Presidential Communications Operations Office
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON AND CHIEF PRESIDENTIAL LEGAL COUNSEL SECRETARY SALVADOR PANELO

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ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Good afternoon MPC, we have Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and Spokesman, Secretary Salvador Panelo. Good afternoon, sir.

SEC. PANELO: Good afternoon, MPC.

TINA MENDEZ/PHILIPPINE STAR: Sir, may specific na bang mga ayuda na ibibigay—mga assistance na ibibigay doon sa mga displaced fishermen, planters ng mga pinya sa ano o…?

SEC. PANELO: Iyong mga appropriate agencies, mayroon nang mga dating nakalaan sa kanila and they're being distributed.

TINA MENDEZ/PHILIPPINE STAR: Sir, may message po ba kayo sa pilit pa ring bumabalik sa mga danger zones kasi mayroon pa raw hong humiga sa kalsada?

SEC. PANELO: Eh hindi mapigilan iyong mga iba dahil they are worried about their properties. But we keep on reminding them of the danger in going back to the danger zone. Eh pero alam mo naman ang mga Pilipino, you can't also blame them.

ARIANNE MEREZ/ABS-CBN NEWS.COM: Sir, sabi ninyo po last Monday i-interview-hin ninyo po si President Duterte this week, one-on-one. Kailan po iyon?

SEC. PANELO: Tentatively 22.

ARIANNE MEREZ/ABS-CBN NEWS.COM: 22, sir. Saan po sir, dito sa Palace sir? Ano sir iyong mga pag-uusapan ninyo po?

SEC. PANELO: Marami. Lahat na—

ARIANNE MEREZ/ABS-CBN NEWS.COM: Like ano po?

SEC. PANELO: Ang sabi niya kasi sa akin eh, "I want to discuss many things and I want the Filipino people to listen to what I'm going to say." Lahat na current issues.

ARIANNE MEREZ/ABS-CBN NEWS.COM: Okay, sir. May time na po ba iyon, sir?

SEC. PANELO: Wala pa; pero most likely ano iyon, hapon. Iyong dati, the same time and venue doon sa tete-a-tete.

FRANCIS WAKEFIELD/DAILY TRIBUNE: Sir, good afternoon po. Sir, comment lang from the Palace, iyong plano raw po ni Cavite Representative Elpidio Barzaga na magpatawag ng hearing po. Sabi niya kasi na nagkaroon ng pagkukulang ang PHIVOLCS, ang government agencies with regards doon sa pagsabog ng Taal po, parang hindi raw prepared or hindi raw nasabihan kaagad doon ang mga tao about the possible eruption noong Taal; pagdating din po sa pagbibigay ng alert level, ganoon.

SEC. PANELO: As if malalaman mo kung kailan puputok ang bulkan. But anyway, that's the prerogative and privilege of the Legislature, to call for a hearing in aid of legislation. 'Di hayaan mo sila.

JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: As far as the Palace is concerned sir, PHIVOLCS had no lapses in handling or predicting or advising the public about the eruption or volcanic activity of Taal?

SEC. PANELO: Magaling nga itong si Director Solidum eh, mahusay magpaliwanag eh. Alam ninyo, iba iyong—kasi ang iba nagko-compare, "Bakit iyong typhoon napi-predict natin?" Actually hindi naman natin napi-predict ang typhoon, nakikita natin eh brewing. On the basis of that, nakukuha nila kung saan papunta, gaano kabilis, kalakas. Pero iyong pagputok o iyong pag-earthquake, hindi mo mapi-predict iyon.

JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: So, you're satisfied with PHIVOLCS sir? President Duterte is satisfied with PHIVOLCS?

SEC. PANELO: Yes.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: So sir, if kayo iyong tatanungin, there's no need for an investigation from the Congress, kumbaga panggulo lang siya?

