

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE
October 13, 2020 (11:58 A.M. – 1:03 P.M.)

SEC. ROQUE: Magandang tanghali, Pilipinas.

Ipinatawag po ng ating Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte si Congressman Alan Peter Cayetano at Congressman Lord Allan Velasco para sa isang pagpupulong ngayong araw po, alas dose y media 'no. Ang agenda po: Pag-uusapan po nila kung paano po maipapasa ang national budget sa lalong mabilis na panahon.

Dahil nga po sa mga pangyayari sa Kamara de Representante, kung hindi po magkakaroon ng isang kasunduan para maipasa ang national budget ay baka po maantala ang pagsasabatas nitong anti-COVID-19 budget ng ating Presidente. Ito po ay magaganap dito po sa Malacañang.

Now, kahapon po ay nagkaroon po tayo ng 48th Cabinet meeting 'no na ginanap po sa Heroes Hall sa Malacañang. Ito po ang kauna-unahang full Cabinet meeting matapos ang pitong buwan dahil ang huling Cabinet meeting po ay noong buwan pa ng Marso.

Now, gaya ng aking sinabi po noong mga nakalipas na araw, tumutok po ang pagmi-meeting kung paano po mabuhay muli ang ekonomiya dahil nga po sa pandemya ng COVID-19. At kahapon po, inaprubahan po ng Gabinete ang lahat ng rekomendasyon ng economic cluster bagama't ang report po ay ginawa ni NEDA Acting Secretary Karl Chua.

Ano ba ho itong mga bagay-bagay na ito? Pero bago po iyon, sang-ayon po kasi sa latest survey ng Pulse Asia ay marami na pong mga senyales na ang public attention ay nakatutok na po sa mga economic concerns. Thirty-nine percent po ang nagsabi na kailangang balansehin ang gobyerno ang COVID at ang ekonomiya, samantalang 20% naman po ang nagsabi na kailangang pagtuunan ng pansin ang pagbubukas ng ekonomiya.

Kaugnay nito, inaprubahan ng Gabinete ang pagkakaroon ng priority areas para ma-manage ang COVID-19 cases. Paano ipatutupad po ito? Ipatutupad ang prevent, detect, isolate, treat and recover or PDITR sa pamamagitan ng teknolohiya at disiplina; i-improve ang hospital care capacity para manatiling below 70% po ang critical care; buksan ang pampublikong transportasyon para magkaroon ng sapat na bilang.

Pag-usapan natin saglit ang pampublikong transportasyon: Magsimula sa pagkakaroon ng one-seat apart at paunti-unting pataasin ang seating capacity o payagan na makaupo nang magkatabi basta may plastic barrier.

Uulitin ko po: Inaprubahan po ng Gabinete na sa pampublikong transportasyon, one-seat apart na po ang distansiya.

Now, papataasin din po ang rail capacity ng tatlumpu hanggang limampung porsiyento 'no. Patataasin po ang bilang ng mga provincial buses, motorcycle taxis, shuttles at TNVS. Pabibilisin po ang paggamit ng service contracting ng mga bus at mga dyip.

Mahigpit na ipatutupad po ang pitong utos o seven commandments para sa lahat ng pampublikong transportasyon. Siyempre po, habang tayo ay nag-e-every other seat, kinakailangan naman ay sumunod din tayo dito sa mga seven commandments na ito.

At ano ba ho itong mga seven commandments na ito? Unang-una, iyong pagsusuot po ng facemasks; iyong pagsusuot po ng face shield; bawal ang usapan; bawal po ang pagkain; kinakailangan magkaroon ng sapat na ventilation; kinakailangan po mayroong frequent and proper disinfection; at kinakailangan po, walang pasaherong symptomatic – so dapat po bago pumasok ay tsinitsek na po na walang symptoms ang mga pasahero; at kinakailangan po iyong appropriate physical distancing – one-seat apart.

Now, kasama rin po sa priority areas para ma-manage ang COVID-19 cases ay pagkunsidera sa mga incremental opening ng mga negosyo sa pamamagitan ng: Mas maikling curfew hours at mas maraming work shifts para magkaroon nang mas maraming manggagawa at mamimili; ang pagtaas ng business capacity galing po sa 75 to 100 percent; ang pagpayag sa paanti-unting pagtaas ng age group na lumabas, halimbawa, mula kinse anyos hanggang sisenta y singko.

Sa panig naman ng IATF, ang pagkunsidera sa pagtaas ng quarantine level bilang last resort 'no. Kung halimbawang tumataas ang kaso ng COVID, panatilihin ang quarantine level at magpatupad nang mas mahigpit na protocols at more localized quarantine.

Samantala, sa IATF, DOH, DILG at PCOO, kinakailangan nilang paigtingin ang communication campaign para malaman ng taumbayan kung paano po mapuprotektahan nila ang kanilang mga sarili at mabawasan ang pagkalat ng virus lalo sa loob ng pamamahay.

Tinalakay din po kahapon iyong Beep cards para sa mga bus. Para mabawasan ang pagkalat ng COVID-19, ipinatupad ng DOTr ang cashless payment sa EDSA bus way 'no. As a backgrounder, ang mga operator ng bus ang pumili po ng AF Payments Inc., or AFPI Beep bilang kanilang contactless payment provider. May charge para sa card issuance fee na nasa 80 pesos, transaction fee na five pesos at kinakailangan ng minimum balance. Nag-isyu po ang DOTr ng direktiba na gawing libre ang AFCS cards at kailangan inter-operable ang AFCS readers at cards. Kaya kailangang pumili ang bus operators ng contactless payment provider na makapagbibigay ng free card at inter-operability requirement. Libre na po talaga ang Beep cards ngayon.

Punta naman po tayo sa ating COVID-19 updates. Sang-ayon po sa Johns Hopkins University, higit tatlumpu't pitong milyon na po or 37,724,073 ang kaso ng COVID-19 sa buong mundo.

Mayroong higit na isang milyong katao naman po or 1,078,446 ang binawian ng buhay dahil sa coronavirus.

Nangunguna pa rin po ang Estados Unidos; pangalawa ang India na may pinakamaraming kaso ng COVID-19 sa mundo; sinundan po ito ng Brazil, Russia and Colombia. Makikita ninyo po sa screen natin ang mga numero ng mga top five countries.

