

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE**  
**News and Information Bureau**

**LAGING HANDA PRESS BRIEFING WITH PCOO SECRETARY MARTIN ANDANAR, DEPED  
SECRETARY LEONOR BRIONES AND DOH SECRETARY FRANCISCO DUQUE**

**January 27, 2020**

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Good morning MPC at welcome sa ating Laging Handa Press Briefing. Today kasama natin si Communication Secretary Martin Andanar para ipakilala pa rin ang ating kasama pang ibang bisita. Good morning, sir.

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Maraming salamat, Undersecretary Rocky Ignacio. Magandang umaga po sa lahat ng mga kababayan. To all the members of Malacañang Press Corps, good morning to all of you.

Laging Handa is a crisis communications center and initiative of RTVM and the Presidential Communications Operations Office that delivers real time reports and updates on disasters, calamities in the country. It aims to create a whole of government approach to widen the circle of responsibility by creating partnerships among government offices, business, non-government sectors and other communities.

Through Laging Handa PH, the government disseminates information that the nation needs to know from preparation, relief efforts, evacuation centers and other pertinent data. It builds a continuous partnership—or continuing partnership with other government agencies, such as the Department of Health, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration, Local Government Units to name a few.

Laging Handa has been the one stop information program for the National government for national emergencies and disaster preparedness.

The year 2020, as this January has not been very good for most of us, especially the news. We got the Iran crisis, Iraq, we also do have the Coronavirus, we have the Taal and this morning was a shocker when we woke up to the death of Kobe Bryant a sportsman who has touched millions of lives across the world.

Today, we continue to talk about bad news and what the government is doing about it. We have two guests, we do have the Secretary of Education, Secretary Ling Briones who will give us an update on the Taal Volcano and the reaction and what the government is doing about it specifically from the Department of Education. And we also do have our distinguished Cabinet member and who holds the portfolio of the Department of Health, Secretary Duque will also give us an update on another bad news for the year, which is the Coronavirus.

But again, based on tradition we go ladies first. So Ma'am Ling Briones, welcome to the Malacañang Press Briefing Room and in front of you are members of the Malacañang Press Corps.

**SEC. BRIONES:** Thank you, Martin. Good morning, good morning Secretary Duque. I'd like to introduce the members of my team who are here ready to give you information and updates. I have with me Director Willy of Region IV-A and then I have director Ronnie of DRRMC, he has the latest numbers on the extent of the damage by Taal and the grumblings and murmurings of Taal and I have Jun Gudoy who is also the director for information. So three directors, three Cabinet members, so hopefully we will give you as much information as possible.

The data which I'm going to share with you is as of January 26, 2 o'clock, this is yesterday. And I'm sure you are already aware of the very latest, so I will go as fast as I can. I will dispense with the description of the nature of the unrest, the character of Taal's behavior. The immediate effects right now, if we look at the 14 kilometer radius danger zone, we note from our perspective as the Department of Education we have 78 affected schools; 30,814 learners and 1,055 personnel. And also the estimated population which is fairly large within the 14 kilometer danger zone would be 459,300 with 24,500 displaced population.

Now, the immediate effects of Taal eruption as far as we are concerned, in DepEd, would be 141 affected schools; 68,984 learners; and 2,498 affected personnel. And then, the immediate effects of the Taal eruption, total lockdown primarily in the province of Batangas and the municipalities are mentioned here. Again as of January 26, we have one really severely affected region, this is Region IV-A, 8 affected divisions and 1,100 of affected schools; 644,081 learners; and 19,488 personnel.

Of course, you have been covering this event, schools were affected largely by ash fall. And we have some photos. Then affected divisions are largely in Batangas, in Cavite and Laguna and the numbers are also in the table and the data will be provided to you directly.

Now, I'm sure you are very concerned about the class suspensions. As of January 26, which is yesterday, five divisions have been affected and with 1,083 schools also affected and learners 616,809.

Also, as of yesterday, we still have schools which are used as evacuation centers. The position of the Department of Education on the use of schools as evacuation centers has been reiterated from the time of the explosion of Mayon and we have cited the law as well as the instructions of the President on avoiding the use of schools as evacuation centers. Now, we are also tracking displaced DepEd personnel aside from the learners and we also have a table as showing displaced personnel as far as our records are concerned; because not only the learners are dispersed, but also our teachers and our staff are also by themselves evacuees.

Now, what are the actions that we have taken? Immediately we issued Department Memorandum No. 3, this was during the first week of the Taal restiveness and we ordered our schools to accept emergency transferees even without credentials. And then we deployed our personnel for tracking down the affected learners, the teaching and the non-teaching personnel. Of course we are very, very concerned about our learners, but we also worry about our teachers and our non-teaching personnel because they themselves are also affected.

We have provided as far as possible psychological first aid and psycho-social support. And then we have delivered alternative delivery mode materials to learners in evacuation centers. At the same time - and this is well projected in the media, thank you very much - we have reiterated Republic Act 1021 where we stressed, this is five years ago with Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act that as much as possible, schools should not be used as evacuation centers and they can only be used as a last resort and also for a maximum of 15 days.

Therefore we have taken action to coordinate with LGUs in the search for alternative evacuation centers and we look forward to the time when the LGUs will be able to build more permanent evacuation centers or all purpose structures.

President Duterte in 2018 reiterated this particular law, the law was passed in 2015 and reiterated by President Duterte at the height of the explosion of Mayon when the problems of schools as evacuation center was aggravated.

Then we also have helped in the provision of clean up and hygiene kits. We conducted a field visit to Batangas as early as January 17 and I had direct look and immediate look at the state schools which are being used as evacuation centers. In one school, for example in Bauan High School, with 6,000 students and used as an evacuation center. Automatically that means 6,000 students have been replaced—I mean, taken out of their schools and making do with temporary shelters, etcetera.

Also, we have declared immediately that affected school teachers will receive their salaries and their benefits, suspensions or no suspensions.

We also recommended as early as—that by February 3, classes in Batangas that are reasonably distant from Taal can resume on February 3. But yesterday, already Governor Mandanas of Batangas already issued an order for return to work and where suspensions are still on going, we would be preparing for a possible opening of classes by February 3.

So, in anticipation of the return of our children to their homes, because the schools are their homes, we have proposed a modified school calendar which was submitted by Director Willy and we hope that we will be able to complete the required number of schools days face to face interaction by April.

So, the next chart shows the modified school calendar. We will be having classes on Saturdays and Sundays, with due apologies to our learners and put students. But in response to queries if we can have our children graduate even without the classes, we have replied that they have to comply with the requirements, because this is a requirement of law.

So, we have a post modified school calendar which will enable the affected schools to catch up and so, this is what we are saying, happily, the Phivolcs on whom we rely for information on the developments in Taal has lowered the alert level to Signal 3. We would look at this, not as a complete relief, we look at this as a breathing space and opportunity to catch up with what is lacking to clean up and so on; and also to encourage local government to really comply with the law and answer positively in the call of the President himself.

