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SENATE
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INTRODUCED BY SENATOR ALAN PETER "COMPAÑERO" S. CAYETANO

RESOLUTION

DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, TO SHED LIGHT ON THE ADEQUACY OF PROTECTION GIVEN TO NATIONAL HERITAGE BUILDINGS AND ARTIFACTS AND SPECIFICALLY LOOK INTO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FIRE WHICH ENGULFED THE MANILA CENTRAL POST OFFICE BUILDING IN ORDER TO PUT IN PREVENTIVE AND MITIGATING MECHANISMS AND SECURE PROPER FUNDING TO PREVENT THE SAME TRAGEDY FROM HAPPENING TO OTHER NATIONAL TREASURES

WHEREAS, the Philippines is gifted by God with rich history, great heritage, and a roster of creative artists;

WHEREAS, as per Proclamation No. 439, s. 2003, the month of May of every year was declared as the National Heritage Month;

WHEREAS, on 21 May 2023, at 11:41 PM, tragedy struck as a fire broke out in the Manila Central Post Office Building. At 05:45 AM of the next day, the fire reached the general alarm (the highest alarm) and it was only at 07:22 AM that the Bureau of Fire Protection declared a fire out;¹

WHEREAS, it is tragic and ironic that on the 21st day of the National Heritage Month, the Manila Central Post Office Building was engulfed in flames;

WHEREAS, the internal wooden structure of the building was reported to have burned all the way from the basement to the third floor and that the damages were estimated to be around \$5.4 million (P300 million);²

WHEREAS, the Manila Central Post Office Building, a neo-classical building designed by two American architects and a Filipino namely: Ralph

¹ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/fire-manila-central-post-office-may-2023/>

² <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/21/asia/fire-manila-central-post-office-intl-hnk/index.html>

Doane, Tomas Mapua, and Juan Marcos de Guzman Arellano, was completed in 1926, destroyed during World War II (1945), and rebuilt after the war in 1946;³

WHEREAS, the Philippines is home to a number of old buildings and churches which can no longer be replicated or recreated, and it is also a repository of great works of art;

WHEREAS, the Philippine Registry of Cultural Property serves as a repository of all information related to cultural treasures, properties, historical landmarks and monuments;⁴

WHEREAS, in 2018, the National Museum officially recognized the Post Office Building as an “Important Cultural Property”;⁵

WHEREAS, under the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, “Important cultural property refers to a cultural property having exceptional cultural, artistic and historical significance to the Philippines, as determined by the National Museum and/or National Historical Institute”;⁶

WHEREAS, there is a need to investigate the cause of the fire which engulfed the Manila Central Post Office Building in order to prevent the same tragedy from happening again and for us to look into the possible interventions that could have been done to mitigate the fire and amount of destruction;

WHEREAS, the Philippine government is far from being fully equipped and prepared for proper management and protection of its national heritage buildings and artifacts, especially with the meager funds being allocated for its care and custody and the meager salaries given its custodians;

WHEREAS, the Philippines is a disaster prone country, experiencing an average of 20 tropical cyclones and 100-150 earthquakes per year, and with around 13,000 fire incidents recorded annually;⁷

WHEREAS, the State should make use of this unfortunate event as a learning opportunity on how buildings of cultural, artistic, and historical significance to the Philippines should be better taken care of as it is important that future tragedies of this scale be prevented;

WHEREAS, it is incumbent upon the government to provide safeguards to protect our national treasures with modern equipment, surveillance, and strategies, and ensure that the relevant agencies receive proper funding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, to direct the Senate Committee on Culture and the Arts to conduct an inquiry, in aid of legislation, to shed light on the adequacy of protection given to national

³<https://icrs.gcg.gov.ph/profiles/ph/post/#:~:text=The%20Philippine%20postal%20system%20has,and%20the%20entire%20Philippine%20archipelago.>

⁴ <https://ncca.gov.ph/philippine-registry-cultural-property-precup/>

⁵ <https://www.rappler.com/life-and-style/arts-culture/217429-national-museum-declares-post-office-building-important-cultural-property/>

⁶ Sec. 3 (w), RA 10066

⁷ <https://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph/climate/tropical-cyclone-information;>

<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1191573;>

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1635871/list-killer-earthquakes-in-the-philippines>

heritage buildings and artifacts and specifically look into the circumstances of the fire which engulfed the Manila Central Post Office Building in order to put in preventive and mitigating mechanisms and secure proper funding to prevent the same tragedy from happening to other national treasures.

Adopted,



ALAN PETER "COMPAÑERO" S. CAYETANO