Dito po sa ating bayan, naku po, tayo po ay nakapag-test na ng halos apat na milyong katao sa pamamagitan ng PCR po 'no – ito po ay 3,914,643. Ito po ay ginawa sa 110 licensed RT-PCR laboratories and 35 licensed GeneXpert laboratories.

Mayroon po tayo ngayong 43,332 active cases ayon sa October 12 case bulletin ng Department of Health. Sa numerong ito, 83.9 po ang mild, 10.8% ay asymptomatic, 1.7% ay severe at 3.6% po ay kritikal.

Parami nang parami naman po ang mga gumagaling, mayroon na po tayong 293,152 na gumaling na nai-report din po as of October 12. Samantala, ang mga namatay po ay 6,332 – nakikiramay po tayong muli.

Pumunta naman po tayo sa bilang ng ... iyong tinatawag na health care utilization 'no. Unang-una po, ang ating ICU beds, mayroon pa po tayong 53% na available; sa isolation beds, mayroon pa po tayong 56% available; ang ward beds, 56% available; at ang ventilators, 70% available. So wala po tayo sa critical level.

Dito po nagtatapos ang ating presentasyon. Bago po tayo pumunta sa mga tanong ng Malacañang Press Corps, kasama po natin ngayon ang ating Budget Secretary Wendel Avisado; at ang ating Labor Secretary, Secretary Bello.

Kay Secretary Avisado po muna. Napakaimportante po nitong proposed 2021 budget, Sec., dahil nasa proposed 2021 budget po iyong mga budget para sa ating anti-COVID-19 responses. Puwede ba hong pakidetalye lang kung anu-ano iyong ilang mga anti-COVID-19 responses natin na nakapaloob po sa proposed 2021 budget. Secretary Avisado, the floor is yours.

SEC. AVISADO: Maraming salamat, Secretary Harry. Magandang umaga po sa ating lahat. Magandang tanghali.

Diretso na po ako doon sa proposed 2021 budget ng Department of Health. At dito nga po, isinumite natin iyong proposed budget for 2021 noong August 25. At dito nakapaloob ang budget ng health sector na umaabot sa 212.39 billion para po sa lahat ng mga gagawin ng ating Kagawaran ng Kalusugan, ganoon din ng para sa implementation ng Universal Health Care Program.

Makikita po natin sa succeeding slides ang mga major health programs na ginagamit natin upang masawata ang pandemya. To achieve our mission, the budgetary support was provided

for the National Health Insurance Program of 71.35 billion to subsidize the health insurance premium of at least 13 million indigent families and seven million senior citizens; 17.31 billion naman ay allocated po iyan para sa medical assistance to indigent patient's program para po sa ating mga mahihirap na kababayan to avail of the medical services sa lahat ng government facilities.

Para naman po sa human resources for health program, mayroon pong 16.58 billion diyan para sa hiring and deployment of about 26,035 doctors, nurses, and other healthcare workers to disadvantaged communities and national hospitals. Para naman po sa improvement ng data systems, mayroong 51.56 million for disease surveillance and monitoring of COVID-19 and other respiratory infections.

To ensure the safety of our health workers, mayroong 2.7 billion pong nakapaloob diyan for the procurement of more than two million sets of PPEs for hospitals, laboratories and regional swab centers. Dagdag na budget na 1.03 billion for procurement of RT-PCR cartridges to be used for fast and accurate testing of COVID-19 cases.

2.5 billion naman po ay para sa pagbibili ng COVID-19 vaccine, hopefully by then mayroon na, that will initially immunize 3.8 million poor Filipinos. Mayroon din po kaming inilaan na 11.6 billion para sa health facilities enhancement program at pagbibili ng mga medical equipment and motor vehicles, for example ambulance among others.

And to support the research and development to address the threat of COVID-19, mayroon pong nakalaang 283 million para sa establishment ng Virology Science and Technology Institute of the Philippines, at 66 million naman para sa participation ng ating bansa sa International Solidarity Clinical Trial of the COVID-19 Vaccine to be launched by the World Health Organization.

Sobrang napakahirap po kung susuriin natin ang kasalukuyang sitwasyon gawa nang, while we are so devoted to avoiding the risk of the pandemic, eh iyong atin namang ekonomiya ang naapektuhan. Kaya nga po the Cabinet last night decided together with the President that instead of just risk avoidance, ang gagawin natin ay case management. Ima-manage natin iyong risk at the same time bigyan nating halaga ang pagbubukas ng ating ekonomiya dahil doon po manggagaling din naman ang gagastusin natin para sa marami pang programa na kailangan isagawa ng ating pamahalaan.

Kaya po makakaasa kayo na ang ating Pangulo ay patuloy na nagbibigay ng instruction sa amin na una sa lahat, unahin ang pangangailangan ng ating mga kababayan at at the same time also, make sure na gumugulong din ang ating ekonomiya.

So, iyan po in a very short presentation ang kabuuan ng nakasaad sa National Expenditure Program para sa budget ng Department of Health para sa susunod na taon.

Maraming salamat po.

SEC. ROQUE: Maraming salamat, Sec. Wendel Avisado. Siyempre po, nandiyan din sa proposed 2021 budget iyong mga stimulus package natin lalung-lalo na para sa ating Build, Build, Build Program

Usaping 13th month pay naman po tayo. Kasama po natin si Secretary Silvestre Bello ng Department of Labor and Employment.

Sir, ano nga ba ho iyong napag-usapan kahapon tungkol po sa mga issues na may kinalaman sa ating 13th month pay? The floor is yours, Secretary Bello.

SEC. BELLO: Thank you, Sec. Harry. Sec. Wendel, good morning sa inyo.

Kagaya ng binanggit ko kay Pangulong Duterte kagabi, iyong 13th month pay is mandated under PD 851 dated 1975, hindi pa tayo ipinapanganak, kaming dalawa ni Sec. Wendel. Iyon po ay very specific provision ng PD 851 and if you notice, that provision wala pong exemption. Kaya lang then Secretary of Labor, the late Senator, Secretary Blas Ople, came up with implementing rules and regulation to implement itong PD 851.