SEC. PANELO: Ah hindi, nasa kanila iyon. We cannot stop them or discourage them – that is their call.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Sorry sir, can I just have an official statement sir from Malacañang, iyong declaring iyong 'no man's land' iyong area? Kasi kahapon we just read reports na nanggaling kay Secretary Año, so can we just get a confirmation directly from—

SEC. PANELO: Yes. You know, ever since naman that's supposed to be a no man's land. There is a 2-kilometer radius as explained to me by PHIVOLCS. Talagang ever since danger zone iyon, talagang hindi dapat tumitira doon. But somehow you know, Filipinos are very creative, they want to earn a living; mayroon ding mga turistang nagpupunta roon. But this time, they should be… or they should realize that it's really very dangerous to be within that 2-kilometer radius danger zone.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Meaning sir, we will—

SEC. PANELO: Talagang no man's land dapat iyon ever since. Pinapaalalahanan na lang ni Presidente, huwag na kayo kasi pumunta roon.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: So, we're going to implement a stricter policy? Mas babantayan siya ngayon?

SEC. PANELO: Yes.

JULIE AURELIO/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Sir, paano mao-operationalize iyon? Magde-declare ba ng directive si President Duterte; may uutusan siyang particular agency? Military ba ulit to enforce the no man's land policy?

SEC. PANELO: Usual naman iyong mayroong nagbabantay doon. But to me, ang kailangan mo doon, talagang education sa mga tao. To make them realize na it's really dangerous for them. Pero ang problema narinig ko nga iyong isang farmer doon, eh sabi niya dito na ako tumira noon, wala naman iyan. Alam ko naman kung magkakaroon ng earthquake or eruption, kasi iyong mga manok, iyong mga animals nagre-react, iyon ang kanila. Hindi mo mapigilan talaga eh!

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: Sir, I recall doon sa speech ni President Duterte doon sa evacuees sa Batangas. He wasn't referring, I believed, he wasn't referring directly to volcano island per se, but he said something like, oh huwag muna kayong babalik doon, hangga't hindi pa safe. So, how should we go about it?

SEC. PANELO: Ganoon na rin iyon. Whether doon mismo sa area ng two kilometer radius or doon sa aabutin, ganoon din iyon, it's the same.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: Starting when magde-deploy ng additional tao or after—hintayin ba nating mag-settle down iyong Taal Volcano?

SEC. PANELO: Wala sigurong additional na taong ide-deploy. Kagaya ng sinabi ko, dati namang mayroon eh – imi-maintain lang.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: May police detachment po sa volcano island?

SEC. PANELO: Siguro, i-istriktuhan nila. I don't know kung may police detachment. Basta alam ko mayroong nagbabantay doon, ever since.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: Sir, maiba lang tayo, back to PHIVOLCS. Given na gustong imbestigahan ni Cavite Rep. Barzaga iyong PHIVOLCS, will the government provide additional funding to PHIVOLCS to replace iyong mga nasira nilang equipment from the eruption nitong nakaraang araw?

SEC. PANELO: That goes without saying. Kung may nasira, di kailangan palitan.

JULIE AURELIO/PDI: And along those lines – additional equipment, improve iyong capability nila to monitor volcanic activities?

SEC. PANELO: Nasa PHIVOLCS iyan. Pag nag-request sila na kailangan nila ang isang bagay to make them more effective, siyempre ibibigay natin.

CELERINA MONTE/MLA SHIMBUN: Sir, regarding these people living in the island. Where will they be relocated?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi ba may mga evacuation center, sa ngayon.

CELERINA MONTE/MLA SHIMBUN: But iyong permanent po if ever, kasi, ide-declare nang no man's land.

SEC. PANELO: Di ba gusto nga ni President magkaroon ng mga permanenteng evacuation centers. Kasi palaging may calamity eh. In his speech, sabi niya or during the situation briefing, sinabi niya na kailangan bago matapos ang term ko, kumpleto iyan, dahil palaging may dumarating.

