting in these two meetings.

Also, in the APG meeting, my candidacy for a member of the standing committee on United Nations Affairs was approved. So, I will now be a representative of the Asia/Pacific Group (APG) for this committee. And it so happens that there was a vacancy for the sustainable development group, so, *ora-orada*, we submitted a handwritten nomination for Rep. Rachel Arenas and she is now a representative. So, I think it is timely that two women—one from the Senate and one from the House of Representatives— will be representing not just the Philippines but the Asia-Pacific region in these two committees.

Next, on that same day, I had the opportunity to attend the Women's Parliamentary Meeting which is always held a day before the official opening. So, we will see photos there of me more than 10 years ago, and me today. And, in many ways, the issues are the same, which is good and bad. Good because we are not letting go until discriminatory practices, until obstacles are removed.

It can be frustrating to the extent that after all this time, there are still countries that have a lot of issues and we have our own. There is no country that is perfect. We are one of those who are still continually trying to address discriminatory practices. But it is important that we continue to stay, keep aware on all of these.

The specific topic was Parliamentary Leadership in Addressing Insecurity and Crises: Putting gender equality at the center of water security, climate resilience and peace sustainability.

As our colleagues know, we are one of the few parliaments in the whole world that has a committee on Sustainable Development Goals, Innovation and Futures Thinking. So, we took the opportunity to discuss this. But it serves also as a reminder to this Representation which I share

with the Body that we should always look at our bills from a gender lens as well. Because when we can truly ensure that women are represented well, that women's concerns are addressed, then we know that it is a sign that there is true democracy and there is true partnership between men and women.

Moving on, there was also a WHO side event on Leveraging the Role of Parliamentarians Towards Universal Health Coverage. And I was a speaker. I was part of the expert panel sharing our experiences on health financing, particularly, on the sin tax laws that we have passed over the few years. So, I delivered my intervention there.

And then, of course, as head of your delegation, I attended the Governing Council session and delivered our statement during the general plenary. I had the support of our colleagues from the House of Representatives.

Finally, I attended one more session on the UN Affairs which I was not yet officially a member of because my membership starts in October. But I was able to attend as an observer and a participant and I also made my statement there during that session.

At this juncture, Senator Ejercito relinquished the Chair to Senate President Zubiri.

I also put on record that I had the opportunity to meet with a colleague who is the president of UNITE, a network of parliamentarians for global health. I am the chapter chair for the Asia Pacific and UNITE has an observer status in the IPU.

I just like to add also that there are approximately 54,000 Filipino nationals in Bahrain. We had the full support of the embassy, of course the Senate Secretariat, and my staff as well. And they took the opportunity to greet all our *kababayan* who were very happy to see us because *hindi naman daw ganoon kadalas na bumibisita ang mga bisitang Pilipino. Ang mga nandoon na mga Pilipino ay mga nagtatrabaho doon.*

We see them all over, usually in the retail establishments, from the coffee shops to the furniture shop. *Iyong isang picture diyari, furniture shop iyon, and even the IPU itself.* The people manning the coffee booths were Filipinos. So, it is true that we can find Filipinos all over the world.

So, on that note, I submit this report and I will be sharing more learnings in the course of debates because I always come home with more learnings having met different parliamentarians coming from all over the world.

MANIFESTATION OF SENATOR HONTIVEROS

Senator Hontiveros extended her congratulations to Senator Cayetano (P) for her election as representative of Asia-Pacific to the Standing Committee on UN Affairs and for her role in the election of another Filipino woman leader, Rep. Rachel Arenas, to the Committee on Sustainable Development.

In reply, Senator Cayetano (P) pointed out that gender equality is always ensured in the membership of the committees, and any vacancy is identified whether it is for a man or for a woman. She said that it was great that the UN ensures that the voice of women is represented and heard.

Senator Villanueva joined Senator Hontiveros in congratulating Senator Cayetano (P).

MANIFESTATION OF SENATE PRESIDENT ZUBIRI

Senate President Zubiri expressed his appreciation to the senators for the hard work and support for the passage of several measures on Second Reading, including the local bills. He reminded the Members that bills for the Third Reading would be considered in the first hour of Monday's session.



ADJOURNMENT OF SESSION

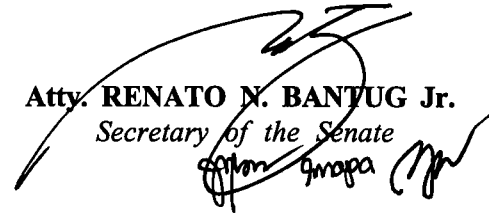
Upon motion of Senator Villanueva, there being no objection, the Chair declared the session adjourned until three o'clock in the afternoon of Monday, March 20, 2023.

It was 6:38 p.m.

I hereby certify to the correctness of the foregoing.

Approved on March 20, 2023

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

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Renato Bantug Jr.', is written over the typed name and title.