And under this IRR, nagbigay si Secretary Blas Ople ng exemption. Meaning as a general rule, lahat ng empleyado dapat bayaran ng mga employers, pero iyong mga employers who are classified as distressed companies are exempted under this IRR issued by Secretary Ople in December 22, 1975, only about five days after the issuance of PD 851.

Okay?

Then, ito hindi nalalaman ng marami. Then came President, the late President Cory Aquino. On August 13, 1986, that probably six months after she assumed as President, she came up with a Memorandum Order No. 20 and under this Memorandum Order No. 20, she amended PD 851. Nobody could question that kasi Memorandum Order lang in-amend ang PD, but nobody questioned that because then we were under a revolutionary government.

Okay...

Under this Memorandum of Agreement, mayroon din, nakalimutan yata ni Senator, former Secretary of Labor, na mayroon din siyang inisyu na implementing order also providing for exception of some employers. So, it is very clear under these facts na the Secretary of Labor has the authority to issue orders or advisories in implementing laws or Constitutional provision. So iyan po, very clear po iyan.

Now, regarding the issue of 13th month pay, I'll make it very clear now, Sec. Harry and Sec. Wendel, the law is very clear, we have to pay our workers on or before 24 December their 13th month pay. The only exception as provided under IRR of the late Secretary Blas Ople is when the company is in distress.

Iyan po ang pag-uusapan namin mamayang alas-dos with about 20 unions and about another 20 management association to discuss the meaning or the extent of distressed companies. Iyan, Sec. Harry, malalaman natin mamaya kung sino iyong mga exempted.

Pero last night during the Cabinet meeting I have the occasion to discuss this with Secretary Mon Lopez, my partner, the DTI. Sabi ko, “O, Sec. Mon, mayroon kaming proposal dito na iyong mga distressed companies will be exempted pero mayroon ding another option,” ‘ika ko sa kaniya. The other option is instead of exemption, puwedeng deferment. And I was surprised with the reaction of Secretary Mon Lopez. Sabi niya, “Okay, puwede rin instead of exemption, pwede rin na deferment na lang,” sabi niya ‘no.

So, this will be the issue that will be discussed and hopefully we can come up and arrive at a consensus between the workers and the employers, together with DTI and NLRC who is also invited and the Department of Labor.

That, Sec. Harry, is the situation of our 13th month pay.

SEC. ROQUE: Maraming salamat, Secretary Bello.

Pumunta na po tayo sa ating open forum. I hope the two Secretaries can join us for the open forum.

We’ll call on Usec. Rocky first.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Roque. Good afternoon, Secretary Avisado and Secretary Bello.

Question from Evelyn Quiroz of Pilipino Mirror for Secretary Roque: You were quoted to have said the following: “*Panahon na po para tayo naman ay magbakasyon matapos ang napakatagal na lockdown lalung-lalo na sa Metro Manila. Nag-aantay na po ang pinakamagandang beach sa buong mundo. Boracay open for business.*” Do you honestly think that it is really safe for the general public to visit other places for pleasure considering COVID-19 is still very much around?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, Evelyn. Alam mo, talagang magtatagal pa sa atin ang COVID-19 pero alam na natin ang anyo ng sakit na iyan. Maiiwasan natin iyan sa pamamagitan ng mask, hugas at iwas.

At nais ko lang i-emphasize na ang Boracay po is COVID-free. So ang worry nga po is how to prevent COVID from entering Boracay, hindi po paano mahahawa ng mga native sa Boracay iyong mga bibisita. It’s the other way around po.

Kaya sa ngayon po niri-require pa ang PCR test para masigurado na walang bisita na mayroong COVID-19 ang makakapasok sa Boracay at gaya ng aking sinabi po ‘no, inaantay din natin ang

resulta ng antigen pilot testing sa Baguio para kung madeklarang successful po iyong pilot testing sa Baguio ay pupuwede na siguro na magamit sa Boracay din ang antigen testing.

USEC. IGNACIO: Question for DBM Secretary Wendel Avisado. Secretary Avisado, the DBM recently submitted for approval the 2021 national budget in the amount of 4.5 trillion pesos. That amount is 10% larger than this year's 4.1 trillion budget. However, a closer look reveals that the budget of the Department of Health will actually go down to 131 billion next year from this year's 181 billion. Additionally, only 2.5 billion was allotted for the expected COVID-19 vaccine next year. In the middle of a worldwide pandemic, why is the healthcare system of this country being underfunded?

SEC. AVISADO: Ang masasabi ko lang po baka inaccurate naman iyong sabihin na underfunded ano sapagka't sa totoo lang kung titingnan natin sa kabuuan, hindi lang naman Department of Health ang may programa sa COVID. Aming sinuri at ito nga ay ni-report na namin sa Kongreso at sa Senado na ang kabuuang COVID-19 program sa lahat ng departamento o kagawaran at ahensiya ng pamahalaan ay hindi lamang nakasentro sa Department of Health at sa katumayan umabot ng P838,353,953 ang kabuuang naka—kung tawagin namin ay COVID-19 tagged projects. So lahat ng departamento maging ang Hudikatura mayroon.

In other words, ang buong pamahalaan po ang nagtutulong-tulong para nang sa ganoon sila man ay mayroon ding sariling programa kaysa doon ihulog lahat sa Department of Health. Ito nga't ang dami na nating mga issues at problemang kinakaharap kahit nga lang doon sa procurement nahihirapan na tayo.

So lahat po ng mga kagawaran at ahensiya ng pamahalaan may sari-sarili po silang mga programa kahit ang Department of Labor mayroon din silang COVID-19 tagged projects at programs. So sana po tingnan natin sa kabuuan at hindi lang po pinu-focus lang natin sa Department of Health ang usaping COVID-19 po.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary Avisado.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Secretary Avisado. Thank you, Usec. Joyce Balancio, ABS-CBN please.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Roque and to our two other secretaries here in our press briefing.

First para muna sa inyo, Secretary Roque: What is the Palace reaction to the House ratification of the election of Marinduque Representative Lord Allan Velasco as the new House Speaker and perhaps, do we have a message also to Congressman Alan Peter Cayetano who recently tendered his irrevocable resignation as House Speaker?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, consistent naman po ang ating Presidente, ang paghalal po ng mga liderato sa Mababang Kapulungan ay desisyon ng mga indibidwal na mga representante natin.

