

**Presidential Communications Operations Office  
News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE  
SECRETARY MARTIN ANDANAR  
NOVEMBER 1, 2019 (6:51 - 7:12 P.M)**

**MODERATOR:** Good evening media friends, welcome to the press briefing of PCOO Secretary Martin Andanar. Good evening, Secretary.

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Thank you Jun and good afternoon to all of our members of the press, the Malacañang Press Corps and those who are watching us live on social media.

This afternoon about 2:30, I received a message from a fellow journalist from the Malacañang Press Corps, Rudy Andal asking me if I have any reaction to the purported Bangkok Post - front page that says that the King of Thailand reminded the President to behave. And then he showed me, he sent me a photograph of the front page.

Incidentally or coincidentally I was on my way to the Bangkok Post for a meeting and interview with one of the reporters there and we asked him if there's any truth to the front page – and he said outright that it was fake news. And he gave us a copy of the newspaper, the actual newspaper, the actual edition which was published on Thursday, October 31, 2019, eksakto, parehas except for the title here below. It says here: *“Suvit calls for Thailand to embrace 5G fast, or lag behind rivals.”* Essentially a story about the statement of Suvit Maesincee, the Minister of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, at sabi niya there is an ongoing roadmap for 5G planning and implementation globally, so it's about the telecommunications here in Thailand.

I would like to remind everybody to be respectful to His Majesty, The King of Thailand. They have been very generous and they have been very courteous and have been good host to us, Filipinos and the rest of the ASEAN. I'd also like to remind everyone to be respectful to the good relations between the Philippines and Thailand, and not to create any fake news that would be detrimental to our good relations.

Respeto lang po tayo sa Hari ng Thailand na napaka-gracious po ng kanilang pag-host sa ating mga Pilipino at iba pang mga miyembro ng ASEAN para sa ASEAN Summit and the Related Summits ngayong taon na ito.

**IAN CRUZ/GMA7:** Sec., nabanggit ba ni Rudy kung saan galing iyong front page screen grab?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Hindi po nabanggit, pero mukhang ang ginawa ay in-edit; phinotshop siguro iyong dito tapos pinalitan noong fake news na title. Malisyoso ang ginawa ng tao na

iyon kung sinuman siya. If he is against the administration, aba'y mayroon namang mga paraan para—na we voice out our concerns and our opposition to this administration. Huwag sana iyong fake news at nandamay ka pa ng ibang bansa at dinamay mo pa ang kagalang-galang na Hari ng bansa ng Thailand.

At alam ninyo po, mayroon pong lese-majeste law na kung kayo po or kapag binastos ninyo ang Hari ng Thailand ay makukulong kayo nang labinlimang taon. So I will call the attention of the National Bureau of Investigation to get to the bottom of this; kung puwede nilang gamitin iyong kanilang cyber forensic division para po ma-trace kung sinuman iyong tao na nagpakalat ng fake news na ito at para po managot kung sinuman iyon dahil nakakaapekto ho ito sa magandang relasyon ng bansang Thailand at ng Pilipinas.

**VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN:** Sir good evening, Vivienne from ABS-CBN. I understand that there's still—or there are still concerns from a party to the RCEP or Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Despite this, are you still optimistic that the parties will be able to reach a conclusion to the negotiations this Monday?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is a very important mechanism for the Philippines and the rest of ASEAN to compete in the world economy, especially ASEAN, we are limited to strong 600 million market. But once the RCEP is signed and once it's been implemented, then we automatically, we drastically open our 600 million markets to about 3.5 billion which includes Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, China and India.

Ang pagkakaintindi ko ay mayroon lang pong mga tanong ang India dito po sa RCEP. They would want to, I supposed go back the drawing board and find out which products would be affected in the lower of the tariffs—of the lowering of the tariffs once this RCEP is approved. We all understand that RCEP is a free trade agreement in the Asia Pacific, so doon po nagkakaroon ng konting obstacle.