CELERINA MONTE/MLA SHIMBUN: Sir, hindi po iyong resettlement area po, kasi di ba hindi na nga sila puwedeng tumira doon?

SEC. PANELO: Oh eh di hahanapan natin kung saang lugar puwede, marami pa namang lupa ang Pilipinas eh.

CELERINA MONTE/MLA SHIMBUN: So, do we have budget for that?

SEC. PANELO: Pag mayroong plano ang gobyerno, siyempre kailangan may budget, ilalagay siyempre sa budget iyan.

CELERINA MONTE/MLA SHIMBUN: Sir, does Malacañang see the need for international help regarding this ano?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi. Sabi nga ni Secretary Lorenzana kaya natin, hindi natin kailangan ng tulong ng ibang bansa sa ngayon.

CELERINA MONTE/MLA SHIMBUN: But those naman na nag o-offer?

SEC. PANELO: Eh di siyempre tatanggapin natin. Bakit naman hindi natin tatanggapin.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL. STAR: Sir, i-clarify ko lang sa Taal island. Sir, I think the recommendation from DOST Secretary Fortunato Dela Peña, seconded by Defense Secretary Lorenzana was among others, was to declare the island as a no man's land. It was approved by the President as he mentioned.

SEC. PANELO: As I said, dati namang no man's land iyon eh.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL. STAR: Hindi. Iyong enforcement sir – na walang tao dapat di ba, na walang titira – sir, kailangan pa ba ng executive order or any other declaration?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi na kailangan iyon, all they have to do is to implement – dati nang policy iyan.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Sir, naglabas po ng statement ang DILG regarding doon sa procurement issue with the PNP. Sabi nila there was a glaring mistake, it was wrong semantics and not actual wrongdoing, kasi ang pagkakaalam po yata ni Presidente, lasers speed gun ang ipo-procure. Ang sabi po ng DILG, it would be micro-digital photo or video laser text speed system, na ginagamit daw po sa advanced countries na nagkakahalaga ng 1 million per system. So, will the President be changing his mind about his opinion on the procurement of the PNP?

SEC. PANELO: They will have to submit a report on that officially to the President and the President will act accordingly.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: So, he might consider?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi natin alam. Siyempre aantayin mo iyong report kung ano ba iyong, bakit nagkaganoon ang paliwanag mo noong una. Always remember that this President is a lawyer and we lawyers are always trained to look deeper into any situation.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Sir, na-submit na daw po. Do you confirm na natanggap na ito?

SEC. PANELO: Wala pang sinasabi sa akin ang Office of the President na mayroon na.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Sir, there is a report saying na iyong government lawyers are set to ask the Supreme Court to revoke iyong franchise ng ABS-CBN. What's the Palace take..?

SEC PANELO: I read about it and I have to talk to the SolGen yet. I haven't seen the petition, if it is already drafted, I haven't talk to him.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Has it something to do with the statement of the President na iyong ABS, magsasara na kayo?

SEC. PANELO: Not really. You must remember that the job of the SolGen is to file the appropriate petitions when he sees or feels that there's a transgression of franchises or any law for that matter.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL STAR: Sir recently, si Presidente ay may galit sa serial rapist sa bandang Quezon.

SEC. PANELO: Oh yes.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL STAR: Bakit, sir?

SEC. PANELO: In fact, I think, that's the thing that triggered his instructions to have a one-on-one interview. Because he noticed that in that part of this country, there had been reports of rapes and the victims being killed. That's why he instructed nga the OIC to do something about it.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL STAR: And then, sir, we received a report that a suspect suddenly died inside his cell, a rape suspect sa 8-year old. May koneksyon kaya iyong order ng Pangulong diyan?

SEC. PANELO: No, I don't think so. That should be investigated kung bakit.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL STAR: So the order will go to the PNP for investigation?

SEC. PANELO: Yes.