So we respect the wish of the members of the House of Representatives on who will be their Speaker 'no and if it is true that it has been ratified, then so be it.

In Avelino versus Cuenco, the Supreme Court ruled that only the members of the House and the Senate can determine their leadership. Good luck to those elected and congratulations to those elected by their peers in the House of Representatives.

I'm just emphasizing kasi sabi mo nagkaroon na ng ratipikasyon 'no. But as of the time I went on the air at 12, wala pa akong ganoong balita 'no. What I do know is the session held yesterday. Now I also know that si Congressman Cayetano apparently had a Facebook live 'no where he apparently resigned 'no. So I do not know factually if there has been a ratification of the election yesterday 'no. So pardon me po kasi we went on the air at around 11:50 'no.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Sir, this morning po kasi—actually minutes before we aired dito sa press briefing nagkaroon na ng session sa Congress and—

SEC. ROQUE: Okay, our congratulations then to the new Speaker of the House, Congressman Lord Allan Velasco. But as I said, that's a decision of the House of Representatives - it's the President's response.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Sir, given this development na formally si Velasco na po ang House Speaker and then nag-resign na nga po si Cayetano, para saan pa po iyong meeting ni Pangulong Duterte calling these two congressmen diyan sa Palasyo?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po alam because as of the time I made the announcement at 10:30, I was just instructed that a meeting was called before 12:30 today and that both congressmen were expected to attend. Hindi ko po alam kung superseded na ng developments itong meeting na ito. But I suppose if the President called for the meeting, it probably will push through still. Okay?

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: And you mentioned sir that the meeting was for the passage of the 2021 national budget. So up to this time, the President is not yet convinced na given his earlier warnings ay hindi pa rin mapapasa ang budget on time?

SEC. ROQUE: Let's just say that with the events in the House of Representatives yesterday 'no, parang nagkaroon ng talagang real danger na baka hindi mapasa ang budget on time. Okay? Thank you very much, Joyce. Usec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Thank you, Secretary Roque. From Virgil Lopez of GMA News Online: Allies of Congressman Lord Allan Velasco elected him Speaker yesterday. Will the President recognize Velasco as the new leader of the House?

SEC. ROQUE: I think superseded na iyang question na iyan ‘no because I understand that there has been a ratification of the election yesterday. So of course he is now the new Speaker of the House.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question po ni Virgil: In their latest monitoring report, the OCTA Research Team urged the government to consider reimposing a stricter quarantine classification or implementing localized lockdowns in Bauan in Batangas, Calbayog in Western Samar and General Trias in Cavite?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I really appreciate the efforts po of OCTA Research Team ‘no in helping us monitor COVID cases. Pero ni-request ko na po sa kanila na to desist from making recommendations on classification kasi talaga pong trabaho naman po iyan ng mga eksperto ‘no at I understand although they have one or two epidemiologists ‘no, it’s still not the same number of experts working with the IATF ‘no, hindi lang po sa DOH ‘no.

So iyon nga po ‘no, I wish they would refrain from making these recommendations publicly. They can probably endorse or course their recommendations privately to the IATF nang hindi naman po napapangunahan, highlighting the fact that classifications are normally announced no less than the President himself.

But in any case po sa tanong na iyan, ang mga areas na niri-recommend po nila ay Bauan, Calbayog, Western Samar and General Trias... mayroon na po tayong IATF resolution na kapag mga municipalities or bayan-bayan ang involved, pupuwede na po iyang aktuhan ng provincial governor in collaboration with the Regional IATF. So hindi naman po iyan nakakarating na sa IATF national.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo, pero sabi po kasi niya dito, the tightening in restrictions in three areas was recommended due to the increasing daily attack rate of COVID-19 in the past two weeks. Will the IATF consider this suggestion?

SEC. ROQUE: Again, sa level po ng mga bayan-bayan, hindi na po IATF-National ang umaakto diyan; it’s the provincial governor. At ang recommendation ko nga po kung OCTA Research team will not mind, kung pupuwede po, let’s do the recommendations privately through the IATF. We will forward it to the regional IATF if need be, at saka emphasizing again that only the President announces po the classifications. So, sana po, if the IATF itself does not make public its recommendations to the President, sana the OCTA team – and this is really an appeal para hindi po nagkakagulo – can also course the recommendations to the IATF privately.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, good afternoon. Good afternoon, Secretary Avisado, Secretary Bello. First question ko po, Secretary Roque, as far as Malacañang is concerned, who is the House Speaker?

SEC. ROQUE: That’s as far as the House of Representative is concerned, they have ratified the election of Congressman Lord Allan Velasco ‘no. But as I said, I did not see the actual

ratification made by the House. I am relying on the report of Joyce Balancio earlier to me kasi nga, by the time we went on the air, hindi ko na po napanood kung ano ang nangyari sa House. So, it has been ratified and it had to be ratified in Congress itself. Well, congratulations po to Congressman Lord Allan Velasco as the new Speaker of the House.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay, sir, second source mo ako. Yes, that was ratified, then former Speaker Cayetano has tendered his resignation. So, Malacañang recognizes Congressman Velasco as the new Speaker?

SEC. ROQUE: Of course, our consistent position has been, it is the House of Representatives that will choose their leaders. And if it has been ratified, then it is Speaker Lord Allan Velasco.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: How much of this is the handy work of President Duterte?

SEC. ROQUE: I think, it is still the individual decisions of the House of Representatives. As I announced at 10:30, they were supposed to have a meeting. And although the agenda was the budget, it was also indirectly how to resolve the impasse because otherwise the passage of the budget might be derailed. So I think nagkasundo naman iyong parehong panig.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, sabay ba sila Cong. Velasco at saka Cong. Cayetano na magkaharap ba sila sa meeting mamaya or magkahiwalay?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko pa alam na ngayon, kung matutuloy pa. Pero pinatawag po iyan ng Presidente, and my assumption is, it is a face-to-face meeting between the three of them.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: All right. Sir, just one last question for you before I go shortly to Secretary Avisado. Sir, would you call this intervention or would you still deny that this is intervention or this is a necessary intervention on the part of the President?

