

Presidential Communications Operations Office

News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON

SECRETARY HARRY ROQUE

MARCH 3, 2018 (1:26 – 1:46 P.M.)

LEGISLATIVE BUILDING IN KATIPUNAN, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE

MODERATOR: Okay, friends from the media please welcome our Presidential Spokesperson, Secretary Harry Roque.

SEC. ROQUE: Good afternoon. We are in the Municipality of Katipunan in Zamboanga Del Norte. So, this is our press briefing in Zamboanga Del Norte.

Let me begin with the good news. Good news – Investment projects approved by the Philippine Board of Investments in January to February 2018 continue to surge as the Premier Investment Promotion Agency recorded 131.6 billion worth of projects, up by 402.3% compared to the same period last year. We attribute this to the sound policies of the Duterte administration which fuel our growth momentum, as we continue to generate projects and create more jobs for our countrymen.

Good news for Zamboanga Del Norte – We are pleased to announce that 29 Payapa at Masaganang Pamayanan (PAMANA) projects will soon be implemented here in the Province of Zamboanga Del Norte, specifically in the Municipalities of Kalawit, Siocon, Baliguian, Sirawai and Sibuco with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP) with Zamboanga Del Norte. As a national government's convergence program, PAMANA offers development interventions to isolated far flung and conflict-affected communities. It aims to improve governance by partnering with national and local institutions to reduce poverty by giving focused delivery of social services and to empower communities by organizing activities that promote social cohesion.

Good news also for the Zamboanga Peninsula – A modern world-class international airport will soon rise in Zamboanga City. The Department of Transportation along with the Mindanao Development Authority on 26 February 2018 has announced that a first class international airport will be built and completed within 4 to 5 years. The airport will be located 17 kilometers away from the city proper at the project site in Barangay Mercedes. To date, a feasibility study on airport project is ongoing. Moreover, a team from TCGI engineers is also visiting the city to conduct an environmental social impact study on the airport project. It is worth mentioning that the current Zamboanga Airport is included in the top 10 busiest airports in the Philippines for 2017 with 8,870 aircraft movements, 1 million passenger movements and 13 million cargo movements per the Department of Tourism figures.

Now... okay, so the Malacañang Press Corps have submitted their questions. But for now, I will give priority to the questions of the local media.

Q: Good afternoon, Secretary. (Che Quesari?) Philippine Information Agency. What is the hottest news in the—our environment, the issue in Boracay, that the Department of Tourism is planning to temporarily close for 2 months the area for—to solve the environmental abuses done in there. What is the Malacañang plan for to this area, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Well as of the last Cabinet Meeting in February, the President gave Secretary Cimat, 6 months within which to submit his recommendations on what to do with Boracay ‘no. So it is only been 1 month since the directive, Secretary Cimat has 5 more months ‘no. So there is also going to be a Cabinet Meeting on the 5th, on Monday, so I’m sure the issue of Boracay will also be discussed.

Q: I would like also to touch on the case of our OFW people, wherein the last incident was in Kuwait; wherein Demafelis was found stored in a freezer and in an abandoned apartment in Kuwait. Well, what is the—how is the OFWs now reacting to this issue on the part of the Philippine government’s intervention?

SEC. ROQUE: Well ang decision po ng Presidente, huwag muna magpadala ng ating mga kababayan sa Kuwait hanggang hindi po nabibigyan ng katarungan itong si Joanna. And pinag-aaralan na rin po ng Department of Labor kung may mga ibang bansa pa na dapat itigil ang deployment ng ating mga mamamayan. So sa ngayon po ang mabuting balita naman, ay iyong dalawang employers ni Joanna ay naaresto na ng mga Kuwait police sa tulong na rin ng Interpol, at iyong dalawang recruiters niya dito sa Pilipinas ay sumurender na rin at sumipot na ‘no doon sa NBI. So, tuluy-tuloy naman po ang proseso ng pagkakamit ng katarungan, pero sa panandalian po, wala pa rin tayong deployment sa Kuwait.

