

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

**ECONOMIC BRIEFING WITH BIR ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ELENITA B. QUIMOSING,
BIR HEAD REVENUE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT ROSARIO M. PADILLA
AND DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE ASSISTANT SECRETARY TONY LAMBINO
MARCH 11, 2020 (11:45 A.M. – 12:24 P.M.)**

USEC. ROCKY IGNACIO: Good morning, MPC. Welcome sa ating weekly Economic Briefing. Kasama na natin, Assistant Secretary Tony Lambino.

ASEC. LAMBINO: Salamat po, Usec. Rocky. Pagbati po sa inyong lahat at welcome sa ating weekly Economic Press Briefing co-hosted by the Economic Development Cluster at ng PCOO.

Pinalakas ng Comprehensive Tax Reform Program o CTRP ang tax collection efforts ng pamahalaan. Ilan sa mga naisabatas ng panukala sa ilalim ng CTRP ay ang Tax Reform for Acceleration and Inclusion Law, pagpapataas ng tobacco at alcohol excise taxes at ang Tax Amnesty Act of 2019.

Bukod sa pagpapalakas ng koleksiyon sa buwis, layunin din ng TRAIN Law na gawing mas simple, patas at efficient ang tax system ng bansa. Pinababa nito ang personal income tax rates para sa siyamnapu't siyam na porsiyento ng ating Filipino wage earners. Malaking tulong ang sin taxes para mapondohan ang implementasyon ng Universal Healthcare Law.

Naisabatas naman noong taong 2019 ang Tax Amnesty Act. Nagbigay ito ng pagkakataon sa mga delinquent tax payers na makapagbayad ng utang na buwis at malinis ang record nila sa BIR. Tumaas rin ang koleksiyon ng BIR sa mas pinaigting na tax enforcement measures nito gaya ng pagpapahigpit ng “Oplan Kandado” para sa mga negosyong hindi nagbabayad ng tamang buwis at pagpapatupad ng Fuel Marking Program at iba pang anti-smuggling efforts kasama ang Bureau of Customs.

Inaasahang makakatulong ang kita sa buwis para sa patuloy na pagpapatupad ng mga infrastructure, health, education at iba pang social programs ng administrasyong Duterte para sa lahat ng Pilipino.

Ngayong umaga, humihingi po kami ng tulong sa MPC na ipaalala sa ating mga kababayan na tax filing season ngayon dahil ang dami po nating iniisip sa panahong ito. Makakasama natin sina Assistant Commissioner Elenita B. Quimosing at Head Revenue Executive Assistant

Rosario M. Padilla ng Bureau of Internal Revenue upang magbigay ng updates tungkol sa tax collection efforts at accomplishments ng BIR nitong nakaraang taon, at sa papalapit na deadline ng tax amnesty filing at para sa lahat ng filing kasama na rin ang online filing and payment options para makatulong sa social distancing ngayong tax filing season.

Assistant Commissioner Quimosing?

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: [OFF MIC - *Iyon pong... ikaw muna.*]

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT PADILLA: Good morning everybody. Natutuwa kaming nandito, salamat po. Bago tayo mag-start on our ... friendly reminders para sa filing season. We are proud to announce that the BIR hit the trillion mark last 2019. We were able to collect P2,186,000,000. So iyon po ay pasok na pasok sa inaasahan na makukolekta ng gobyerno para punan iyong government expenditures.

For this year, we would like to remind everybody na ang atin pong deadline to file our annual income tax return is fast approaching – ito po ay sa April 15, 2020. We remind everybody to pay on time, file on time para po ma-avoid natin ang inconvenience ng siksikan sa pila and, of course, to avoid payment of surcharge of 25% for late filing and then an interest at 12%.

Para po sa mga gustong mag-file, we have our ... now, ang pinakabago namin na gustong i-announce at gustong ipaalam sa lahat para sa sinabi nga ni Asec. na social distancing, we now have our offline eBIRForms Package. This package is a home-based application that offers convenience to taxpayers and ensures correct computation of tax dues. So in the convenience of your home, you can file your income tax returns.