We are also going to trace the displaced learners, etcetera, whom I ordered should be taken in with or without documentation. And we want to continue education and restore normalcy among the children's lives.

As to Coronavirus, we take our lead from the Department of Health. Whatever challenges, whatever memorandum, whatever tips they give we immediately pass on to our schools for implementation and for compliance. Thank you.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Thank you very much Secretary Martin and also my greetings to our fellow Cabinet member, Secretary Liling Briones of the DepEd. And in behalf of the DOH, I'd like to welcome you all to his presscon. And I will have a brief presentation; this is a four-part presentation.

First, will be on the quick characterization of the Coronavirus; followed by the Novel Coronavirus related events.

Third would be the actions undertaken by the DOH; and last but not the least, of course will be the public advisories.

So, on the first slide, the Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses belonging to the Coronaviridae, they are named after the crown like surfaces... crown like spikes rather on their surface and Coronaviruses are zoonotic meaning they are transmitted between animals and people. These viruses cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe like the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome or the MERS COV and also the earlier related Coronavirus that happened sometime in 2002 and 2003 the SARS COV.

Patients who contract Coronavirus were shown to exhibit respiratory symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more advanced cases, the infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and kidney failure and may cause death.

Next, in December 31, 2019, WHO was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. On January 7, 2020 Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified a new type of coronavirus. The Novel Coronavirus technically defined or referred to as 2019-NCOV. It's a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. The mode of the transmission of this is not yet well established. While initially thought to be transmitted through animal contact, recent data has shown that human to human transmission is possible, especially those in close contact with infected patients, such as family members or healthcare workers.

While the development of a vaccine for the NCOV is currently underway, it may take months to years before it can be made available for public use. For those ill, no definitive treatment can be given, supportive care and symptomatic treatment is still advised as with any other viral infections.

Most of the cases or 1,000 now, we have 2,014 are from China and these includes five cases in Hong Kong, two in Macau, three in Taipei and others. There are confirmed cases - four in Thailand, three in Singapore, Australia and France, two cases in Korea and the US, one case was reported in Nepal. I understand that Malaysia has three cases reported. There are a total of 56 deaths recorded out of the 2,014 cases hence a case fatality rate of 2.7%. All recorded deaths are from China.

Now, let me just dwell a bit more on this. Compared to MERS COV, the case fatality rate is 34 to 36%, how high the death rate is from MERS COV; while the SARS COV posted a 10 to about 12% case fatality rate. And so, you can just see how much lower the case fatality rate is for the Novel coronavirus.

In terms of risk levels, China has been classified as very high risk, the western pacific region is considered high risk, while global risk has been classified as moderate. There are 39 Novel coronavirus related health events that were reported to the Epidemiology Bureau of the DOH headed by the way, I have with me and joining me are the Directors of the Epidemiology Bureau Director Ferchito Avelino; the Director of the Bureau of Quarantine, Director Ferds Salcedo; the Director of the Health Emergency Management Bureau, Director Gloria Balboa.

And so, just to go back to this Coronavirus healthy related events, history of travel to Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China—I think the 11, half not all; and belong to the age range of 18 months to 78 years old with the median of 24 years and of the 39, 23 or 59% are males, while 16 or 41 are females.

Now in terms of geographic distribution of reported 2019 NCOV related health events, 13 or 33% are in Central Visayas; 9 or 23% in Western Visayas; 3 or 8% in National Capital Region; while the rest are in Regions IV-A, IV-B, X and XI. 11 of the 39 accounts for 26% are considered patient under investigation or PUI. That's the correct terminology to use. So far, there are zero confirmed cases of NCOV in the country, the five year old suspected case tested

negative for 2019 NCOV by PCR as reported to us by the Victorian Infectious Disease Reference Laboratory of Melbourne, Australia.

Of course, we hope, we won't have any confirmed cases, knock on the wood.

Now, what are the actions taken by the DOH. The following are actions carried out by your DOH in response to the threat of this 2019 NCOV: First, we have established a dedicated task force on NCOV; second, we have issued interim guidelines on the same; third, heightened border screening through thermal screening and use of health declaration checklist; fourth, mandated the use of decision table in evaluating sick passengers, this is essentially a risk assessment tool that will help us classify whether the passengers are persons under identification or they will because of their manifestation falls squarely within this PUI classification or they are mere ILI suspects or Influenza Like Illness with no history of travel to Wuhan City; or a SARI which could be a severe acute respiratory infection in individuals whose manifestations maybe caused not necessarily by NCOV, but by other microbes such as a bacteria and also different influenza viruses have commonly been attributed to similar or overlapping signs and symptoms.

Next would be directed triaging. Triage simply means prioritization of patients at the arrival area on sick passengers. Next would be a insured laboratory and hospital preparedness, establish 2019 NCOV surveillance for daily updates and lastly intensified risk communications in all communication venues and taking advantage of the quad media.

And I call upon the responsible media practitioners in our means that let's not be used by the unscrupulous groups whose agenda is to propagate infodemic. Infodemic means the spread of false or baseless pieces of information. And let's not be party to such a propagation because otherwise, this problem, this misinformation can be more viral than the virus that we all are guarding against. So, this is an infodemic, we don't want to be party to its spread.

Moreover, the PPEs or Personal Protective Equipment are available at the Bureau of Quarantine, the centers for health development and DOH hospitals.

DOH is also closely monitoring individuals who manifest signs of respiratory infection and had a history of travel to China and is coordinating with WHO and the China Center of Diseases Control for updates.

Now, lastly, the public advisory.

The DoH reiterates that the public must practice frequent hand washing. You can sing "Happy birthday." Say your little prayer of "Our Father" and then wash your hands properly which means the palm of the hands, the back of the hands and the digits. So, you do this—as I can see, I get the soap and then under the—just... just with the soap and do this... this... and then this... and then that all twenty seconds. Nothing prevents you from extending it by

another twenty seconds so you can sing and you can pray. So, that's forty seconds all in all. And of course, avoid unprotected contact with farm or wild animals. Practice proper cough etiquette, okay.

By the way, going back to the hand washing, avoid shaking of hands this time. Sometimes at the most... siguro fist bump... fist bump. Avoid beso-beso, okay. Please, okay? Tigilan na muna... ganun na lang. O kung gusto n'yo finger to finger na lang para talaga least contact point, okay. Or that's the best, "Hello", ganun na lang. "Hello", okay? Okay.

So, cough etiquette, okay. Maintain distance and cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or the crook of your elbow. The crook is this, *[demonstrating cough]* okay? Kung wala kang pang... pang—panangga doon sa iyong bahing, sa ubo, at sa plema. Avoid close contact with people showing cold or flu-like symptoms. And for those experiencing flu-like symptoms kung puwede just stay at home especially if you're feverish. Don't spread it. And if it cannot be avoided, just put a N95 mask or a surgical mask, momentarily this will help prevent the spread.