Bago tayo magpatuloy, nais ko pong i-acknowledge ang kakarating lang – Mayor Fiona Marie C. Manigsaca, Mayor Flora Villarosa and Vice Mayor Cris Eguia. Welcome to our Malacañang Press Conference in Zamboanga Del Norte. So you can also direct your questions to the 2 Mayors and the Vice Mayor. Thank you very much Mayor, for hosting us in your municipal hall.

MODERATOR: Okay sir, I’ll get to your question from Malacañang Press Corps. From Bella Carias: “Can Spox categorically kung maituturing ang ginagawang examination ni Dr. Erfe on the Dengvaxia suspected cases credible? Kasi if it’s can’t be used as evidence, what’s the use of PAO’s initiative?”

SEC. ROQUE: Sasabihin ko lang po ang naging desisyon ng ating Secretary of Justice ‘no – tuloy po ang imbestigasyon ng PAO. Kung si Secretary Erfe po ay kasapi sa imbestigasyon ng PAO, so be it! Pero sinabi rin po ni Secretary Vit Aguirre na iba iyong mga expert witnesses na ipiprisinta sa hukuman, kasi kinakailangan mayroon silang kuwalipikasyon bilang ‘experts’.

So ang sagot ko po diyan, as part of the PAO examination, Dr. Erfe can continue but it is ultimately the National Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice’ National Prosecution Service who will determine kung sinong ipiprisinta nilang expert witness.

Q: Secretary, good afternoon, si Mark ng DXDR-Dipolog. Sir, may umuugong ngayon na balita na kung saan ay si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte is a co-owner ng West Philippine Sea, sa China. Puwede ho bang maipaliwanag?

SEC. ROQUE: Na-explain ko na po ‘yan ‘no. Ang sabi niya, ‘as if’... hindi naman niya sinasabi na co-owner – ‘as if’. Meaning, ang gusto lang niya mangyari ay iyong joint venture—not joint venture but joint exploration ‘no. So, hindi naman niya sinasabi na magko-co-owner tayo. Kaya lang habang hindi natin rini-resolba pa iyong pagkakaiba, iyong pag-aangkinan ng teritoryo, ang tingin ng Presidente ay mas mabuti na makinabang na sa pamamagitan ng joint exploration.

Q: Secretary, follow up lang. Sa ngayon, sa lahat naman ng tao ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte is nag-iikot sa buong Pilipinas para sa federalism. Are all Filipinos Secretary is ready for federalism?

SEC. ROQUE: Eh tingin ko po, eh ito’y isang plataporma ni Presidente noong siya’y tumakbo bilang Presidente. Sabi niya, isusulong niya ang pederalismo – hinalal naman siya ng napakaraming Pilipino – so ang tingin ko, handa na ang Pilipino sa pederalismo. Otherwise, hindi dapat nilang hinalal si Presidente Duterte.

MODERATOR: Okay sir, here’s another question from Pia of Rappler: “If the Duterte administration maintains’ there have been no human rights violations in the drug war? Why order police not to participate in the probe of UN Rapporteurs? What does this say about the government’s commitment to transparency and international laws on human rights?”

SEC. ROQUE: Well iyong mandato po ni Presidente, dahil sa tingin niya na iyong gustong pumasok na mga UN Rapporteur ay iyong mga bias at mayroon nang konklusyon bago pa magkaroon ng imbestigasyon. Bakit ka nga naman makikipagtulungan sa isang Rapporteur na mayroon na siyang konklusyon at ang kinakailangan na lang niya ay ilang bagay para masuportahan iyong kaniyang konklusyon? Makikipagtulungan lang po tayo doon sa mga tao na wala pang konklusyon at mayroon pong katapatan na talagang mag-iimbestiga bago magkaroon ng konklusyon.

So pagdating naman po sa transparency at saka international law on human rights, eh wala pong kinalaman iyon sa order ng Presidente. In the first place, ang Presidente po bilang isang abogado ay talagang nasa isipan niya at nasa kostumbre na niya na kinakailangan igalang ang batas. Kaya nga po ang nagkakaiba tayo, ang Presidente bilang isang piskal, lahat po ng patayang nangyayari sa ongoing war on drugs, eh dahil ‘yan po ay mga legal na patayan.