Tapos hindi na rin po natin kinakailangan na pumunta at makipila sa mga bangko. You can actually pay your tax dues using different payment channels which are available online. We have now partnered with PayMaya, GCash, LBP LinkBiz with the ATM and debit cards, the DBP Tax Online Credit/ATM/debit cards or the eFPS for eFPS filers. So lahat nito, hindi na po natin sila kinakailangan pang papuntahin ang ating mga taxpayers at pumila sa bangko or makipagsalamuha sa mga collection agents. So whether it's big or small, puwede na po tayong magbayad in the convenience of wherever you are convenient. So kung nasaan ka, doon ka magbayad using your app.

Gusto rin naming i-announce that we have our Tax Filing Assistance Centers which will be setup starting March 28, 2020 sa lahat po ng Revenue District Offices to assist all taxpayers relative to electronic filing and payment inquiries. So dahil nga bago ito, BIR people will be there to assist you para po makapag-online kung hindi po kayo marunong pang mag-online file and pay.

In addition, iyong aming National Training Center sa BIR main grounds will also be open during the period March 28 to April 15, including Saturdays, from 8 to 5 P.M. para po mag-receive ng tax returns para sa lahat ng taxpayers registered within Caloocan, Manila, Quezon City, East NCR, Makati City and South NCR.

And also, we have an agreement with the banks through the BSP na ang atin pong mga authorized agent banks will extend their banking hours until 5 P.M. for the period of April 1 to 15 in line with the tax filing season. They are also open on the said two consecutive Saturdays to accept tax payments within their areas of jurisdiction.

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: I'm going to give you updates on the tax amnesty, okay.

So sa tax amnesty po, as of January 31, 2020, we have already collected 3.2 billion pesos 'no, na ito po iyong nakikita ninyo, iyong date down 'no. From tax amnesty on delinquencies, mayroon po tayong 2,799 filers na nagbayad ng amnesty amount of 2.2 billion. And sa estate tax naman po, amnesty, 13,522 ang ating filers at ang amount ng kanilang binayad as amnesty is 958 million. For a grand total of 3.2 billion pesos, out of the 16,321 filers. Okay.

So ang delinquency po, amnesty on delinquencies doon sa mga may mga utang na delinquent na, ang deadline po niyan is April 23, 2020. So after iyong deadline ng filing which is April 15, ang deadline naman for the filing and availing of the tax amnesty on delinquencies is April 23, 2020.

Iyon naman pong amnesty on estate tax, doon sa mga naiwanan na ari-arian ng mga namatay nating ninuno or parents or whatever, ang deadline po noon is next year pa po, sa June 14, 2021. Kasi iyon pong amnesty na estate ay binigyan tayo under the law ng two years within which to avail. Okay.

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: And then available po lahat ng forms na kailangan natin para tayo mag-avail ng tax amnesty. Actually, nandoon po iyon sa aming website. Okay, you can download it from our website, iyong lahat na kailangan ninyong forms. Nandiyan din po nakalagay ang forms po na kailangan for tax amnesty on delinquency is form 2118-DA, and for the estate tax amnesty is form 2118-EA. So mayroon din po tayong mga flyers na ginawa para po doon sa estate tax amnesty, as well as the tax on delinquencies na makikita n'yo po iyong sample niya nandito. Nandoon din po iyan sa aming website sa bir.gov.ph.

So anything about tax amnesty, may icon po kami doon sa aming website, icon ng tax amnesty. Pag-click n'yo po noon, lahat, anything about tax amnesty nandoon po, pati mga

flyers, as well as the posters, as well as all the revenues issuances regarding tax amnesty. Thank you.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Ma'am, sa context lang po ng COVID 'no. So siyempre inaasahan ninyo na siksikan na naman iyan. First off, you're actually encouraging people to pay online, correct?

