

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

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE**  
**APRIL 20, 2021 (12:02 P.M. – 1:02 P.M)**

**SEC. ROQUE:** Magandang tanghali, Pilipinas.

Pinirmahan po ni Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte kahapon ang Administrative Order # 39 na nagbibigay ng one-time financial assistance na dalawampung libong piso sa mga pensioners ng GSIS at SSS na may permanent total or permanent partial disability and survivorship pensioners. Basahin natin ang ilang bahagi ng AO 39:

*The ECC is hereby authorized to grant a one-time financial assistance of P20,000 to EC pensioners for permanent partial disability, permanent total disability and survivorship in the private and public sectors subject to the availability of funds and pertinent laws, rules and regulations.*

Hintayin na lang po natin ang IRR na iisyu ng ECC sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa SSS at GSIS.

Kapapasok lang po na balita ‘no, pumunta po tayo sa usaping financial assistance: In-extend ang deadline na makumpleto ang pamamahagi ng financial assistance hanggang a-kinse ng Mayo 2021. Ito ay dahil sa mga sumusunod:

- Una, tayo ay nasa panahon po ng COVID-19, bawal ang malakihang pagtitipun-tipon. Kailangan pangalagaan ang kaligtasan at kalusugan ng lahat.
- Pangalawa, inaayos ang paraan at ginagawang flexible ang pamamahagi kung ito ay automated o bahay-bahay.
- Pangatlo, may mga apela sa mga lokal na pamahalaan.

Kinausap po ng ating Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte, ang taumbayan para sa kaniyang Monday Talk to the People Address. Sinabi ng Pangulo na handa niyang bawiin ang executive order na kaniyang inisyu tungkol sa temporary reduction ng import tariff on pork products sakaling ma-improve ang domestic supply.

Sa kaniyang pahayag, kinilala ni Presidente ang kagustuhan ng mga mambabatas na protektahan ang local hog raisers, ngunit binigyan din niya ng diin na pabor ang kaniyang economic managers sa lower tariffs ng mga baboy para ma-stabilize ang presyo. Tignan po natin ang infographic na galing sa NEDA kung saan makikita natin na mayroon tayong production ng baboy sa taong 2020 na nasa halos isa’t kalahating milyon or 1,499,853 metric tons. Ang demand sa baboy ay mahigit rito na nasa 1,618,355 metric tons kung kaya’t mayroon tayong estimated deficit na 118,502 metric tons. Ang importasyon natin ay nasa 131,330 metric tons.

Sa susunod na slide ay makikita natin ang karne or meat ang top contribution sa inflation ayon sa Philippine Statistics Authority or PSA at NEDA, mula number 6 noong September 2018 at March 2020, ito ay naging number one noong nakaraang buwan, March 2021. Alam naman natin na marami sa atin ay mahilig kumain ng baboy.

Ang mensahe ng Presidente po, temporary po itong kaniyang pinayagang na pag-angkat ng MAV at temporary rin po itong pagbaba ng taripa. Okay? So kapag dumami na po ang supply, kapag tayo ay nakabawi na po, ibalik naman po natin ang dating taripa.

Now, makikita naman po sa susunod na slide, base pa rin sa estimate ng PSA at NEDA 'no, kung paano po mapapababa ng pag-angkat ng baboy ang ating inflation. Makikita po natin na ang overall inflation ay 4.2. Ang meat contribution po dito sa overall inflation ay 1.2%, at 3% po iyong other items. Kung mapapababa po natin ang presyo ng baboy, ibig sabihin ay puwede pong bumaba hanggang 3.8 ang ating inflation.

Samantala, pinuri ng Pangulo ang vaccines rollout sa bansa. Kaugnay nito, inaasahang makukumpleto na natin ang delivery ng 1.5 million doses of Sinovac ngayong buwan ng Abril. Kalahating milyon or 500,000 doses ang inaasahang darating sa Huwebes, April, 22, at sa susunod na linggo, April 29, panibagong 500,000.

Samantala, may initial na 20,000 doses naman ang manggagaling sa Russia na darating; at mayroon pong 480,000 doses ng Sputnik V bago matapos ang Abril.