SEC. ROQUE: This was a decision of the members of the House of Representatives on a purely internal matter.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: And the President has nothing to do with that?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po alam kasi ang sabi ko nga po, nagpatawag siya ng pagpupulong pero even before the meeting happened, nagkaroon na po ng resolution ang leadership issue.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Thank you, sir. Sir, can I go to Secretary Avisado, shortly. Hi, sir! Good afternoon. Sir, tama ba iyong narinig ko, sir, as far as the budget is concerned kung total and including all the agencies budget for COVID response, 212 billion ba, sir, iyon, lahat-lahat na ng nasa 2021? And then your comment that it seems that finally, the issue of the leadership in the House of Representatives is resolved?

SEC. AVISADO: Una, sa kabuuan, para lang sa Department of Health. Nagkaroon po ng increase iyan from 185.5 billion this year to 212.4 billion next year. So may increase po siya na 26% higher than this year at por lo menos, umabot ng mga 27 billion ang dagdag sa budget ng Department of Health.

Sa panig naman ng DBM, kami po ay natutuwa at nagagalak na naresolba na po iyang leadership issue dahil nga po kagabi napag-usapan namin, eh we cannot afford a re-enacted budget at this time, lalo't higit na patuloy nating kinakaharap ang pandemya. So, sana po sang-ayon din sa naitakda na ng proclamation ni Pangulong Duterte ay matapos at mapasa nila on third and final reading ang budget ngayong darating na Biyernes, which is October 16.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So, the Senate can begin its work parang ganoon, sir?

SEC. AVISADO: Ay, opo dahil po kaagad naman, kagyat, sabi ni Senate President Tito Sotto kahit naman during the break ay tuluy-tuloy lang iyong pagri-review nila ng budget.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: All right, Secretary Avisado. Secretary Roque, regards, Secretary Bello. Thank you for your time, sir.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Joseph. We go to Usec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, from Kris Jose of Remate: Iyon pong pag-imbata po ba ng PCOO sa kanilang Laging Handa briefing kay Congressman Velasco ay pagkilala na bilang bagong Speaker ng Mababang Kapulungan ng Kongreso at si Congressman Cayetano ay dating House Speaker?

SEC. ROQUE: Moot and academic na po, Speaker na po talaga si Speaker Lord Allan Velasco.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, basahin ko na lang po iyong second question ni Kris Jose: Sinabi po ni Congressman Cayetano na hindi raw po kikilalanin ng mayorya, ng mga mambabatas si Marinduque Representative Lord Allan Velasco bilang bagong House Speaker dahil peke ang idinaos na session at pakana ito ng kaniyang mga supporters. Bilang isang dating mambabatas at isang abogado, sang-ayon po ba kayo sa sinabi ni Congressman Cayetano? Paano po ninyo ilalarawan ang tila pagkakaroon po ng dalawang Speaker sa Kamara? Sinabi po in Congressman Cayetano na kapag iginiit daw po ng kampo ni Velasco ang pagiging Speaker nito at mga ginawa ng kaniyang kampo ay mistulang banana republic na po ang bansa.

SEC. ROQUE: Moot and academic na po iyan, nai-ratify na po ang eleksiyon kahapon, kaninang umaga.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS: Good afternoon, Secretary Roque. Good afternoon din po kay Secretary Avisado and Secretary Bello. Sir, dito po sa nangyayaring mga kaganapan sa

Congress, how would you assess the weight of the President's address recently and his leadership overall, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: I think the message was received by everyone that the President really needed the early passage of the proposed 2021 budget. Kung hindi po siguro dahil dito ay lalo pang napahaba iyong agawan sa puwesto. Pero the President, I think, made it very, very clear that at the time of COVID, hindi pupuwedeng maantala iyong budget niya para maging kasagutan dito sa pandemyang ito. And we thank the House of Representatives for that.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS: So, kumbaga po, sir, itong mensahe ni Pangulo, this triggered all the movements? Kumbaga, it caused an action on the part of the lawmakers, do you think?

SEC. ROQUE: I cannot read their minds. But I think the message has been received that the priority is the budget, not politics.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS: Sir, dito lang po ulit sa nangyayari sa Congress 'no. Isn't the whole gathering, the number of people and the way videos and pictures would show us, walang mga distancing, some people sometimes, even though wear mask. Hindi po ba ito violation of the quarantine protocols? And if it is, what does this say about our leaders, you know, clearly violating protocols, if ever?

SEC. ROQUE: I leave it to the House of Representatives to address. Napakahirap naman po that the President being a co-equal branch will interfere even with the manner by which the House of Representatives met. So we leave it to them po, highlighting na kinakailangan lahat po ng mga namumuno sa bayan dito ay iisa po ang boses pagdating sa mask, hugas at iwas.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS: But on the part of the IATF, will someone be held liable for quarantine protocol violations?

SEC. ROQUE: We leave it na po to the House of Representatives kasi pati po iyong isyu ng pananagutan/accountability, the members of Congress can only be held accountable by their peers. Iyan po ang consistent ruling ng ating Korte Suprema. Kaya mayroon po silang House Ethics Committee.

Can we go back siguro sa round 2, kasi we are enforcing the three questions rule. So, we will go back to you if we have time.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, question from Maricel Halili of TV 5. How will the development in Congress yesterday affect the passage of the 2021 national budget?

SEC. ROQUE: Moot and academic na po. We expect that it will be approved on third and final reading within the period covered by the President's proclamation between today until the 16th.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ang second question po ni Maricel Halili: When the President mentioned in his speech that if Congress cannot solve the problem, he will solve it for them. Was he referring to this meeting between Representatives Velasco and Cayetano? Will the President once again mediate to settle the issue of Speakership?

SEC. ROQUE: I have no information po; and everything is moot and academic because the House has without any legal doubts, elected Speaker Lord Allan Velasco.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ang third question po niya: What does the President expect to achieve from the meeting Representatives Velasco and Cayetano?