At kung mayroon nang mga iligal na patayan gaya ng nangyari kay Kian ay ino-order naman ng Presidente na litisin at parusahan ang kapulisan. Pero ang karamihan po talaga ng ating kapulisan ay talagang sinusugal ang kanilang mga buhay dito sa giyera laban sa droga dahil I can assure you iyong mga drug lords po, they are heavily armed and ready to kill our policemen.

BERT/KAPIHAN SA DIPOLOG: Good afternoon po, Mr. Secretary. Kanina we have heard iyong tatlong mga Usec., at saka si Secretary Castriciones discussing about federalism. And then

napakaganda po ng sinasabi nila na mga possible provisions but then it's all proposal yet. So puwede po ba naming maintindihan bakit—kung ano po ang pagbe-blend nito kasi may Constitutional Commission advisory group na binuo si Presidente and then mayroon ding proposal from the PDP-Laban, mayroon ding from the MRRD NECC, and then may other inputs pa po, so medyo maraming versions po ng federalism provisions. How do we blend this and then how can the people, lay people to be assured na iyong hinanaing nila, iyong mga aspirations nila can be incorporated into it when their voices are not part of the big groups that are pushing for this provisions in the federalism?

SEC. ROQUE: Well kaya po binuo ng ating Presidente iyong Constitutional Commission na iyan ay dahil nais niya na ang Kongreso should be guided by the work output of the Constitutional Commission. Sa lahat po ng mga pending proposals naman for federalism ay lahat po iyan ay open din na isumite sa consultative commission na binuo ng Presidente. Pero minabuti na po ni Presidente kasi dati noong walang Consultative Commission napakadami ngang mga bersiyon at walang nagkukumpas. So ang nais na mangyari ng Presidente na hayaan na itong consultative commission na ito na kumumpas at maghain ng aktuwal na mga rekomendasyon sa ating Kongreso ng mapabilis naman iyong proseso sa ating Kongreso.

Q: Thank you po.

MODERATOR: Okay sir. I've got two questions here from Malacañang Press Corps. One from (Eva?) and the other one is from Henry Uri. From Eva please expound, clarify your statement yesterday "supposed joint exploration with China under AC 57. Exploration under that contract is not joint as the Chinese company is a sub-contractor of the Philippine and also AC 57 is not a disputed area and therefore is not for joint exploration." Is considering joint exploration for AC 57 allowed even if there was no prior claim for China, Maritime Professor Jay Batongbacal says agreeing to jointly explore AC 57 elevating the status of the Chinese contractor as a co-owner of our EZZs areas. Comment on this please.

SEC. ROQUE: Ay naku desisyonan po iyan ng ating Korte Suprema sa kaso ng La Bugal. Ang problema doon sa mga kritiko ng administrasyon nais nilang maging justices ng Supreme Court, maghintay muna po kayong maitalaga diyan at maghintay muna kayong magkaroon ng kapangyarihang gumawa ng desisyon.

Malinaw po ang La Bugal, ang joint exploration po ay pinapayagan sa ating Saligang Batas basta alinsunod ito sa isang kontrata na nilagdaan ng Presidente at isusumite sa Kongreso. Iyong mga nagpipilit po na ipinagbabawal ang joint exploration ay maghintay po kayo ng susunod na desisyon ng Korte Suprema, ang desisyon po ngayon, ang batas na umiiral ay isinulat po ni dating Chief Justice Panganiban. Constitutional po ang mga joint exploration doon po sa area na walang dispute, kagaya ng 57 at doon sa area na mayroong dispute kagaya ng 72. Ang rekomendasyon ko po kay Professor Batongbacal: magbasa ng desisyon ng Korte Suprema bago magbigay ng opinyon.

MODERATOR: Okay, other question from Henry Uri, sir. Sir clarification, let's say pumunta dito sa Agnes as tourist, then mag-imbestiga. Will she get arrested to—sa immigration pa lang haharangin na siya for questioning?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po, nakapasok na nga iyan ng Pilipinas na hindi in-invite. Pero welcome po siya dahil after all we welcome all tourists. Kaya lang ang masama doon huwag niyang palalabasin na nag-imbestiga siya kasi ang pagpasok sa Pilipinas, hindi naman po iyan katumbas ng pag-iimbestiga. So kung siya po ay papasok sabihin niya, nagkaroon siya ng obserbasyon bilang turista. So kapag pumasok po siya ay aanyayahan po namin siyang lumangoy sa malamig na tubig ng Pasig River.