But I am very optimistic that after all of the time and the money invested by the different nations, especially here in ASEAN, parang wala na hong rason kung bakit hindi pa ito ma-finalize during this time. And I also understand that this one of the objectives of the Chairman of ASEAN this year.

**IAN CRUZ/GMA7:** Sec., follow up lang doon ano, kasi may mga sectors naman na maaaring tumutol dito like iyong agricultural sector natin. Paano natin sila mapoprotektahan kung papasok din iyong other products na mas mababa sa atin.

**SEC. ANDANAR:** We are in a very volatile world economy wherein it's just impossible for a country to isolate itself from the growing economies of the—growing economic blocks of other continents. For us, ASEAN, it's very important that we can also send or export our products to other countries na sa ngayon ay hindi natin ma-export dahil mataas masyado iyong tariff at hindi tayo makapag-compete.

By having an RCEP, then we essentially equalize further the playing field in our ASEAN regional block and the additional countries that we will be dealing with, like the countries I mentioned: South Korea, Japan, China, India, Australia and New Zealand – napakalaking merkado nito.

**IAN CRUZ/GMA7:** [off mic]

**SEC. ANDANAR:** You know... for example right now, it's the same question, Ian, that has been thrown at us para dito naman sa ating rice tariffication. For instance, sa rice tariffication, nakita natin na bumaba iyong ating inflation to .9 at kung matatandaan natin noong nakaraang taon, napakataas ng ating inflation. Tapos the greater majority of Filipinos are enjoying low price in rice, pero magrereklamo naman iyong farmers kasi sila naman iyong naapektuhan dahil sa mababang farm gate prices.

But iyong nakukuha naman na buwis ng gobyerno natin from the rice tariffication, for instance, eventually kapag nakuha na iyong koleksiyon ng gobyerno, ito naman iyong gagastusin din para mas lalong maging competitive iyong ating mga farmers.

So, I will suppose that iyong kikitain din ng bansang Pilipinas from a mechanism called RCEP (*Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Program*) ay ito rin iyong gagastusin para mas lalong ma-train pa iyong iba pang mga industriya, mabigyan ng karampatang tools para sila ay makapag-compete din sa ibang bansa na mas advance sila in that specific industry.

**MODERATOR:** Next question from [unclear]

**ASAHI SHIMBUN.** Good afternoon sir, from Asahi Shimbun.

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Hi!

**ASAHI SHIMBUN:** What is the position of the Philippines in terms of India and RCEP? Is the Philippines open to having RCEP without India just to have it...you know, push through or do we want all the countries on board when we actually sign the—

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I cannot answer you kung ano iyong posisyon ng bansa natin with regards to the policy of India. I may have to defer that question to Secretary Mon Lopez. Tomorrow, he will have a press conference here.

**MODERATOR:** Other questions? Okay, Vivienne.

**VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN:** Sir, US President Donald Trump will reportedly skip the ASEAN Summit this year – how do you think will this affect the—I mean, what does this...what message does this send to the ASEAN regarding the importance, US places on the region?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I do not know the reason why President Donald Trump is skipping the 35th ASEAN Summit, the same way that he skipped the Summit in Singapore but I am pretty certain that the United States will be well represented by US official. And that official will represent Donald Trump would be his alter ego.

**VIVIENNE GULIA/ABS-CBN:** You don't think this is showing lack of importance to the ASEAN—

**SEC. ANDANAR:** No, I don't think so. ASEAN and the United States have had a good relationship for the last decades. We are good partners with the United States. We would also want to foster our partnership and—but absence in an ASEAN Summit like this would not change the equation of our relationship.

**MODERATOR:** Okay, any more questions? Bernadette Nicolas from Business Mirror then Joan Villanueva.

**BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR:** Hi, Sec! May we know how many bilateral meetings are scheduled to be attended by President Duterte?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** For now, I have in my list one bilateral meeting but I will allow Secretary Sal Panelo to make the official announcement.