SEC. ROQUE: Moot and academic na rin po niyan. Tapos na po ang boksing.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you very much, Usec. Melo Acuña, please.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Good afternoon, Secretary. Katatapos pa lamang po ng forum ng FOCAP with General Gilbert Gapay. Nabanggit po na mayroon ng NBI report tungkol sa naganap na pamamaril at pagkasawi ng apat na Philippine Army personnel sa Jolo noong Hunyo. Would you know if President Duterte has already received such copy? And what were his thoughts about the recommendations of the NBI?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, ang recommendation naman po, kasuhan iyong mga suspects 'no. At when he visited Jolo, mayroon na pong preliminary report ang NBI; ang pakiusap lang niya sa lahat, huminahon at bibigyan naman po ng katarungan iyong mga naging biktima nitong insidenteng ito. At iyan po ang sinisigurado po ng ating Presidente, justice will be done to the victims.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Yes. With your indulgence, for Secretary Bello. Magandang hapon po, Secretary.

SEC. BELLO: Magandang hapon po.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Binanggit po ng World Bank doon sa kanilang survey na isa sa bawat dalawang kumpanya ang nagbawas ng kanilang kawani. Ano po kaya ang bilang ng mga nawalan ng trabaho dahil sa COVID-19 sa ating bansa?

SEC. BELLO: Okay. Thank you, Melo. Ang aming record will show na ang nawalan ng trabaho dahil sa COVID-19 ay 3.5 million. Pero diyan sa 3.5 million, 1.9 million ang nawalan ng trabaho temporarily; iyong nawalan ng trabaho permanently, mahigit dalawandaang libo. At iyong mga hindi naman nawalan ng trabaho kung hindi nabawasan ng trabaho, we are talking of 1.2 million workers.

[Garbled] isyu doon sa mga 1.9 million na nawalan ng trabaho temporarily dahil under the law, they have to be re-hired after six months, and that six-month period ended noong September 30. Kaya the workers who were temporarily terminated were already hoping to go back to work. Kaya lang nakiusap ang mga employers, sabi nila, “Hindi pa rin namin kayang i-re-hire iyong aming mga workers.” Pero sabi ko naman, under the law you have to. So sabi nila, “Puwede ba, can we extend the six-month period to another six-month period?”

On the basis of this request ng mga employers, kinausap ko ang mga labor group if they are open to the idea of extending the period. Kung minsan kasi, Melo, mas maganda na iyong temporarily terminated kaysa permanently terminated. Kasi kung ipagpipilit mo, then they will say, “Okay na lang, huwag na lang. We will pay you separation pay.” In that case, mawawala na iyong employment status mo.

So open ang labor dito, and that is what we are going to decide this afternoon whether we will allow the six-month period; and if we will allow the six-month period extension, ano ang mga parameters. Ano ang mga kundisyon? Sabi ng mga workers, ‘baka naman iyong six months na iyan ay ibibenta na lahat ng properties nila, wala na kaming hahabulin.’ Iyon ang pag-uusapan namin ngayong hapon, Melo, together with about 15 labor groups and the same number of employer’s group.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Okay. May pahabol po ako, sapagka’t ayon sa Department of Foreign Affairs, dalawandaan at labintatlong libo siyamnaraan at apatnapu’t dalawang Overseas Filipinos ang naiuwi na sa Pilipinas. Karaniwan pong practice ng Republika ng Pilipinas na magkaroon ng redeployment matapos ang retraining ng mga Overseas Filipino. Ano pong kinabukasan para matulungan natin itong 213,942 Overseas Filipinos who are now in the Philippines, possibly looking for another source of income?

SEC. BELLO: Melo, unang-una, I think we have to correct the figure. As of today, we have already repatriated 250,000 OFWs.

Now, iyong tungkol sa whether they will be redeployed or not, it’s a matter of choice sa mga OFWs. May mga iba, gustong bumalik. Iyong mga gustong bumalik, tutulungan namin makabalik kasi mayroon pang mga open markets, in fact there are alternative markets. And we will help our OFWs to get deployed again.

Iyong mga ayaw na, napagod na siguro, we will provide them initially cash assistance and livelihood assistance, iyan po ang programa under the National Reintegration Program, Melo.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Maraming salamat po, Secretary. Maraming salamat, Secretary Roque. Magandang tanghali, Secretary Avisado. Thank you.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Melo. Let’s go back to Usec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, from Haydee Sampang ng DZAS: Aprubado na po ba ni President Duterte iyong one-seat apart sa public transport at pagpayag na makalabas ang 16 to 65 years old?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, aprubado na po iyong one-seat apart dahil isa po iyan doon sa rekomendasyon ng economic cluster group na inaprubahan kahapon.

Pero iyong—wait ho, titingnan ko itong mga recommendations ‘no. So nandito iyong mga recommendations, tingnan po natin iyong... iyong sa age group, ang recommendation po ay gradual expansion of the age group allowed to go out, i.e. 15 to 65 ‘no. So, I suppose—hindi po ini-specify kasi sa recommendation kung 15 to 65 na nga ang recommendation. But it was part of the recommendations, so—nakasulat kasi dito ‘e.g.’ eh, 15 to 65 so it is now approved ‘no, it is approved because it was a recommendation approved by the entire Cabinet.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question niya po, ano daw po iyong oras ng Talk to the People bukas ni President Duterte?

SEC. ROQUE: Eh alam ninyo naman po, kung kailan matapos po iyong pagpupulong saka po iere iyong mensahe.

Pia Rañada, please.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Hi, sirs. Good afternoon to all the Cabinet members present. For Secretary Roque, just to... for on the record, sir: Did the President have anything to do at all with convincing lawmakers in the House to vote for Speaker Velasco or did Speaker Velasco do everything, lobby for votes all on his own?

SEC. ROQUE: The President was consistent from the very beginning – it’s an internal matter of the House. But certainly, when there was an impasse, and there was an impasse when we had the event yesterday, he called for both at 12:30 today. And I’m not even sure if that will still push through ‘no.

So I think it is fair to say that the President respected the separation of powers and allowed the members of the House to vote for whomever they want to vote as their Speaker.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Okay. So he had no part in convincing them to side with Velasco kasi parang may change of heart ‘di ba from 184 with Cayetano, some of them went to Velasco. So parang they were convinced somehow to change sides.