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT PADILLA AND ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: Yes.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Can you just illustrate po iyong procedure because you mentioned EDIR, is it Echo, Delta, India, Romeo iyong offline na home-based payment?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: eBIRForms.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: eBIR, okay. Can you illustrate, ma'am, for the information of the public kung papano iyon? If maybe the first we are going to pay online, the steps?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Pupunta lang po kayo doon sa may website ng BIR, that's at www.bir.gov.ph. Tapos you go to the forms, tapos makikita mo iyong mga forms doon. So most likely, you will go to the 1700 series, ito iyong para sa income tax returns and then pag-click mo noon, pipili ka kung ano iyong form. So the eBIRForms Package, the beauty of it is you can actually download it, work on it at your convenience and then later go back to upload it.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: What do you mean upload? I mean, physically write on the paper, print it, write on it—

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: No.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Ah, it's just a—

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Kailangan ano pa rin.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay, and then?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Para hindi mo siya ano... tapos you go online again.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: What do you mean, online where?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: To upload, para i-file mo siya.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay, and then the payment?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: And then on the payment, kapag using the eBIRForms, kasi decoupled ito; hindi siya naka-diretso na you proceed to payment. So magpo-proceed to payment ka, but actually you will be going to the system of our partner financial institutions. So you go there, it's either you choose PayMaya—

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Ibig sabihin, ma'am—

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: You choose GCash.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So may link po from the document itself?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Yes po.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay, and then that's the way to pay, okay. Ma'am, papaano kung halimbawa dumami pa rin and maybe not a lot of people may have computers and maybe more comfortable them filing. Are you factoring in iyong the way you set up your offices in such a way that it's going to be a little safer?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Of course.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: How?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Actually that is why nag-put up kami ng additional assistance, tax filing assistance centers para hindi sila magkumpulan sa isang lugar lang. So, mayroon kami noong mga nasa district office, mayroong mga nasa... nandoon sa main office. The National Training Center is a big area. Tapos we also invited our partner financial institutions to put up the kiosk doon sa mga district offices natin to assist, para—siyempre hindi natin aasahan iyan, maybe not even with the BIR people, baka hindi nga pa kabisado on how to make the payments.

So people will be there to assist them. So as to the pila, that is why we encourage everyone now to please avoid the rush hour ng ano... iyong you know, kasi mahilig tayo na—

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Last minute.

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Last minute pa, 15 pa naman eh, isang buwan pa iyan. Parang isang ano lang, parang nandiyan na siya nang hindi mo namalayan. Time flies and so we encourage you to please... kung kunwari you would like to use the facilities online, puwede na kayong mag-practice, ano naman iyan eh ... 'di ba you download and then you practice the form na mag-fill out ng forms, ganoon. So para hindi tayo nata-traffic, kumbaga.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So after they pay sa... iyong mga partner agencies ninyo, of course mayroon silang document na mare-receive that they've actually paid in. Then you can actually show that as a receipt, right?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: You'll actually receive an e-mail.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Ah okay, as a receipt.

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: As a receipt.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Kasi baka mamaya biglang habulin. Ma'am, ano lang, speak as a government employee 'no. Because may proposal po to implement a 4-day work week, statement from Secretary Nograles and I think DOLE as I understand. Will that be very helpful for you? Would you prefer a 4-day work week given iyong threat ng COVID? I mean as a mother, as an employee.

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Of course, the services na kinakailangan naming gawin at saka iyong mga functions na kailangan naming i-perform cannot be done in a 4-day work week period. But as an individual, if we could make the proper arrangement so that each employee will have access to that 4-day work week while not disrupting the 5-day service period that's required from our agency, we will gladly support that.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: But how is it going to disrupt the system—I mean, not the system but the way you do things at BIR? Kulang talaga iyong four days ninyo, kung halimbawa four days siya?

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: Puwede naman siguro by scheduling na in such a way na five days. Five days pa rin, the personnel will be ... kung if ever, shifting na let say, for example lang ha, Monday to Thursday iyong iba; others will be, for example, Tuesdays to Fridays, you know. Because we cannot afford naman din because our mandate is really collection of taxes.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Correct.