And then for those eating food, please let's make sure it's cooked, always cooked. You know, ASF also came from China, okay; SARS came from China. Okay, now this is coming from China. The food that needs to be taken in by our loved ones, the family, make sure that the preparation is adequate, it's really cooked. Hindi puwede 'yung half-cook, 'yung pinkish meat that you see in the pork - especially in the pork.

I urge travelers with symptoms of respiratory illness either during or after travel to seek medical attention immediately. And I call upon all of our health facilities to enhance standard infection prevention and control practices especially in our emergency departments.

We must always be ready. Thank you.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Kay Secretary Duque and Secretary Liling. Recently or today sir, several Chinese schools have suspended their classes. Do you think that this is necessary at this time?

**SEC. DUQUE:** With the permission of our chairman? Okay. So, the decision by a select or by few private schools to suspend classes is a decision on of their own. So, that being said, I think Secretary Liling would want to give a follow-up to my response; but suffice it to say that their actions are not within the contemplation of our interim guidelines on NCoV. So, it's really up to them, okay? And I'm not really privy to the reasons why they have arrived at this decision; so, wala po kaming kaalam-alam. So ibig ko pong makipag-ugnayan sa kanila perhaps through Secretary Liling, so that I will be able to know exactly the basis of arriving at such a decision.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Sir, on their advisory they said precisely to—this is to—this is a precaution against coronavirus. Pero sir do you think considering that there has been no confirmed cases in the Philippines that's there is a need for them to suspend classes?

**SEC. DUQUE:** If I were to—my position is, again, it's not within our interim guidelines - the suspension of classes at this point. There has been no communication coming from the WHO with regard to an advisory that is related to that. So, I really do not know, I'm not privy to it. We will try to find out, get to the bottom of the reasons why they decided to do so.

**SEC. BRIONES:** Okay. First of all, we have to bear in mind that it is the local government units who have the authority to declare suspensions of classes... I was saying it's the local government units who have the authority to declare suspensions or reopening of classes.

Secondly, private sector schools have a greater degree of autonomy than a public sector schools. So, what we did in NCR - because of the schools which suspended their classes are in NCR - was to remind them that if they do suspend, this are their own decisions but they have to conduct make up classes.

For us, what is important is that the children do not lose the number of days face to face interaction with the teachers which is required by law. And the reason that has been given is that in these schools, a number of students, faculty members, have been traveling to and from China so they suspect that there might be a degree of exposure.

We will be encouraging them to coordinate with the Department of Health because on matters of health, we take our lead from the Department of Health and their advisories. Pero sila, desisyon nila 'yun; pero mag-make up classes eventually if they decide to reopen class. At saka local governments—perhaps the local governments need also to advise and to consult with these schools kasi nasa kanila 'yung authority talaga.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** So, ma'am, considering that—you said that some of these students or 'yung mga relatives nila may have some exposure or galing sila sa areas which are—were there are cases of coronavirus confirmed. Would you be encouraging them to do the same especially for other schools po?

**SEC. BRIONES:** Not necessarily. I would encourage them to coordinate and to seek advice from the Department of Health because it is the Department of Health who has all the latest information and advisories as well as the news about suspensions whether here or in other parts of the world. So, I would advise these schools to consult with the Department of Health and with the local government. But as far as we in DepEd are concerned, since they're relatively autonomous, they should not miss out on the number of school days for the learners.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Thank you, ma'am.



**ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS:** Secretary Duque, good morning!

**SEC. DUQUE:** Good morning!

**ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS:** Secretary, wala tayong naririnig na parang recommendation para i-repatriate ‘yung mga kababayan natin sa Wuhan amid the ongoing situation. Talaga bang hindi advisable na pabalikin ‘yung mga kababayan natin dahil baka makalusot dito sa Pilipinas?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Well, unang-una ho, mayroon naman po tayong nakatalagang mga sistema, quarantine measures by the BOQ and as I have said earlier, heightened ‘yung ating border surveillance – ang mga pantalan, paliparan ay binabantayan po ito at may kasama tayong mga more or less forty thermal scans that have been deployed to all of these ports ‘no.

Now, the issue of whether we should repatriate our people from Wuhan, China is a consideration that we will discuss after this with the representatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs. So, we will have a meeting at 1:30 at the OSEC precisely to address this particular concern. So, maghintay na lang po tayo sa ngayon.

Ngunit, uulitin ko, nakatalaga naman po ang mga sistema. ‘Yung atin pong Bureau of Quarantine ay nakatutok, ang atin pong Epidemiology Bureau ay ito po ay inatasan na ang atin pong mga regional epidemiology and surveillance unit officers na tutukan ang mga Novel coronavirus related events, ‘no.

Just in case nakalusot sa quarantine. Tandaan po natin na sa quarantine ay ia-isolate ka kung mayroon kang lagnat, mayroon kang ubo, sipon/ubo at mayroon kang positive history of travel from Wuhan and exposure to four.

And what are these four kinds of exposures? Number one, would be a directive contact with a confirmed case of Novel coronavirus. Not necessarily taking into consideration the travel to Wuhan or residing in Wuhan. Number two, would be nakasalamuha mo ang isang health professional in a facility which has been identified as having taken care of confirmed case of Novel coronavirus. Number three, would be any visit o ‘yun po ba ay dumalaw, kumain doon sa ground zero or epicenter of the Novel coronavirus which is the live animal market or seafood market where this whole sting started. And of course, the fourth exposure would be any contact with an animal, live animal or has this been eaten by that person.

So, you ask those kinds of questions where the Novel coronavirus is strongly thought to have begun from the animals and through what is known as zoonotic transmission began affecting or spreading to the human population.

So, lahat po ito this is what called the assessment tool. Mayroon tayo diyan positive – positive - positive doon sa apat; mayroong positive – negative – positive – positive; mayroon tayong negative – negative – positive—Mayroon na tayo, kumpleto na tayo diyan para lahat

po ng mga tao natin pati sa mga ospital, pati sa mga komunidad—kasi gaya ng sinabi ko, puwedeng makalusot sa quarantine eh kasi wala namang symptoms but with the history of travel so... mayroon pong nakalagay ‘yan sa health declaration card. Nakalagay po lahat itong mga impormasyon na ito para magabayan.

Kung saka-sakali, “O, you travelled in Wuhan City”, so these are the things that you need to watch out for, okay? So, you do some quarantine or self-isolation. You take your fever, temperature for fourteen days, you avoid going to crowded places. Kumpleto na po tayo sa mga advisories po natin.

**ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS:** Usec, kay Secretary Briones. Secretary, magandang umaga po! Secretary, mayroon po ba tayong initiative na magkaroon ng information drive among our students na mabigyan sila ng knowledge about NCoV?

