

Artificial spending via 'pasa-load' procurement bared

**MANILA** – Senate President Pro Tempore Ralph Recto on Thursday said the government should end the practice of “artificial spending” by preventing the transfer of allotments from one agency to another to cover up the failure to spend.

In a statement, Recto said this “pasa-load” scheme merely parks the funds in another agency, resulting in unspent public money, which “subverts” the essence of cash budgeting to accelerate disbursement.

“Ang nangyayari kasi ngayon, para lang masabi na 'obligated' na ang allotment ay pi-napasa ito sa ibang ahensya. Ginagawa ito upang maipagmalaki na obligated na ang isang pondo, at hindi na ma-revert back sa Treasury (The funds are passed on to another agency to make it seem like the allotment was obligated. This is done to prove that the funds are obligated and won't be reverted to the Treasury),” Recto said.

“This creates the illusion of money spent when what happened was the budgetary equivalent of passing the buck,” he added.

The senator said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) or the Philippine National

Police (PNP), for example, pass the responsibility of procurement to the Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management instead of conducting the bidding process themselves.

He further noted that in the books of the AFP or PNP, the funds have been obligated, when in reality, it is not the case.

“One favorite repository of parked allotments is the Philippine International Trading Corp. (PITC) Ang tanong: Ano ang competence ng mga ahensyang ito (The question is, what is the competence of these agencies) to, say, conduct a due diligence-compliant procurement of highly-specialized goods like trains, ships, planes, and automobiles?,” Recto said.

“But this transfer of obligational authority to outsource procurement has not expedited the purchase of goods and services, according to COA itself,” he added.

He also cited the case of the PNP, wherein it engaged the services of the PITC to procure equipment amounting to PHP1.35 billion but managed to deliver only PHP137.5 million worth of purchases by end of last year, or 1/10th of the

amount.

As of December 2018, the PNP still has to collect about PHP5.08 billion worth of projects from PS-DBM intended for the procurement of common-use supplies, materials and various equipment, military and police supplies, and municipal police stations.

The Commission on Audit (COA) 2018 audit report for PITC noted that the corporation has received about PHP30.63 billion worth of fund transfers from various agencies.

Meanwhile, the COA report for PS-DBM in the same year said the agency has PHP17.04 billion due to various government agencies for the procurement of various items and projects.

“Dapat matigil na ang ganitong (We need to put an end to such) 'lateral transfer' of funds whose intent is to beat the clock, a pasa-load scheme to extend the life of an appropriation about to expire,” Recto said.

“Dapat matigil ng parehong kapulungan ng Kongreso ang oversight powers nito (Congress should use its oversight powers) during the budget implementation to determine the real status of an appropriation,” he added.

(PNA)

“Just no conditions like spare the drug dealers to spare civil society's feelings. Our soldiers prefer what they're used to, American weaponry. We need 74,000 M-16s and 3 clips for each to finish off the Commies. Still waiting,” he said.

Asked what aspects in the talks the two nations are having a disconnect, Romualdez mentioned concerns raised previously by the US Congress.

Robredo to meet with ICAD members: Palace

**MANILA**—Adayafter accepting the challenge to lead the government's intensified campaign against illegal drugs, Vice President Maria Leonor "Leni" Robredo has called for her first meeting with members of the Inter-Agency Committee on Anti-Illegal Drugs (ICAD), Malacañang said on Thursday.

Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo was told by Executive Secretary (ES) Salvador Medialdea through a phone call that Robredo and ICAD members would meet to discuss President Rodrigo Duterte's efforts to fight illegal drugs.

Panelo said the Palace has yet to get additional information about the planned meeting initiated by the Vice President, who is concurrent ICAD co-chairperson.

Panelo, nevertheless, praised Robredo for her dedication to her

duties as the co-chairperson of the ICAD.

“According to ES, the Vice President has already called a meeting for the ICAD. Hindi naman [nakakabigla] (It's not surprising). Ibig sabihin (It means) she's very dedicated to assume her new job,” he told Palace reporters.

“Ibig sabihin nagtatrabaho na siya (It means she's working),” he added.

Robredo confirmed that she will meet with the agencies under the ICAD at her office in Quezon City on Friday.

The ICAD, created through Executive Order 15 inked by Duterte on March 6, 2017, is mandated to ensure that all policies, laws, and issuances on the government's anti-illegal drug campaign are being implemented.

Apart from Robredo, the anti-drug panel is

co-chaired by Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency director-general Aaron Aquino.