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: And you know very well naman na importante iyan sa ating... not only for the government but also for everybody because diyan natin kinukuha iyong mga kailangan natin for the Build, Build, Build at saka doon mga kailangan natin din sa mga health centers natin. So, it's really—

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Pero paano po kayo mahihirapan with four days?

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: Did we say mahihirapan kami?

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: I mean, medyo may adjustments kaunti.

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: Of course.

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: The commerce, iyong mga private companies, they will continue working maybe six days a week pa rin, 'di ba. So iyong dalawang araw na mahuhuli kami, mabi-behind kami sa pag-monitor sa activities nila, is very big!

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Maiipunan kayo ng trabaho.

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: Opo. Hindi lang maiipunan ng trabaho, but we need to monitor them closely din.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ ABS-CBN: Hi, ma'am. Ma'am, is the BIR entertaining the possibility of maybe extending the April 25 deadline because of the coronavirus particularly on the areas kung saan confirmed po iyong local transmission of the virus?

ASST. COMMISSIONER QUIMOSING: I think the deadline is April 15.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ ABS-CBN: Sorry, April 15, yeah.

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: That is why nga we are making the campaign now to please file early because as of now, there are no pronouncements of any extension. So the deadline stays at April 15, 2020, ma'am.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ ABS-CBN: But it could be ... puwede po siyang isa din po sa mga puwede nating pag-isipan or to take into consideration just in case the situation worsens in the next few days or weeks po?

EXEC. ASSISTANT PADILLA: For now, we encourage people to make use of the online facilities. So we don't see any need to extend as of the moment. But of course kung kinakailangan talaga, we are not in the position to say we are or we are not extending. If it's necessary, then it will be considered

PIA GUTIERREZ/ ABS-CBN: Ma'am, doon sa online payment natin. Ilang percent po ng mga taxpayers ang ini-expect po natin that could possibly avail of the online services? Do we see this as more or less mas ma-o-overtake niya iyong mga physical filers as of this moment, especially with the coronavirus concerns.

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: So noong last year, medyo mababa pa iyong aming mga availers ng ano but kasi but we have to take into consideration kasi last year, we only have the eFPS na ano ... but considering na ano—among tawag dito, eFPS lang ito, may mga certain taxpayers who are mandated. It's not available sa lahat ng tao iyan and lahat ng taxpayer. But for now with the eFPS, availability of the eFPS and the eBIR forms, packages are available for any taxpayer who would like to file online so we expect na we will be having lesser over-the-counter filing and payment.

ASST. COMM. QUIMOSING: And in addition, because of our partnership with PayMaya, with GCash and also with the debit and credit cards and also, hindi pa rin naman mawawala iyong pagpunta ng taxpayer doon mismo sa bangko to pay. So if they like, na hindi sila makapag-online payment, they can always go to the bank and pay doon sa mga authorized agent banks namin.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Good morning po, ma'am. Mag-i-inquire lang po ako. May napansin na po ba iyong BIR na parang impact po ng COVID-19 pagdating po sa collection po ng tax revenues for January and February?

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: Wala pa po.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Bale magkano po iyong tax collection nila for ... iyong pinaka-latest po as of now?

USEC. IGNACIO: Sige ma'am, habang hinahanap ninyo, Alvin muna. Alvin, question?

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Ma'am Rosario Padilla. Ma'am, nabanggit ninyo po kanina na wala nang extension as of now. Pero sa mga nakaraang taon, nagkakaroon din tayo ng extension ng payment ng taxes, ano iyong mga ikinunsider ninyo for extension?

ASST. COMM. QUIMOSING: Mayroon ho ba? Kasi last year wala rin po kaming extension; the other years, wala rin po! Hindi rin po talaga ini-encourage kasi ng commissioners, even iyong commissioner namin before, ang mag-extend ng deadline for filing.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Pero ano iyong pupuwedeng mai-consider natin for an extension? COVID-19?

ASST. COMM. QUIMOSING: Hindi ko po masagot ngayon kasi depende po. Siguro po ... kaya nga inaano na namin ngayon pa lang na mag-file na tayo nang maaga. Huwag na po nating hintayin iyong April 15, kasi obligasyon naman po talaga natin na mag-file tayo at magbayad ng taxes.