**SEC. BRIONES:** Huwag ng?

**ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS:** Initiative para magkaroon ng information drive about NCoV?

**SEC. BRIONES:** Actually, nag-issue kaagad kami ng Memorandum Circular to all schools nung unang labas ng balita tungkol sa CoV at saka ang policy kasi namin, ‘pag may mga advisories ang Department of Health, pinapasa namin ito kaagad. Kasi sa Department of Education, mayroon kaming School Health Division, pero ‘yung mga technical information, advisories are really based on Department of Health issuances.

At saka kasama naman sa curriculum ‘yan with or without any threat of an epidemic or whatever... eh kasama naman talaga ‘yung hygiene sa mga bata at saka ‘yung ano natin very effective ‘yung—we have water faucets available at saka ang mga bata tinuturuan ng hand washing at saka pag-inom ng tubig, toilet facilities, hygiene, kasama naman ‘yan sa pagtuturo pero dapat bigyan ng additional emphasis ‘yan. At saka inaano namin lahat ng mga officials namin to immediately share whatever advisories the Department of Health issues kasi ang expertise nasa kanila pero ‘yung mga potential patients – God forbid – would be largely also our students because they are twenty-seven million of them all over the country kaya nag-issue kami kaagad kung anong sasabihin nila, ipapaalam namin.

**ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS:** Salamat po, Sec.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Secretary Duque, good morning po! Can I focus on the eleven under investigation cases? Could you give us little more background, for example, if you can tell us saang areas ‘to and latest tests that have been done... and the circumstances of these cases, please?

**SEC. DUQUE:** ‘Yung—on a more granular level, it would be difficult for us to give you... you know exactly where they are, where they are being hospitalized, because of the privacy. We

don't want media going there and exposing yourselves also to... you know... we really don't know because they're right now under investigation which means that the specimen, the throat swab, the nasopharyngeal swab specimens had been sent to RITM and RITM is currently running the tests. The results of which we expect within twenty-four to forty-eight hours and if it's negative, we send them home with the proper advice as to how they should take care of themselves. However, should the test yield positive result for non-specific pan-coronavirus, then that get sent to Melbourne, Australia for confirmation, okay?

So, while that is happening, the patient will not be allowed to go home. They will be staying in isolation rooms in the hospitals. But suffice it to say for now that there are eleven PUIs, all had the travel history of Wuhan China and then the onset of illness, I have the different onsets of illness and then the laboratory results, I also have here.

One, two, three, four, five. So four—one, two, three, four. Yielded different results 'no. Iyong nga, iyong nauna, iyong boy from Cebu, a Wuhan national, negative for MERS-CoV, negative for SARS-CoV but positive for the non-specific coronavirus. So that was sent. And now, it's negative.

Now, for the other one. Influenza A viral RNA detected. Influenza A, if you recall NAH1N1 pandemic of 2009, this is the same. It's now become part of the circulating influenza viruses. There are two types: Alpha Influenza Virus and the Beta Influenza Virus. So this is the Alpha which was detected. Again, MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV viral RNA not detected.

So again, in one other case, SARS-CoV viral RNA not detected. No panel pathogens detected. So iyong panel, which means they ran several tests for several viruses and bacteria, not anyone of those yielded positive.

So hintayin na lang po natin because there are four, so about seven pa specimens are ongoing testing by the RITM.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** RITM level iyon, sir. So kapag mayroon po silang pancoronavirus, that's the time that you have to send and can be considered as a possible case eventually?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yeah, well, you can say that. It's a possible. But unless confirmed, I advise that you don't say it's a possible case, just person under investigation. That would be the more generic term – safer.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, can you at least give us maybe profile of these 11 people? Are there all Filipinos or ... ?

**SEC. DUQUE:** No, there are all Chinese nationals. Then there were also Brazilians daw, German and an American.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Okay. So Chinese, ilan po ‘yung Chinese, from the eleven?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yeah! Can you just do that? It’s too detailed. Can we give it to you later?

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Okay, sir. Kaunti pa?

**USEC. ROCKY:** Kaunti pa? Mayroon pa tayong lima, Joseph magtatanong. Sa NCoV pa rin muna—

**SEC. DUQUE:** ‘Oy! linom kayo ng tubig ha! You guys especially when you’re working in closed spaces, very low temperature, water is very important. So, if you notice we’ve been drinking water to keep your throat moist. This is not just to tungkol usaping NCoV kundi marami pong mga mikrobyo, marami po tayong... ‘yun na nga, Influenza A, Influenza B viruses, mayroon po tayong Streptococcus pneumonia, mayroon po tayong Haemophilus influenza, ang dami-dami pong mikrobyo dito sa Pilipinas na puwede hong humantong sa mga malubhang komplikasyon. Lalo na po ang mga matatanda, with all due respect to my... to our Sec— she’s very healthy.

By the way, she’s one of the hardest working members of the Cabinet. Truly an exemplar and a source of inspiration.

**SEC. BRIONES:** Let’s not to get sick, you know? Sila mga inuubo—

**SEC. DUQUE:** Bawal siyang magkasakit daw.

**SEC. BRIONES:** napapagod tapos—

**SEC. DUQUE:** So, keep your throat moist.

**SEC. BRIONES:** Sorry, I’m still around.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yes, ma'am! Oho.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Secretary Duque, good morning!

**SEC. DUQUE:** Good morning.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Sir, follow-up lang 'yung kay Joseph. So sir, once na nag-positive doon sa RITM, ipapadala sa Melbourne. How long will it take bago lumabas 'yung result to know whether they are positive or not?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Well, according to the VIDIRL – the Victorian Infectious Diseases International Reference Laboratory - from the time they get officially receive it, it's twenty-four hours. But between the Philippines and Australia, we have some bit of a problem with the courier. So, we're looking at another courier that's going to be more responsive and quicker in delivery of these specimens for confirmation.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Okay. Sir, paano 'yung mga nagkaroon ng direct contact doon sa eleven under investigation?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Well, of course that is what is under our guidelines. Mayroon tayong sinasabing contact tracing, okay? There's a rule of four and we have EV Director whom you can interview later.

So, halimbawa 'yung bata sa Cebu, let's say naging positive 'yun, kunwari lang, halimbawa lang. So, magco-contact tracing ang EV, ang Regional Epidemiology Surveillance Unit team or officers, may rule of four. Four in front, four at the back, four at the side – right, four at the left side. Then they're gonna get the flight manifesto to look at the relative positions of the passengers and then they will get the addresses and then all the pertinent information available and they will work on this to start with their contact tracing activities.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** And sir, given na lahat nung mga under investigation puro mga foreign nationals, will the DoH recommend the cancellation of flights from those countries na positive na dun sa NCoV?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Again, this is one of the issues that we will address together with the Department of Foreign Affairs. So, ayaw ko naman pong magsalita o pangunahan ang Department of Foreign Affairs at hangga't kami po ay magkasundo, magkaroon po ng consensus, at amin pong ihahayag sa atin pong mga media practitioners kung ano po ang mga susunod na hakbang na dapat po nating Isulong para bandang huli po ang kapakanan ng atin pong mga mamamayan ang nangingibabaw sa lahat.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Thank you, sir.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Secretary Duque—

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yes, sir?