IAN CRUZ/GMA7: Sec., doon sa ICC. Despite iyong withdrawal ni Atty. Sabio, tuloy pa rin daw sabi ng ICC?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi mo naman mapigilan sila. But the fact remains is that it has no jurisdiction whatsoever over the President and for that matter this country. We have repeatedly said that the very source of its authority never gave birth. Why? Because we have to follow certain processes in giving teeth or enforceability to the particular law, it has to be published in a newspaper in general circulation or on the Official Gazette. And the Rome Statute was never published in either of the two mentioned processes.

But it must … the ICC must realize that it is receiving communications coming from polluted source as exemplified by this withdrawal of complainant/communicator Sabio that it is indeed coming from those who want to vilify the administration and besmirch the reputation of the President.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: Sir, can the government go after Sabio for vilifying the President?

SEC. PANELO: It can if it wants to, I mean, the complainant.

CHONA YU/RADYO INQUIRER: But will the government do that?

SEC. PANELO: If you noticed, the President doesn't mind all of this. Pinapabayaan niya lang iyong naninira sa kaniya 'di ba. Wala naman siyang dinidemanda.

You know, as I said in my statement, lies can be sustained only for some time. Once it haunts the peddler, then those lies melt in the heat of truth. Iyon ang nangyayari kaya kahit anumang—iyon naman ang ano ni Presidente eh, lahat ng mga kasinungalingan ninyo, lumalabas eventually hindi totoo. It only shows that this is a robust democracy in place.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL STAR: Sec., iyong sa deployment ban sa Kuwait. Despite the agreement between the Philippines and Kuwait regarding iyong sa labor, iyong sa workers, iyong

sa working conditions may nangyaring ganoong incident, are you planning—or is the administration planning to scrap iyong agreement kasi hindi naman nasunod and then we banned iyong workers—

SEC. PANELO: That is precisely why there is a total deployment ban. Until such time as the terms of the MOA are incorporated in each labor contract between the employer and the employee, the ban remains. Kasi hindi pa nasusunod iyon eh, that's what Secretary Bello told me.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL STAR: So we are retaining that bilateral agreement?

SEC. PANELO: Yeah. Kaya nga iyon ang kundisyon eh, kapag hindi ninyo ginawa iyong pinag-usapan natin diyan, tuluy-tuloy ang ban namin.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL STAR: So indefinite iyong magiging ban sa workers?

SEC. PANELO: Yes.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL STAR: Wala ba kayong hihingiin na amendment sa ban para ma-ensure na iyong provisions ay nasusunod kasi apparently, hindi nasunod sa kasong ito eh?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi. Iyong pagsunod, hindi naman iyon sa pag-amend mo ng MOA eh kung hindi sa pag-implement ng gobyerno nila.

ACE ROMERO/PHIL STAR: So we are seeking stricter implementation of that—

SEC. PANELO: Yeah. Hindi lang strict, we are asking them to implement it, otherwise the ban remains.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Good afternoon, sir!

SEC. PANELO: Lady in pink!

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: [laughs] Sige, sir. Sir, back to ABS–CBN, may plano po ba—may kumpas po ba sa ating Pangulo na iyong plano ng Office of the Solicitor General na mag-file ng ano... ng warrant—

MPC: [OFF MIC] Quo warranto.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Quo warranto.

SEC. PANELO: Ibig sabihin—ang ibig mong sabihin kung may instruction ang Presidente?

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Yes!

SEC. PANELO: Wala. Trabaho kasi ni SolGen iyan, as I said earlier.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Ah okay. Sir, another issue, according to SWS, forty percent—forty-four percent ng Pinoy ay satisfied daw with Vice President Leni Robredo being - iyong performance daw po niya, being an ICAD – so, tumagal lamang siya almost two weeks, any reaction on this?

SEC. PANELO: O, 'di ba may... mayroon na akong statement doon ah!

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Wala, sir. Iba 'to eh—

SEC. PANELO: Mayroon.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: January sixteen...