JINKY BATICADOS/IBC: Hi ma'am. Ma'am, sorry ma'am, i-follow up ko lang iyong kay Alvin, kasi sabi ninyo po, wala tayong extension. Clarification: So kung wala po tayong extension, ano po iyong 25 percent late filing charge natin?

ASST. COMM. QUIMOSING: Ano pa iyan, surcharge for late filing and late payment. Kapag po nag-file ka after the deadline which is April 15, ang surcharge whether one day ka lang na late or two days or a year – 25% po, fixed iyan; plus 12% interest per annum. So iyong 12% percent, depende iyan sa number of days kang ma-late. So iyon po.

JINKY BATICADOS/IBC: Kasi to clarify po, kung mayroon tayong extension, wala kang babayaran?

ASST. COMM. QUIMOSING: No, no. Iyon pong basic—

JINKY BATICADOS/IBC: No, no, no, ma'am. What I mean is, kapag wala po tayong extension kasi—I mean, kapag may extension po pala tayo, wala tayong babayaran, of course.

ASST. COMM. QUIMOSING: Yes po, of course. Depende po kung mag-announce ng extension ang DOF o ang Commissioner, then we're going to have that extension. At iyong extension na iyon ang magiging basis sa hindi pag-impose ng penalties. But after that extension, then we impose penalties po.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Going back lang po doon sa previous question ko, kung ilan po iyong latest po na tax collection ng BIR?

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: As of March 10, that's today—yesterday pala, 11 pala today. As of March 10, in million pesos, ang total collection of the BIR is at 332538, in million pesos.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Mas malaki po ba ito or mas mababa compared to—

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: Mas malaki siya compared sa 2019, that's only at 320.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Sa ngayon po, wala pa pong napu-project iyong BIR na possible impact ng COVID-19 pagdating sa target collection po ng agency nila this year? Kung mayroon po bang impact?

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: Wala pa po.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Hindi, kung may projection po ba?

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: May projection? Wala pa po akong alam na pinag-uusapan as to the ano. But of course, these things will be considered as to the ano ... kasi sa ngayon ay we are focusing on how to make it easier in relation to COVID. How to make it easier and mas konbenyente [convenient] for the taxpayers to be filing wherever they are – so iyon po aming pinag-focus ngayon. So before we get into the analysis on the impact, we have to make it accessible to the taxpayers, iyong filing and payment po.

SAM MEDENILLA/BUSINESS MIRROR: Last na lang po. Iku-consider po ba ng BIR iyong pagpu-provide ng possible aid sa mga companies kasi nga baka mahirapan magbayad ng tax because of COVID-19? Mayroon po ba kayong iku-consider na possible tax breaks?

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: Ang pagbibigay kasi ng tax breaks, hindi po siya function of the BIR. The exemptions at saka itong mga amnesty, anything pertaining sa tax po, nag-o-originate po iyan sa Congress. So amin po, we are implementing agency. So kung ano po ang sasabihin sa amin, siya po naming ginagawa. So kung ano ... not for us.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI: Good morning. Ma'am, could you give us an update on the tax collection on POGOs, because there was an earlier report that some 15 billion was not collected last year from these operations?

EXEC. ASST. PADILLA: Pertaining to POGO, ito po ay hina-handle ng isang ... mayroon po kaming task force and since this is being investigated on a continuing basis, mayroon po kaming special team to answer questions pertaining to POGO po. Parang every question pertaining to POGO will be coursed through the DOF.