SEC. ROQUE: Not the President po. Not on the part of the President.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: All right. Going on naman, sir, to the developments in the Cabinet meeting. Sir, the decision on one-seat apart, may we know what was the science used as basis for this rule? Because, sir, ‘di ba technically seats differ in sizes, so if you want to be

philosophical about this, sir, 'di ba, some people, the distance will not be standard because nag-iiba-iba po iyong sizes of seats. So, the one-meter rule here is thus put into jeopardy. And we also know that some Cabinet officials were not supportive of reducing the one-meter requirement. So, sir, may we know the discussion on this? Was there a debate that ensued on this rule? And what was the basis for this rule?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi na po kasi mainit na napag-usapan itong one-meter rule to 0.75. Napakatagal po ng pagpupulong ng IATF tungkol dito. Hindi na po inulit iyong pag-uusap dito muli, although kahapon nandoon po iyong mga eksperto. Mayroon pong eksperto galing sa grupo ni Dr. Dans, mayroong eksperto galing naman sa grupo ni Secretary Cabral at hindi na nga po nadinig ang expert except for one, but the President cut short the expert who was giving her opinion kasi parang tapos na, mayroon ng consensus on the issue.

So, I guess I'm answering that as far as the reducing the one-meter distance is concerned, it was arrived at as a matter of consensus and it is based on science; it is based on studies which Doctor Dayrit presented to the IATF. I do not have the study before me right now but I can text to you the study cited by Doctor Dayrit.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: So, sir, what was it that convinced the President and Cabinet officials like Secretary Año and Duque who weren't for the reduction in distancing? What convinced them finally to change their mind about it?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, the fact that we needed really to open the economy because the lockdowns have been causing poverty and malnutrition on the part of our children. And the fact that we have the seven commandments 'no, that you wear a mask, you wear face shield, you don't speak, you don't eat, may proper ventilation, iyong frequent and proper disinfection, walang asymptomatic passengers at saka iyong mayroon pa ring social distancing, this will reduce the risk of acquiring COVID-19 in public transportation.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Okay. And then, sir, last question. Sir, iyong what the Cabinet decided na last resort na lang po iyong changing the quarantine classifications of regions, does it mean, sir, that Metro Manila will stay under GCQ for an indefinite period of time? Wala na po iyong mga changing every month? And what exactly does last resort mean? What are the parameters for saying that we have now reached the point where we have to change the classification of this certain region?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I think by last resort is meant last resort, common meaning of last resort. Kung wala na po talagang magagawa at saka tayo magri-resort again to lockdowns. Pero for now, the strategy remains granular and localized lockdowns.

Okay? Thank you, Pia. We go now to USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, questions from Genalyn Kabiling of Manila Bulletin on the Cabinet approval of economic clusters: In the recommendations, what are the priority areas where COVID cases must be managed?

SEC. ROQUE: Siyempre po kung saan iyong mga lugar na matataas ang attack rates at saka titingnan din po natin iyong critical care utilization rate ng lugar. So, pinalitan lang po natin iyong case doubling time ng attack rates, tapos tinitingnan pa rin po natin iyong critical care capacity.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question po niya: When will the government enforce the one-seat apart rule in public transportation, shorter curfew hours, gradual expansion of business capacity? Will this still require resolution from IATF? Isn't the government concerned, easing lockdown measures might lead to a spike in COVID cases?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po. Unang-una, it will be effective upon publication po in the Official Gazette. Hindi na po kinakailangan ng IATF meeting iyan kasi it was a full Cabinet meeting.

Pangalawa po, hindi naman po dahil tingin ko after six/seven months of lockdown, alam na natin ang gagawin – mask, iwas, hugas.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Usec. Mela Lesmoras, please.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV: Secretary Roque, may first question po: Nasabi na bukas ay may meeting nga si Pangulong Duterte at public address, ano po kaya iyong mga tatalakayin sa meeting ninyo with IATF na hindi pa natatalakay sa full Cabinet meeting?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, iyong Ulat sa Bayan naman po primarily tungkol po iyan sa COVID-19 eh and our responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, so pareho pa rin po.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV: Opo. Can I go to Secretary Avisado please, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, please.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV: Opo. Secretary Avisado, para lang po sa kaalaman ng ating mga kababayan, may I ask kung ano po iyong comparison sa COVID-19 response ng pamahalaan kung magkakaroon ng reenacted budget ang pamahalaan at kung maipapasa naman on time ang proposed 2021 national budget?

SEC. AVISADO: Kung maipapasa natin ang 2021 Budget eh 'di hamak na wala tayo masyadong puproblemahin na usapin patungkol sa COVID-19 dahil nakalatag na po lahat iyong mga programa at proyekto at mga gagawin pa nating pagsisikap para nga po maibsan ang epekto nito lalo't higit sa ating ekonomiya.

Sa kabilang dako, kung ito naman ay maaantala at hindi maipasa on time, eh 'di kapag nag-reenacted budget po tayo mahihirapan po talaga tayo dahil hindi tayo makakapag-implement ng mga projects na nakapaloob sa National Expenditure Program for next year. Ang tanging magagawa lamang natin ay magpasahod at iyong continuous operation natin, ang MOOE. Pero pagdating sa capital outlay at lalo't higit doon sa pagbibili ng kung ano iyong mga pangangailangan dahil sa patuloy natin na laban sa pandemya, pinagsisikapan nga na maibsan ang dulot nitong pandemyang ito ay hindi po mangyayari iyan. So, talagang mahihirapan po tayo talaga, sobrang hirap. Kaya we cannot afford, as the President was saying, we cannot afford to have a reenacted budget.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV: Opo. And, sir, panghuling tanong na lamang po. With this statement nga po, ano po ang mensahe natin hindi lamang sa Kamara, kung hindi maging sa Senado when it comes to pagpasa nga po ng proposed 2021 national budget?

SEC. AVISADO: Alam naman namin po na ang Mababa at Mataas na Kapulungan ay nagsisikap din po sila at kinikilala po namin ang kanilang pagsisikap at pagtulong sa ating pamahalaan dahil we respect each other's area of jurisdiction and separation of powers. Kaya nga po kami ay umaasa at nakikipagkaisa naman kami sa kanila at tumutulong na kung ano pa iyong pupuwedeng gawin para nga po mapadali ang proseso ng pagpasa ng ating budget for next year and hopefully ito nga at naresolba na iyong leadership issue ay tuluy-tuloy lang po sana at umaasa kami na sa Friday at the latest ay maipasa na on third and final reading sa Mababang Kapulungan ang national budget for 2021 po.