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Magandang umaga po! 'Yun hong sinasabing pagkalat ng coronavirus, dahil daw sa umano ay pagkain o paghigop nung sabaw ng paniki ano ho? Sinasang-ayunan n'yo ba ito?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Niluto ba 'yung paniki? Baka naman diretsong sinabawan na lang 'yung buhay na paniki?

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Ang kumakalat ho ngayon sa social media parang...

**SEC. DUQUE:** Hindi naman kilawin?

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Parang 'yung paniki sinakal ho saka isinakay sa sabaw! Pero Secretary ang tanong ho ay ganito: Marami kasing mga kababayan natin ang kumakain pa rin sa mga iba-ibang probinsiya ng mga exotic foods ano ho. Ahas... 'yan! May mga kumakain din ng paniki although niluluto naman nang maayos. Aso... ano ho? Ano ho 'yung mga hayop na hindi dapat kainin at delikado sa kalusugan ng tao?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Marami-rami po ito. Siyempre, 'yun pong mga aso hindi mo alam kung may rabbies 'no, kung may sakit na mga ganun, pusa, of course wala pa akong alam na kumakain ng paniki. Alam ko, ang daga kinakain, 'yung mga sa agricultural lands kinakain. Dapat itigil

po natin ito. Kung hindi naman maiwasan, ‘yung mga ahas mayroon po talagang kinakain, ‘yung mga bayawak, ‘yun pong mga... anong tawag mo dun? Lizard, bayawak, ‘yang mga ‘yan kinakain pero ginagawa adobo ano? Masarap! Nakatikim na ako eh ng... ‘yung bayawak pati itlog, ganun pero lutong-luto.

Talagang kailangan iluto mo dahil sensitive naman itong mga coronaviruses sa init. So, pagka—I think fifty-three degrees centigrade they will be neutralized. So, dapat po ito ay talagang ihanda nang maayos, huwag kakain nang hilaw. Rule number one: Never eat raw meat, okay? Maraming puwedeng sakit pong ibigay ‘yan sa atin.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Okay, so your advice ay huwag kakain kung hangga’t maaari huwag nang kakainin ito?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Oho, kasi ‘yan po marami pong mga sakit ang tao na nagsimula po sa mga hayop. ‘Yung zoonotic transmission kung tawagin. ‘Yan po SARS nanggaling sa civet cats, okay - sa SARS. Ang HIV-AIDS, nanggaling sa mga chimpanzees, okay? Ang ASF, galing po sa baboy. Ang MERS-CoV, originally from the bats tapos pumunta sa intermediate host which is the dromedary camel... dromedary camel ang tawag tapos ‘yung Middle Eastern nationals got exposed to it, very deadly form of coronavirus.

So, dapat tigil po natin ‘yang mga ‘yan. Wala pong kabutihang idudulot ‘yan kung hindi kapahamakan at talaga lalo na ang mga mahal natin sa buhay, ang mga bata kapag sila ay napakain niyan.

‘Yang mga kilawin, tigil na muna natin ‘yang mga ‘yan. ‘Ke kilawin... Oo, ‘yung mga kilawin kasi maraming... maraming mikrobyo din ‘yang mga ‘yan. Pasensya na ha kung may magagalit na naman sa akin bakit ang kilawin. Ang hilig-hilig ng mga Pilipino kainin lalo na may kasamang tagayan ng—sabagay kung ‘yung alcohol ninyo parang ‘yung “Bossing” alcohol siguro.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** May nagpoprotesta rito, Secretary. Ito hong sashimi ho hilaw daw ho ‘yun eh.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Huh?

**USEC. ROCKY:** Sashimi daw po.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** ‘Yun pong sashimi hilaw.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Ah, well... Okay lang naman ‘yung mga sashimi pero dapat sa mga kilalang mga restaurant na ‘ika nga, mayroong reputation ano na talagang malinis sila, maayos. At ‘yan naman ‘yung local... ‘yung mga local... ‘yang mga sanidad, ‘yung mga health... anong tawag mo dun? Mga local health sanitation—sanitary inspectors tinitingnan naman ‘tong mga ito.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Alright. Secretary, last question. ‘Yung labing-isang iniimbestigahan anong nationality po ito?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Karamihan dito mga Chinese, mga iba may kaunting Brazilian, American, German. Four nationalities.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Wala pong Pinoy?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Wala pa naman, awa ng Diyos.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Thank you, sir.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Still, Secretary Duque. Sir, I know you mentioned out of respect for the patients’ privacy you don’t want to divulge the specific hospitals where the eleven persons/patients under investigation are—

**SEC. DUQUE:** But I showed you the regions ‘no?

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Ayun! Sir, Can you tell us the regions? Metro Manila po ba ‘yung eleven?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Can you put it... put it back? It’s... ito, Central Visayas – thirteen... nine... huh?

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Sir, ‘yung eleven po na under investigation?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Ah, hindi ko na masabi kung ano. Naka—they’re dispersed across these regions.

[OFF MIC] Only the regions, sir?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yeah, only the regions?

[OFF MIC] Metro Manila.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Okay, Metro Manila.

[OFF MIC] MIMAROPA

**SEC. DUQUE:** MIMAROPA

[OFF MIC] Northern Mindanao

**SEC. DUQUE:** Northern Mindanao



[OFF MIC] Western Visayas

**SEC. DUQUE:** Western Visayas

[OFF MIC] Eastern Visayas

**SEC. DUQUE:** Eastern Visayas

[OFF MIC] Central Visayas

**SEC. DUQUE:** Central Visayas. Ito 'yung eleven? Okay.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Sir, sorry hindi kasi narinig. Metro Manila, MIMAROPA, Northern Mindanao, Western Visayas, Eastern Visayas, and Central Visayas? Sir, may we ask ilan po 'yung nasa Metro Manila if you can give us that data?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Ayan!

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Ayun... ang laki kasi. *[laughs]* Picturan na lang. Okay. Sir, I know you talked about—

**SEC. DUQUE:** PUI lang itong mga 'to ha!

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Yes. Sir, you mentioned kanina po 'yung infodemic na tinawag ninyo but I just have to ask it because yesterday, I'm sure nakarating na po sa inyo 'yung rumors of a suspected case in a hospital in Binondo; there's also rumors of one in Alabang. Kabilang ba 'yun—

**SEC. DUQUE:** The rumors are careless because they're saying that these are positive daw for coronavirus. So, how can that be positive 'no? Nobody knows because number one, we do not have the capability right now to identify the Novel coronavirus that's why we're sending them for confirmation in Australia because we still don't have that capability.