ASEC. LAMBINO: Magandang umaga po ulit. Ang collection po natin sa POGO as of 2019, end of 2019 for that year was 6.4 billion pesos – iyan po ay 169% higher than that year prior. Iyong 50 billion po ay nabanggit po iyan sa isang hearing, it was a very rough estimate that was made as the hearing was occurring. So hindi pa po iyan iyong ating final number 'no. It was a rough estimate generated during the hearing.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI: So ano po, sir, iyong final number?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Well, ang estimate talaga natin kasi pagdating sa POGO is we should get to around two billion pesos a month 'no, from withholding taxes. In addition, the DoF fully supports the efforts of Congress to increase taxes on POGOs. These are the POGO operators including service providers. In fact, I think one of the leading versions of legislation finile po iyan ni Congressman Joey Salceda, iyong chairman ng Ways and Means Committee, ang gusto po niyang gawin ay gawing malinaw na iyong franchise tax na five percent ay kailangan talagang bayaran kasi po may mga POGO na nagsasabi dahil offshore sila ay hindi po sila dapat patawan noong five percent franchise tax.

Ang gusto pong linawin doon sa batas na—o doon sa Bill na isinusulong ni Congressman Salceda ay gawing malinaw na they did really do owe us that five percent franchise tax dahil nag-register po sila sa PAGCOR. By virtue of the registration with PAGCOR, that means they have operations here in the Philippines.

Pangalawa, mayroon pong mga POGO operators na nandito sa Pilipinas and nakita naman po natin na si DepCom Guballa ay nag-lead ng isang operation para isara ang isang POGO operator na hindi po nagbabayad ng five percent franchise tax and iyong estimate po natin diyan may utang po sila sa atin na P114 million.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/ PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Sir, kung base on the two billion per month estimate and may na-collect tayong six billion, so mga eighteen billion pa ang deficiency more or less?

ASEC. LAMBINO: On the estimate that we made on the withholding, yes. And in fact this year, mas malaki na po ang collection na nagagawa natin from POGO from withholding, sa first two months pa lang.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/ PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Sir, ano po iyong actions that we're doing to collect this deficiency, iyong mga eighteen billion more or less?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Well, tuloy-tuloy po ang operations ng Task Force POGO, tuluy-tuloy po ang pagsara ng mga hindi nagbabayad ng tamang buwis at nandiyan din po ang paglilinis ng mga listahan dahil iyong mga listahan dati bago po na-form itong task force ni Secretary Dominguez ay hindi pa po pinagbangga. So, ngayon dahil po may task force, nag-uusap-usap na po ang mga ahensya na relevant po dito sa pagbantay sa mga POGO operators and service providers.

That is why we know now, based on the best information that we have available, kung ano po iyong—ilan po ang nandito at ano po iyong tax due.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/ PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Sir, last na lang. You mentioned, sir, this year there has been an improvement in collection. Could you tell us the figures?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Yes. Actually, we'll—I'll get back to you on the actual figure. It was reported in a recent interagency meeting, the January – February figures. I'll get that number to you.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/ PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Thank you.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Kay Asec. Lambino. Sir, in connection pa rin doon sa POGO. Sir, ano na po iyong status natin to investigate iyong money laundering allegations linked to

POGOs and what will happen to all these efforts now that President Duterte made a sweeping declaration yesterday that POGOs are clean?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Well, ang nangyari po kasi mayroon po tayong nakita na mga pera na pumapasok, ‘no? That was with regard to foreign currencies coming into the country being brought in by both Filipinos and foreign nationals ‘no, na dini-declare nila or iyong iba hindi nag-declare at nahuli kaya na-seized. Iyong mga nag-declare ay hindi naman kasi—wala pa tayong batas na nagsasabi na illegal or kailangan lagyan ng maraming strict monitoring measures, ‘no. But that being the case, ang ginawa pa rin natin ay ini-report po ito sa Anti-Money Laundering Council.

What we are hoping to do now is to really advocate for the passage of a law that will amend the AMLA rules, so that we have stronger monitoring and enforcement tools. Kasama po diyan hindi lang po iyong sa money laundering pati po iyong lifting of absolute bank secrecy, pati po iyong automatic exchange of information with other jurisdictions ‘no, iyong iba pong mga bansa, mga tax jurisdictions. Iyan po ay isang package ngayon na gusto talaga nating i-advocate. At noong ini-report po ito ni Secretary Dominguez kay Pangulong Duterte, the President agreed that these are priority measures.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, in connection with the declaration of President Duterte, what he said—