Thank you po.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV: Opo. Thank you so much, Secretary Avisado, Secretary Roque.

SEC. ROQUE: Yes. Thank you very much, Mela. Round two, Joyce Balancio. Maximum of two questions on the round two, please.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Yes, Secretary Roque. Doon lang po sa one seat apart na rule or policy na natin. So, just to be categorical about it, we are now dropping the one meter physical distance between passengers and wala tayong specific na measured distance between passengers, only one seat apart? Because many are asking, Secretary, paano ito ipatutupad for example sa mga jeep, iyong one seat apart?

SEC. ROQUE: Ano naman po iyan, I'm sure DOTr will issue the final guidelines pero one seat apart is one seat apart po, hindi po puwedeng magkakatabi.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: And, sir, as of now, wala tayong specific distance na parang 0.75 ganoon?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala na po.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Basta one-seat apart relative—

SEC. ROQUE: Wala na po. And I'd like to underscore that the approval of this resolution is now unanimous.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: Okay. Iyong MGCQ for NCR, was it discussed during the Cabinet meeting yesterday?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi pa po, one month po kasi iyong ating classifications.

JOYCE BALANCIO/DZMM: All right. Secretary, thank you.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Joyce. Joseph Morong, round two?

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Hi, sir! Good afternoon. Sir, sabi po noong ating kakilala pareho ay tuloy pa rin po iyong meeting nila Cong. Velasco and Cong. Cayetano.

Sir, iyong message na lang sa ... kumpas na lang ni Presidente doon sa mga kongresista now that the leadership issue has been resolved? At ang expectation po ba natin to pass iyong budget from both houses of Congress by what date, sir, December ... ano iyong kailangan nating ma-beat?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, unang-una, nagpapasalamat po kami sa lahat ng miyembro ng Kamara de Representante dahil pinakinggan po nila iyong pakiusap ng ating Presidente na sana isantabi muna ang pulitika at isulong muna itong anti-COVID-19 budget natin para sa taong 2021.

Maraming, maraming salamat din po kay dating Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano and congratulations and salamat din po kay Speaker Lord Allan Velasco 'no. We look forward to working closely with Speaker Lord Allan Velasco because he is also a very close ally of this administration at ang tingin ko naman po magpapatuloy ang buong kooperasyon ng Ehekutibo at ng Kongreso under the leadership of Congressman/Speaker Lord Allan Velasco.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, last na lang. Sir, iyon pong—hindi ko alam kung tama iyong kinig ko, iyon pong dati nating pinagbabawalan na mga minors and then iyong seniors, pinapayagan na ba sir natin sila under the new—

SEC. ROQUE: Nabago lang po iyong edad, ibinaba to 15 to—pero ito po e.g. 15 to 65 'no. So I think ang ibig sabihin nito is babaguhin talaga iyong edad pero let me see. I think we will give some leeway to the IATF to actually fix kung anong edad iyan 'no. Ang nakasulat dito e.g. is for example 16 to 65 'no but what was approved was iyong gradual expansion of the age group allowed to go out 'no.

So titingnan po natin if it will really be 15 to 65 kasi dito sa recommendation hindi fixed eh which I just read 'no – e.g. which is for example 15 to 65. Pero bigyan natin ng leeway ang IATF muna 'no.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, kung halimbawa iyan iyong masusunod although that's just an example, ang puwede nang lumabas would be... assuming ma-solidify iyan, 16 to 64 'di ba?

SEC. ROQUE: Well [laughs]... I think it's up to 65 years old, okay, before 66 years old [laughs].

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So sinong puwedeng lumabas? Anong edad, sir? Anong edad kasi iyong mga workers na—

SEC. ROQUE: Tingnan po natin kung ano magiging deklarasyon ng IATF pero mababago na po iyan. It will not remain to be 21 to 60 'no right now. I think mabababa iyong edad ng kabataan at matataas iyong edad ng mga seniors. I think I'm almost sure that 65 will be the age for seniors, hindi lang ako sigurado at what age for the young people.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sixty-five, meaning 65 above cannot go out?

SEC. ROQUE: Except for necessities and except for Boracay [laughs].

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay. So, tama nga.

SEC. ROQUE: Two questions lang, ikaw sobra ka talaga ha...

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So tama nga, sir, kung 16 to 65 ka puwedeng lumabas 16 to—hindi, hintayin na lang main, sir, iyong—

SEC. ROQUE: Antayin na lang po natin iyong sa IATF talaga iyan 'no. Kasi ang nakasulat dito kasi, this is the condition, it's e.g. for example 15 to 65. What was approved was the gradual expansion of the age group allowed to go out so let's leave it to IATF to fix. Okay?

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So I will just wait, sir. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you very much. Trish Terada...

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES: Just two questions, short lang. Sir, una, is Malacañang optimistic na mapapasa iyong budget given the changes now or given what's happening in the Congress or do you think this change in leadership in the middle of budget deliberations will affect the budget pa rin po?

SEC. ROQUE: Now, the President is very optimistic.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES: ... na mapapasa po?

SEC. ROQUE: Na mapapasa po iyan. Kasi naisantabi na nga po iyong pulitika and they can now concentrate on passing the budget in the House.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES: Sir, final question. Napag-usapan po ba kagabi sa Cabinet meeting kasi I remember iyong DOH suggested to Presidente Duterte na standardize po iyong cost ng PCR testing para mas mapababa or para mas abot-kaya ng lahat iyong presyo ng PCR po?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po na-discuss kagabi.

TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES: All right. Thank you, Secretary. Salamat po.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you very much, Trish. So kung wala na po tayong katanungan, maraming salamat po sa inyong lahat, sa inyong pagsubaybay sa ating press briefing. Maraming salamat po sa ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps. Maraming salamat, Usec. Rocky. Thank you to our two guests, Secretary Avisado and Secretary Bello.

And again, sa ngalan po ng ating Presidente, ito po ang inyong Spox Harry Roque nagpapasalamat po lalung-lalo na sa mga miyembro ng Kamara dahil naisantabi po ang pulitika para po maipasa ang ating pantauang budget sa taong 2021. With that, please stay safe and we'll see you again on Thursday. Good afternoon, Philippines.

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