Q: Good afternoon, sir. I'm Arjay King of Radyo Natin Dipolog. Sir matutuloy po ba ang barangay election?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, alam ninyo po desisyon iyan ng Kongreso bagama't ang salita sa Davao na si Presidente, na ang nais niya sana ay matuloy na. Pero siyempre hindi po mapipilit iyan ng kahit kanino kung sasabihin ng Kongreso na mapo-postpone bagama't sinabi ko rin na doon sa Liga ng Barangay meeting ng Leyte na kung saan nakasama ko si Senate President Koko Pimentel ang sabi din niya, parang walang suporta sa Kongreso ang pagpapaliban na naman ng barangay elections.

Q: So follow up lang sir ha. Ano po ang masasabi ninyo para sa mga PNP po natin na nasasangkot po sa illegal drugs?

SEC. ROQUE: Mga BN?

Q: Mga PNP po natin?

SEC. ROQUE: Ay lahat po sila ay sinisibak ng Presidente 'di ba? Kailan lang po ang mga—ilan ba iyon na nasibak? 300 plus lang sinibak at karamihan sa kanila ay na-involve sa droga. So ang ating mungkahi kung kayo po ay miyembro ng ating kapulisan na doble na ang inyong mga suweldo, magpakatino na po at kung kayo po ay ma-i-involve sa droga ay umalis na po kayo diyan sa kapulisan dahil talagang hindi po kayo papayagang manatili ng ating Presidente diyan.

Q: Thank you po.

Q: Good afternoon po sir. Ako po si (Mercury?). Itatanong ko lang po sana. Sa ngayon po kasi nag-apply ako ng—sa Teacher 1 applicant, tapos nakita ko po kasi sir na maraming—tawag dito—kailangan mong gawin para lang maka-apply ng Teacher 1. So ngayon po nakikita ko na after all those efforts medyo mataas talaga iyong antas ng kailangan para makapasok ka ng Teacher 1.

So ang nangyari po para pong medyo na-frustrate po ako kasi nag-take po ako ng Masteral tapos wala pa rin po. Parang hindi aabot iyong puntos ko tapos nag-seminar ako, maraming gastusin kaya nga hindi naman tayo maka-indulge ng—kung anu-anong pinapa-comply nila kung hindi tayo makapasok mismo sa trabaho bilang Teacher. So tanong ko po sana kung puwede bang iyong qualification po sana ng pagtanggap ng Teacher 1 applicant, puwede po ba sanang medyo babaan ng kaunti po kasi marami pong mga quality teachers, mayroong skills pero kulang sa papeles po, hindi sila makapasok-pasok.

SEC. ROQUE: With all due respect po, I'm a Spokesperson [laughs]. I'm not the Secretary of Education, Culture and Sports but I will relay your concern to the Secretary Leonor Briones. Thank you.

Q: Good afternoon once again, Honorable Secretary. Earlier po when we asked the three honorable, Usec., and Secretary Castriciones on the problem of corruption, drug addiction and the electoral problems that we have. All of them had said it's also values based, the solution is values based, change in the inner man. So in relation to that aside from the federalism cause that the President is pursuing all reforms, is there also a program envisioned by the President to address a values revolution in our nation vis-à-vis the change in the Constitution and the federalism, the form of government? Thank you.

SEC. ROQUE: Well alam ninyo po, I think it is—we should not completely isolate values from the Constitution because they say that the Constitution is a living Constitution. It also embodies the values of the Filipinos as a nation. So I think the process of revising the Constitution also entails the reiteration of values that we treasure as a people.

Okay so kung wala na po, maraming salamat ulit sa municipality ng Katipunan, probinsiya ng Zamboanga Del Norte at maraming salamat Pilipinas for watching and maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. Good afternoon. [Applause].

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Source: PCOO-NIB (News and Information Bureau)