ASEC. LAMBINO: I think the POGO and the money coming in, the direct link between them is to be established still. Kasi iyong pera na pumasok, there were some names that were mentioned ‘no, and it just so happened na medyo sabay yata iyong balita about the closure of the POGO operator pero kuwan po... the dots have to be connected and in order to connect all of these dots we need to amend those laws and we need to lift absolute bank secrecy and institutionalize the automatic exchange of information.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, as far as the DoF is concerned, don’t you think na iyong sinabi President Duterte clearing POGO of all of these allegations are premature considering, you said, that you have still to establish any link doon sa mga pinapasok na pera?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Hindi ko po narinig iyong statement ng Pangulo. We will, of course, study it very carefully and follow all Presidential directives.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Alright. Thank you, sir.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, I’m just curious. How many POGO companies do we have and how many employees do they employ?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Plus or minus a few, the operators are around sixty; and plus or minus a few, the service providers are around two hundred plus.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Ito iyong mga nagbibigay ng tao?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Ito iyong nagbibigay ng mga technical support or ng mga call center-type functions sa mga operators. So—

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Employees?

ASEC. LAMBINO: —iyong listahan, there were several estimates that came out. The one that we work with is more or less a hundred twenty thousand.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: And the nationality, mostly Chinese?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Mostly Chinese, foreign nationals.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: And the sixty are operating mostly in Metro Manila or—

ASEC. LAMBINO: No, most are offshore. Most of the sixty are actually offshore with local— with service providers that are based in the Philippines.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay.

ASEC. LAMBINO: Kaya nga iyong isinara po ni DepCom Guballa and Task Force POGO is isa doon sa mga iilan na may opisina dito sa Pilipinas. But by virtue of registering with PAGCOR, BIR considers them—

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: [OFF MIC]

ASEC. LAMBINO: Yeah, as having operations here in the Philippines and therefore, they should be paying the five percent franchise tax.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay.

ASEC. LAMBINO: Iyong maganda nga doon sa panukalang batas ni Congressman Selceda ay nilililaw iyon, wala ng doubt na they owe the five percent franchise tax.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: On top of course of the withholding taxes and all?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Uhm.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay. Thank you, sir.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Kay Asec. Lambino. Sir, just to clarify, you've mentioned that President Duterte has agreed to make some measures urgent—

ASEC. LAMBINO: Yes, that's correct.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Paki clarify lang, sir, ano-anong mga laws or bills ang—ito?

ASEC. LAMBINO: There are a couple of sets of bills. Iyong isa sa strengthening the Anti-Money Laundering regulations—regime here in the Philippines and the second is the lifting of absolute bank secrecy and the automatic exchange of information with other tax jurisdictions, so other countries in other words.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: So, three – three measures?

ASEC. LAMBINO: There are three pieces to that that we are advocating. It could happen that they all got passed in one law or in complimentary laws.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: So, we'll be expecting the President to release a letter to Congress?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Well, the certificate of urgency comes when there's actually a committee report already.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Okay.

ASEC. LAMBINO: Committee report number, so we look forward to working with Congress in making this high priority para po ma-address natin itong mga issues na ito.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Alright. Thank you, sir.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Sir, clarify ko lang. While we're waiting for the law of Congressman Salceda on the five percent franchise tax, we're not collecting this—imposing this amount on POGOs?

ASEC. LAMBINO: No, they are being ask to pay this. In fact, one of the POGO operators that actually does have a physical presence was closed by the POGO Task Force, because they refuse to pay the five percent franchise tax and they are being made to pay P114 million.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: And the others sir, is there a way we can collect this from them or impose this on them?

ASEC. LAMBINO: Well, the ones that are offshore, they're challenging that and that's why the law is important and we hope that Congress can pass that law as soon as possible.

MPC: [OFF MIC]

ASEC. LAMBINO: Yeah, because they registered with PAGCOR.

USEC. ROCKY: Questions, MPC? No more? Ikaw, Joseph? Okay. Thank you, MPC. Thank you, Assistant Commissioner Quimosing, Ma'am Padilla and Asec. Lambino. Thank you, MPC!

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