However, the Japanese counterpart of RITM, the team will arrive on Wednesday to bring in the primer. The primer is a part of the identification. This is like a tool with a reagent to identify whether Novel coronavirus or the suspect coronavirus found here is exactly the same as the one in Wuhan China.

So, nag-originate 'yung primer na ito from China and they gave it out to the different countries.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Hindi naman po kaya, sir, kaya baka nabanggit po 'yung dalawang hospital - 'yung isa sa Alabang, 'yung isa sa Binondo - because is baka nandoon 'yung patients under—mayroon po doong PUI?

**SEC. DUQUE:** PUI. Hindi ko alam kung may P—can you just check?

[OFF MIC] There's one in Alabang but not in Binondo.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Okay. In Alabang?

[OFF MIC] Asian Hospital.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Asian Hospital po sir 'yung nababanggit.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Huwag n'yo na sabihin 'yung ospital mamaya doon kayo dumiretso tapos mananghalian— *[laughs]*

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Okay, sir, Sir, last na lang po from me. Sir you mentioned—

**SEC. DUQUE:** Ano, ano?

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Sir, 'yung data po na binanggit ninyo kanina about the much lower mortality rate of the Novel Coronavirus. Is that—

**SEC. DUQUE:** It's hovering around—We've been tracking this down since about almost two weeks ago. The case fatality rate is hovering around two to four percent. So, 2.5 ngayon 2.7, yesterday was 3.6%. So, hindi naman lumalampas. So it looks like in fact the bigger the number of infected people, mukhang the smaller the case fatality rate. Which is okay but siyempre, as a public health practitioner, any one death is one death too many.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Okay. Sir, but is that all—I mean, stressing that figure is that your way of telling people na huwag masyadong mag-alala because you know, masyado ng—many are concerned about the quick supposedly spread of the virus and yet you're saying hindi naman po ganun kataas 'yung mortality rate. Is that your way of sort of allaying fears na baka—you know, to avoid panic?

**SEC. DUQUE:** You can say that but what I'm just saying is factual, based on the data and I would not want to say anything more than that and I leave it to people like you to analyze this statement. Basta suffice it to say that comparatively speaking... relatively speaking, it's much lower than MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV.

**ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR:** Secretary, kasi maraming kumakalat nga na rumors about iyong sa NCoV. So for the record, para lang hindi na magkaroon ng mga ganoong misinformation, paano ba natin... can you discuss briefly, paano ba natin kinu-confirm iyong cases ng NCoV? Ano iyong process? Halimbawa, may na-observe na symptoms until lumabas iyong test results?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Iyon, mayroon tayo kasi sa Bureau of Quarantine. So lahat ng mga biyaheong papasok, they will be subjected to thermal scan. Kung may lagnat, very courteously, respectfully, you know, set them aside, this patient. And then it will be investigated. They will be asked a set of questions. Their half declaration card will be collected, and then they will be evaluated as to whether they have fever, they have coughs and colds, any history of travel to Wuhan City and any exposure to the four that I have enumerated.

So kung lahat po niyan ay positive, so ang gagawin po, number one ay this will be treated as a person under investigation. Number two, this patient will be isolated in a particular facility, hospital, RITM more often than not. But also, we have already scaled up the preparedness of our regional hospitals so they already have their isolation rooms prepared. They're PPEs prepared. And the laboratory testing capability is also being improved constantly. And then third would be—the third will be to, I said, to isolate and then to collect the specimen – sa ilong, sa lalamunan, padala sa RITM. And then, manage the case accordingly.

Because here, there is no treatment, there is no vaccine, there is no medicine or medication, only supportive treatment. Okay? So ibig sabihin niyan isusuwero ka, bigyan ka ng paracetamol for fever, bigyan ka ng analgesic for pain, etc, a lot of water to... (unclear).

**ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR:** So all results nung patients, all will come from the DOH? Kayo lang po ang—

**SEC. DUQUE:** RITM po.

**ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR:** Sila lang po ang authorized mag-ano, walang iba?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Opo, tama po iyon.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Secretary Duque, could you give us a general update po iyong preparations sa mga hospitals natin in case iyong coronavirus enters the country?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Part of the scaling up, other than the border containment and surveillance measures which the BOQ takes the lead in setting the measures 'no, the scaled up measures; also the hospital preparedness has been worked on in compliance with our interim guidelines on Novel Coronavirus, and this will include the provision of a personal protective equipment: the gloves, the goggles for the eyes, the mask – N95 mask – the head gear, the gowns, etc. Prioritizing, of course, healthcare workers who will be taking care of the suspect individuals or the PUIs. And then, the isolation rooms have been prepared, and identified in the NCR hospitals, in the regional hospitals so everybody is now aligning their various preparations in accordance with our interim guidelines.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Sir, another question. Patanong po ng office. Can you give us an update po doon sa American ng PUI who is reportedly being investigated sa Eastern Visayas, sir?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Samples are with RITM. Wala pang resulta? So we'll await for the result. We will give you daily updates on this. This is part of—our mandate is to give you updates.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Last na lang, sir. A lot of unverified information circulating causing panic, what is your appeal to the public, sir? For example, they don't seem to understand that the Philippines does have coronavirus, just not the 2019 NCoV pero nagpa-panic pa rin, sir, iyong mga tao.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Huwag po tayong mangamba. Maniwala po kayo sa inyong Department of Health na nakikipag-ugnayan oras-oras sa WHO. Mayroon po tayong country representative. Ang pangalan po niya ay si Ginoong Dr. Rabi Abeyasinghe. Ito po ay ang atin pong tulay sa gitna ng DOH at ng ating Chinese Center for Disease Control, and the Chinese Ministry of Health; and also connects us to WHO Geneva. In fact, we're monitoring the two meetings that the WHO executive committee held last week. That's why, ang sabi nga ng WHO, they will reconvene 10 days after. That was Friday, so we will wait whether they will declare that the NCoV in China has reached Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) or rather it is timely to declare a global health emergency with regard to this 'no.

So huwag po kayo basta-basta maniniwala sa inyo pong nababasa sa mga social media nang wala pong malinaw na batayan. Maging mapanuri po tayo. Magtanong po tayo: Validated ba ito? Verified ba ito? Sinasang-ayunan ba ito? Galing ba ito sa DOH?

Hindi po lahat ng mga mababasa natin ay atin pong ... we absorb each one of this and then we start propagating this false news, so this could be more endangering the viral spread of false news can cause a lot more societal injury.