Members of the ICAD include the Dangerous Drugs Board; Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Philippine Information Agency, Public Attorney's Office; Office of the Solicitor General; Philippine Coast Guard; Philippine National Police; National Bureau of Investigation; Armed Forces of the Philippines, and Anti-Money Laundering Council.

Other ICAD members are the Departments of the Interior and Local Government, Justice, Health, Education, Social Welfare, Trade, Agriculture, and Defense, as well as the Customs and Immigration bureaus.

Robredo sought the meeting with ICAD members, even after

she has yet to see Duterte and discuss her specific role as the head of the anti-drug body.

Panelo could not confirm whether the President and the Vice President would have a formal one-on-one meeting to talk about the government's drug war.

But he said it would be up to Robredo, if she wants to pay a courtesy call on Duterte at Malacañan Palace.

“Nasa sa kanya na 'yun kung gusto pa niyang mag-meeting (It is up to the Vice President if she wants to hold a meeting with the President),” Panelo said.

“Palagay ko dapat si VP Leni ang mag-request. Cabinet na siya eh (Perhaps, VP Leni should request for a meeting since she's already a member of the Cabinet),” he added. (PNA)

Senators call for heightened protocols vs. ASF

**MANILA** – Two senators on Thursday urged the government to heighten its precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the African swine fever (ASF).

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, chair of the

Senate Committee on Education, Arts and Culture, called on the Department of Education (DepEd) to be vigilant and enjoin schools in raising awareness and to exhaust all sanitary measures to protect students from consuming ASF-positive products.

“Mahalagang magdoble ingat ang mga paaralan lalo na't mahilig ang mga bata sa ganitong klase ng mga produktong positibo sa ASF. (It is important for schools to be extra careful especially since kids like to eat processed meat products, which were tested positive for ASF),” Gatchalian said.

“Sa mga feeding program na isinasagawa ng DepEd, halimbawa, dapat siguruhin ng ating mga guro na gumagamit sila ng mga malinis at mapagkakatiwalaang mga produktong ipakakain sa mga bata (For the feeding programs conducted by DepEd,

teachers should ensure that they are using clean and trusted products to feed the children),” Gatchalian said.

The senator cited reports that processed pork from China tested positive for ASF.

The Department of Agriculture's (DA) Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) also confirmed that skinless longganisa and hotdog from Mekení were tested positive for ASF.

Gatchalian also advised DepEd to involve parents in efforts to raise awareness on sanitary practices and preventive measures.

“While schools play an important role to protect our students' health, it is important that we also extend our efforts at the household level,” Gatchalian said.

Senator Francis Pangilinan, meanwhile, said all sectors in the hog industry must cooperate with the DA as it implements

measures to prevent the spread of ASF.

Pangilinan said all concerned sectors must abide by the following protocols: surveillance and quick response, quarantine checkpoints, and culling.

On reports of oversupply of pork in the country, Pangilinan suggested a suspension in the pork importation and start buying local.

“This will be a big boost to local hog-raisers, many of whom are also farmers seeking to increase their income through hog-raising. We must explore all possible means to help our backyard hog raisers as they bear the brunt of losing their source of income,” he said.

Pangilinan also highlighted the vital role of media, as they are instrumental in spreading correct information over the outbreak and lessen the public's distrust of uninfected pork products. (PNA)

Sale of US rifles to PH a 'work in progress': envoy

**MANILA** -- Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose Manuel Romualdez on Thursday night said talks are still ongoing on Manila's intent to buy some 74,000 M-16 assault rifles from the US to help address communist insurgency and fight terrorism in the country.

“(It's a) work in progress,” Romualdez told the Philippine News Agency (PNA) in a text message.

The statement comes as Foreign Affairs Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr. re-

iterated on Thursday that the government is waiting for Washington to act on its request to provide the arms.

Locsin was responding to a report where Pentagon urged the Philippines to continue using America's military equipment amid Russia's offer to boost its defense capabilities.

On his official Twitter account, Locsin said the US should give the Philippines “good deals” with no conditions and it will pay.

“Only with the US Democratic Congress. (And) concern about de Lima and Ressa cases,” he said.

To recall, a resolution was earlier introduced into the US Congress, calling on the Philippine government to free detained Senator Leila de Lima and drop charges against online news site Rappler CEO Maria Ressa. Ressa is facing charges of cyber libel as well as violation of the Anti-Dummy Law.

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