**MODERATOR:** Joann Villanueva of PNA.

**JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA:** Sir, in regard doon sa RCEP, do you have any ballpark figure how much we will gain from it and how much we will lose? I mean, which has the bigger portion between the two?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I do not have a ballpark figure of how much we will gain or how much we will lose but I am sure that we will gain and I am also sure that the market opens up tremendously from six hundred million to 3.5 billion people. So, just imagine the products of the Philippines can now be exported to a 3.5 billion people on this side of the hemisphere.

**JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA:** Sir, what can we expect from President Duterte when it comes to tackling issues on the South China Sea during the Summit?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** The President has always maintained to have a policy that is friends to all and enemies to none: Our relationship with China is not limited to one aspect. We have other factors to consider: We do have the people-to-people exchanges with the People's Republic of China; we also have trading relations with China; we do have cultural exchanges with China; we are expecting ODA and we are also receiving investments from the People's Republic of China whether from the government or from the private sector. At the same time, we still hold that card that Permanent Court of Arbitration ruling stating that we do have sovereignty over this area in the West Philippine Sea.

**JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA:** Will he raise it, the arbitral ruling?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I cannot tell you if he will raise it but I am almost certain that what would be discussed during this ASEAN is the Code of Conduct.

**JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA:** [off mic]

**SEC. ANDANAR:** The COC (*Code of Conduct*)?

**JOANN VILLANUEVA/PNA:** Yes.

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I cannot answer you how far we are but as the country coordinator for ASEAN and China, the Philippines will work extra to be able to come up with a good environment for the final approval and the implementation of the Code of Conduct over the South China Sea.

**MODERATOR:** Okay. Last two questions from Genalyn Kabiling of Manila Bulletin, then Jhesset Enano of Inquirer.

**GENALYN KABILING/MANILA BULLETIN:** Hello, sir! Sir, will the President take the opportunity to confront China to stop its incursions and other excessive claims into our waters?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I cannot answer you if the President will raise that during this ASEAN but what I can tell you is every time that there are issues or issues come up or spring up, we do have the Department of Foreign Affairs that is very active in sending their message to China.

**GENALYN KABILING/MANILA BULLETIN:** But will the President ask other ASEAN leaders at least to—the negotiators to hasten the crafting of the Code of Conduct to reduce the tension in the region?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** We will find out in the next few days.

**GENALYN KABILING/MANILA BULLETIN:** Thank you.

**MODERATOR:** Okay, last question from Jhesset Enano of Inquirer.

**JHESSET ENANO:** Hello Sec., Jhesset Enano po from Philippine Daily Inquirer. Sir, do we see a timeline for the... finally, the conclusion of the Code of Conduct? And if not, if it's not going to be passed sooner or later even in the Summit, what are the dangers that we see for the Philippines or the implications if this Code of Conduct is still not passed?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** I remember in 2017, the mechanism for the Code of Conduct was finalized in the Philippines and then it proceeded in Singapore and now we are here in Thailand. So, if you ask me if there is a timeline, the Associations of Southeast Asian Nations would want this as soon as possible, but if you ask me when, I wouldn't be able to answer you.

**Q:** Pero iyong sa dangers po for our country, for the Philippines and our relations with China and those with other overlapping claims once this continues po na we don't have a Code of Conduct on the table?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** No, I don't see any danger. As I mentioned earlier, our relationship with the People's Republic of China is multi-faceted, it's not limited to our issue over the West Philippine Sea. And while the ASEAN at it – building the mechanism and finalizing the Code of Conduct – we will still continue trading with China, we will still continue with our people-to-people exchange, our cultural exchanges and our partnership in eradicating hard drugs and also fighting terrorism and human trafficking.

**MODERATOR:** Okay. That concludes our press briefing in Bangkok, Thailand. Thank you, Secretary Andanar and thank you media friends! Good evening!

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Thank you, thank you.

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