**FRANCIS WAKEFIELD/TRIBUNE:** Good morning, Sec. Itatanong ko lang, sir, na-inform ninyo na ba si Presidente about iyong mga latest update dito sa coronavirus at in case na may ma-confirm or may mga confirmation na mayroon ng coronavirus dito, sir, ano ba iyong parang steps na gagawin ng government? I mean, iyong pag-a-announce ho na kung mayroon na nga. Si Pangulo ho ba ang mag-a-announce na mayroon ng warning dito sa atin, sir?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Hindi naman na kailangan dahil very busy din si Pangulo, marami din siyang mga issues na kaniyang tinutugunan. At iiwanan na lang niya iyan sa kaniyang mga Gabinete, katulad ko bilang magbigay ng official announcements, ano po. So maghintay na lang po tayo for the latest updates. We will make sure that we will provide you verified validated information to the best of our capacity.

**ROSALIE COZ/UNTV:** Good morning po, Secretary Duque. Regarding po sa mga Chinese national na galing mismo ng Wuhan City na nag-arrive pa po sa Aklan last Friday. Ano po ang

masasabi ng DOH, mayroon daw pong 80 plus Chinese nationals na hindi kasamang bumalik sa Wuhan at kung may contact tracing po ba tayo sa kanila?

**SEC.DUQUE:** Most of them, they will be going back to China, to Wuhan.

**ROSALIE COZ/UNTV:** How about the others, sir? Monitored po ba natin iyong movement nila?

**SEC.DUQUE:** Yes, yes. They are all monitored.

**ROSALIE COZ/UNTV:** Okay, sir. Sir, how do we allay concerns, may mga reports po na nagsasabi na iyong mga infected ng Novel Coronavirus, maaari silang makahawa kahit hindi pa po nagma-manifest iyon pong simtomas? So papaano natin ia-address kung halimbawa, 'di ba—

**SEC.DUQUE:** While incubating, that's what you mean.

**ROSALIE COZ/UNTV:** Yes, sir.

**SEC.DUQUE:** While nag-i-incubate sila. Well, mahirap. Pero may mga lumalabas na rin ngayon na while ... kahit na nag-i-incubate, MERS-CoV, puwedeng makalipat na iyong coronavirus, puwedeng makahawa. But we here—ha?

**Q:** [OFF MIC]

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yeah, the 14 days we always make sure iyong part of investigation, the questions we ask the traveler. We ask them, "Have you travelled within 14 days prior to the onset of your symptoms – coughs, cold and fever?" And so, that is the reason. Ang incubation period is between 10 to 14 days.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Iyon pong 11 PUIs, na-flash na po iyong location. So just an assurance from the DOH na baka iyong mga tao kasi iwasan iyong lugar or hospital. What should they do? Hindi po kasi na-flash ninyo kanina iyong PUIs?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Wala naman, kasi nga PUIs they are all isolated now. Okay? So they are not in those areas at the moment. Some of them discharged kung negative, oo iyong mga negative dinischarge na. So, there shouldn't be any cause for alarm, just because we flashed the areas where the PUIs come from, it doesn't mean that those areas are infected with Novel corona virus. Because there is none, we keep harping the fact that there is none, it is still zero as of today.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sec, kasi iyong 11, ang na-imagine ko nasa hospital pa sila, they are not, doon lang sila dinala?

**FROM DOH:** Iyong iba, some of them have been discharged, some of them are still under observation.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Do we know from the 11 kung ilan yung na-discharge?

**FROM DOH:** What we know is that one in Cebu, the five year old kid has been discharged already and there are some had been on the process of being released now. Like the one in Aklan, they will be going home today.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Ah, okay iyong sa Aklan is pauwi na. So, sir iyon yung tatlo di ba?

**FROM DOH:** Yes.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Okay, three pauwi na.

**SEC. DOQUE:** By the way, I recall I spoke with the RITM Executive Director, Dr. Celia Carlos, she told me there are four which they are looking at, they are testing. So, depending on the result of the test, whether the decision to send it to Australia, we will find out as soon as the test results are out.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** This is included in the 11, sir 'no?

**SEC. DOQUE:** Yes, exactly.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, iyong doon sa mga Chinese schools, necessary yung ginawa nila to suspend the classes?

**SEC. DOQUE:** In China?

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Hindi, sir iyong mga Chinese Schools dito?

**SEC. DOQUE:** I really don't have any idea—

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Kasi baka may sumunod na mga schools.

**SEC. DOQUE:** Oo, basta babawian sila sa bandang huli, by extending classes, by doing make up classes according to Secretary Liling; but is so far as the DOH is concerned, we are not aware of the reasons why they decided to suspend classes. There is really no need as of now, there is no indication.

**REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO:** Sir, meron na bang travel advisory or is there a need na maglabas ng recommendation sa DFA for travel warning o pag-iwas muna ng pagbiyahe ng China with this development?

**SEC. DUQUE:** By 1:30, we will convene with the DFA, DOH and other concerned agencies, so we will have a uniformed guideline. We will let you know, as soon as we arrive at a consensus as to how to address... Siguro 1:30 ang meeting namin, siguro lalabas iyong decision namin, about 4 o'clock. DOH na.

**REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO:** Sir, ayaw ko namang sound like discriminating. Pero the Coronavirus na bago iyong Novel ay originated, as reported from Wuhan, China and as expected ang common carrier ay mga Chinese. So, is it a practical advice na for the meantime ay medyo umiwas-iwas, lumayo-layo muna sa mga Chinese?

**SEC. DUQUE:** *[laughs]* No, you cannot do that. That is a violation of fundamental human rights.

**REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO:** Hindi specifically doon sa mga bagong dating na mga Chinese, lalo iyong mga record of traveling from Wuhan.

**SEC. DUQUE:** Hindi, mayroon tayong sistemang nakalagay. So iyong sistema na iyon, hayaan na natin na tumakbo iyong sistema na iyon at gawin iyong nararapat ke Chinese, American, Filipino, Japanese, Korean. Wala po tayong kinikilala o dine-discriminate na mga klaseng mga tao.

**REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO:** Just for the record bago ako patayin ng mga trolls, hindi ako discriminating. Thank you.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Secretary Martin on another topic lang po. Baka mayroon lang pong update makalipas ang ilang araw ng sabihin ng Pangulo na hindi siya a-attend sa US-ASEAN, baka po may update na, baka nagbago na po iyong ihip ng hangin.

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Gustuhin ko man sagutin iyan, Henry, mayroon kayong press briefing mamaya with Secretary Sal Panelo at 12:30. So, I would defer to him.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Opo, pero itong US-ASEAN ano ba ang pakinabang dito ng Pilipinas at anong mawawala kung hindi a-attend ang Pangulo?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Itong US-ASEAN summit is really for building relations, building relationship between the United States of America at itong mga member countries ng Association of South East Asian Nations. So, ano ang pakinabang natin sa United States? Malaki iyong merkado nila. Ano ang pakinabang nila sa atin? Malaki din iyong merkado ng ASEAN, more than 600 million people reside in the ASEAN region. So, if you have good relations then you have good trading, you can have good security, you can have everything na puwedeng pakinabangan ng Amerika sa atin at tayo naman puwedeng mapakinabangan sa kanila.