SEC. PANELO: Anyway—

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Sir, ano na lang—

SEC. PANELO: 'Yung ano—

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Ang also, sir another... iyong forty-nine percent din—

MR. BALTAZAR: 'Yung isa muna, Miss Vanz.

MPC: [OFF MIC] ICAD.

SEC. PANELO: 'Yung ICAD?

MPC: [OFF MIC] Yes.

SEC. PANELO: Satisfied ang tao? Sa tingin ko 'yung satisfaction na iyon dahil in-appoint siya; because of that appointment kaya tumaas ang rating niya. But you must remember that iyong rating sa trust at popularity rating as well as the way he tackles the drug problem, mataas. Mataas!

MPC: [OFF MIC] Si VP Robredo, sir?

SEC. PANELO: Hindi. Iyong the way the President is handling the drug war.

MPC: [OFF MIC] So, iyong four out of ten?

SEC. PANELO: Iyong alin?

MR. BALTAZAR: Miss Vanz, Iyong ano... 'yung—

SEC. PANELO: Ano iyong forty-nine?

MR. BALTAZAR: ‘Yung isang question mo, Miss Vanz.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Yes, about this SWS: Forty-nine percent of Pinoy naniniwala ang pagkakatanggal daw niya sa ICAD is an admission by the Duterte Administration on the drug war is failing daw.

SEC. PANELO: Failing because she was the co-chair for eighteen days, kaya nag-fail.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Kontra, sir! Ano ba yan!

MR. BALTAZAR: Salamat, Miss Vanz! Follow-up?

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Sir, how about dun sa mismong fact na four out of ten lang iyong Pilipinong nagsasabing kuntento sila with Robredo as ICAD co-chair? What does it say about her performance and ‘yung trust ng tao sa kaniya handling the drug war?

SEC. PANELO: Four out of ten?

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Because forty-four percent or four out of ten.

SEC. PANELO: Siguro iyong four out of ten, eh iyong anim – iyung anim kontra?

MPC: [OFF MIC] Hindi baka may ‘undecided’ pa dun.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Mayroon—‘yung—may mga percent sir, kasi parang twenty something percent dissatisfied, iba-iba.

SEC. PANELO: Siguro iyong four, iyon ang napaniwala doon sa mga incessant, unrelenting attacks as a—says correctly against the drug war of the President. But as I pointed out earlier, this is contradicted by the people’s satisfaction of how he’s handling the drug war.

ALEXIS ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: So, looking back Sec, masasabi ninyo ba na tama iyong desisyon ng Pangulo na gawin siyang ICAD Chair?

SEC. PANELO: I do not know whether or not, when the President describe her as a colossal blunder, he was referring to her appointment as co-chair or as a public official having elected to the second highest post in the land. Hindi ko alam, kasi hindi masyadong klaro sa akin. I will ask him exactly if he considers appointing her as a blunder. But you know, to my mind, because people or some in the opposition said that that was made out of pick. Others say that was a test to measure her mettle and her ability to improve on what she keeps on saying that ‘if not a failure, ineffective.’ But in either case, to my mind she was being given the rare chance of introducing other schemes that will improve in the campaign against the prohibited drugs and she blew it. ‘Yan ang tingin ko doon.

ALEXIS ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR: Salamat, Sec.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Sir, can you give me an update doon sa mga PDL, kasi wala na tayong balita eh.

SEC. PANELO: Ano ‘yun?

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: ‘Yung mga detainees sa BJMP na pinakawalan tapos ibinalik, hindi ba? PDL... incarcerated—

SEC. PANELO: Ah, wala pa. Teka muna, wala...Siguro—buti you pointed it out. We will ask the newest status from the BJMP.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Okay, sir. Thank you very much.

MR. BALTAZAR: Maraming salamat, MPC.

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Source: PCOO-NIB (News and Information Bureau-Data Processing Center)