**HENRY URI/DZRH:** Kung talagang hindi naman pupunta ang ating Pangulo, may mawawala ba sa atin?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Well, kung hindi naman pupunta si Presidente Duterte, I'm sure he will assign someone to go there, usually it's the DFA Secretary.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Secretary Duque quick clarification lang po. Ano po iyong difference between doon sa NCOV related health events na 39 at saka iyong patients under investigation. Ano po iyong difference?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Well, iyong 39 it's more generalized NCOV related events, in other words may suspect, iyong ILI, iyong influenza like illness nagkataon lang sinabi mo NCOV related, kasi iyon yung isyu na namamayagpag NCOV related, okay. So iyong Persons Under investigation, iyon ang unang classification, susunod iyong mga suspect ILI, may symptoms pero wala naman history of travel, pero kailangan mo ding... hindi mo naman puwede i-itsapuwera na ang sila just because walang history of travel, kailangan pangalagaan pa rin sila, di ba. At of course iyong SARI maybe presenting with Severe Acute Respiratory Infection upon arrival; but necessarily due to NCOV, it could be due to host of other viruses or micro organism.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Meaning, sir iyong 39 nagkaroon ng symptoms like lagnat, inuubo, but since wala pong travel history. So lahat po iyon, sir, out of the question na, hindi na sila ino-observe?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Yeah, pinauwi na ang karamihan doon.

**SEC. BRIONES:** I cannot resist responding to the question of age. When I was confirmed—noon, during my confirmation hearing, somebody remarked on my age. And my answer was that, there is no correlation between the state of my knees and the state of my brain. And the quickness of mind or the slowness of mind is not determined by age. If one is born already with a generous amount of matter between your ears, whether you are 18 or you are 80, it's there. But if you are born with very little, then whether you are only three years old, it's not there. So age is not a factor especially at this time.

And I'm sure that—since you are journalists, you are very well-informed, you have read Harari of course. Harari is talking about... ang una niyang inano, iyong homo sapiens, the development of human society. His latest is *Homo Deus*, that man and woman are headed towards immortality. And perhaps, in a matter of 30 years, the life span could increase ... of a human could increase to even 150 years. So by such standards, I'm just a teenager. *[laughter]*

**SEC. DUQUE:** Let me add something to that, okay. My own take on the matter, in support of the wisdom as have been manifested by our dear Secretary Liling. There's a saying that years wrinkle the skin, but to lose enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. So that's probably one of the messages that we would like to impart to you.



**SEC. BRIONES:** Going back to Taal, one major push for us why we are interested in really restoring the classes and so on is because we have this program for Edukalidad. Edukalidad where we are strengthening the K to 12 program because in the last examination, global examination, those who are in the senior high school had higher scores than those who are only junior high school. And then instructions, as well as teachers, and the environment of communication kahit anong tawag diyan – K to 12 infrastructure, teachers and then social environment – importante ang role ninyo especially at this time because the kind of education that you were taught during your time and your kids is rapidly changing. I keep on repeating that when our kids graduate, whatever you have taught them will be nearly irrelevant.

And so again, I'd like to say, I'm the oldest in the Department of Education and in the Cabinet, but I have the youngest ideas. Thank you.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Thank you, Secretary Briones. Permission lang po, may habol muna tayong question. May time pa naman po tayo na konti, so i-accommodate natin si Ina.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILS:** Hi, ma'am. Ma'am, your slide earlier said na, iyon nga, you want classes to resume on February 3. Is that a clear directive for all schools na natigil po iyong classes because of the Taal Volcano?

**SEC. BRIONES:** Well, the final decisions will be that of the local governments. But Cavite already said all classes restored. Batangas already said, with the exception of Laurel and Agoncillo, classes will also be restored. And we are very happy about this.

But this should not lull as into complacency. Kasi pagkatapos ng isang crisis, seemingly nare-resolve, we move on to the next crisis and get very excited about it. But even Governor Mandanas says, Phivolcs says that this could only be a possible lull. And we are given the opportunity this time now for the local governments to build their own evacuation center. This is the time to do it. This is the time to prepare facilities and strengthen our capacity to deal with not only health disasters but also natural disasters. This is a break, and such a break we should take advantage of.

We had a series of earthquakes in Mindanao, and then you also had in Luzon, and now we have Taal and its bad moods, and it's a reminder. It's not necessarily, totally bad news. There is good news in reminders. There is good news in being alert. And as far as health issues are concerned, prevention, of course, is the best response to any health threat. Or whatever threat there is, prevention is always useful. Thank you.

**INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHILS:** Okay. Ma'am, you mentioned may more than 300 schools pa rin that are still being used as evacuation centers. Iyong mga estudyante po from these schools, ano po ang aasahan nila sa February 3? Could some of them already also resume their classes, ano po ang aasahan nila?

**SEC. BRIONES:** Yes, yes, yes. Kasi may mandate na from the local governments. So I believe, nakita naman ninyo, you reported that on TV, ‘Evacuees were returning already to their homes.’ And besides, kaya nga nag-ano kami ng space na February 3 kasi whenever our schools are retrieved from being evacuation centers or go back as schools, there is usually a lot of work to be done in terms of facilities, in terms of school rooms, in terms of cleanliness, hygiene, etc. etc. And with the warnings also of the Department of Health, we have to be extra careful. Kaya sabi namin, maximum February 3. Pero the teachers will already started reporting. And besides, those who evacuated were advised that they should go to the nearest public school and continue their classes, and they may decide to stay on because I would assume that not all will return – some will stay on where perhaps they feel it is safer.

You will recall that the location of Taal was moved several times since the 18<sup>th</sup> century because of the Taal incidents. So you might have populations, you might have families who will opt not to return. This has happened in Marawi. All our provinces all over the country have Marawi communities as a result of the incident how many years ago. So we expect that that will also happen.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Thank you, Secretary Briones. Secretary Duque?

**SEC. DUQUE:** Just very quickly. I defer to the words of wisdom of Secretary Briones and I see no need to say anything more. Same for what I have already said, let us not be party to the viral spread of infodemic - to the viral spread of false, fake news as this will not do any good to the issues that we all ought to come together to address in the most objective manner, evidence-based and science-based. Thank you.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Secretary Andanar?

**SEC. ANDANAR:** Thank you so much for giving us your time, Ma’am Liling Briones, Secretary of DepEd. Thank you also, Secretary Duque, for accommodating our invitation; and to the members of the Malacañang press.

We will have Laging Handa when there are emergency, calamities or other crisis here at the press briefing room, Mondays. But let’s pray na wala ng mga crisis, wala ng mga trahedya at emergencies na kakailanganin natin ang Laging Handa. Maraming salamat po.

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