Makakasama po natin maya-maya lamang si Ambassador Sorreta para pag-usapan ito; at maya-maya rin po ay mayroon po tayong recorded interview kay Ambassador Babes Romualdez, ang ating ambassador sa Estados Unidos. Kaya asahan po natin, tuluy-tuloy lamang po ang ating pagbabakuna.

Masayang binalita rin po kagabi ni DOST Secretary dela Peña na mayroon nang na-develop na local ventilator ang isang grupo mula sa Technological Institute of the Philippines or TIP.

COVID-19 update naman po tayo:

- Nananatili pong number 27 sa buong mundo ang Pilipinas in terms of total cases, ito po ay sang-ayon sa Johns Hopkins.
- In terms of active cases, number 28 po tayo worldwide;
- In cases per one million population, tayo po ay number 133 worldwide;
- At sa case fatality po, tayo po ay nasa number 90 from 93, pero nananatili po na 1.7% ang ating case fatality rate.

Mayroon tayong 9,628 na mga bagong kaso ayon po sa April 19, 2021 datos ng DOH. Bahagyang bumaba po ito 'no kung ikukumpara doon sa isang araw na mahigit 10,000.

Nasa 788,322 ang kabuuang bilang ng mga gumaling; samantala, malungkot po naming binabalita na 16,048 na po ang binawian ng buhay dahil sa coronavirus. Nakikiramay po kami sa lahat ng mga nasawi.

Puno ba ho ang ating mga ospital? Well, makikita po natin sa infographics na ito na dito po sa Metro Manila, 84% na po ng ICU beds ang utilized pero ang ating isolation beds ay sa 63%, ang ating ward beds ay 70% at ang ating ventilators ay 61% utilized.

Sa buong Pilipinas, 66% po utilized ang ating ICU beds, 49% utilized po ang ating isolation beds, 56% utilized po ang ward beds at 47% po utilized ang ating mga ventilators.

Okay, naka-flash muli po sa ating screen ang mga numero na puwedeng tawagan kung kinakailangan pong magpa-admit sa ospital: Ang One COVID Referral Center po natin, mayroon silang 1555 or 'di naman kaya ay 0915-777-7777 or 0919-977-3333 or 02-886-50500. Ito po ay bukod pa sa mga opisyal ng barangay at mga LGUs na pupuwede nating tawagan. Kapag pinagbigay-alam ninyo po sa inyong barangay na mayroong may sakit sa inyong bahay, pupuntahan naman po kayo, mag-o-offer po sila na ilagay sila sa Oplan Kalinga o isang temporary treatment monitoring facility nang sa ganoon po ay maiwasan nga po ang pagkahawahan.

Okay, dito po nagtatapos ang ating presentasyon. Kasama po natin ngayon via taped interview ang ating Ambassador to the United States, Jose Manuel Romualdez. Kinailangan po nating i-tape kasi 12 hours difference po tayo, midnight po ngayon sa America. Panoorin po natin ang ating naging taped interview kay Ambassador Babes Romualdez:

**SEC. ROQUE:** *Magandang gabi, Ambassador. At thank you po at you can join us again in our press briefing.*

*Marami pong nagtatanong sa akin dahil nga po limitado ang supply ng mga bakuna, kailan po kaya makakarating sa Pilipinas ang mga bakuna na galing sa Amerika? The floor is yours, Ambassador Babes Romualdez.*

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** *Salamat, Sec. Harry. Well, one thing for sure, iyong bakuna na inorder, iyong Moderna, kinonfirm sa akin ng Moderna na they will start delivery starting June 15 – that is the target date. And I think they're quite confident that they will be able to rolling in the vaccines and the delivery of our vaccines starting June 15. And then, it will start increasing in succeeding months, July, August, September up to the end of the year. They will complete the 20 million before the end of the year.*

*Now, as far as the Pfizer, for instance, we're going through the COVAX Facility initially and they [garbled] hundred and seventeen thousand that we've been waiting for will most likely be coming in next month. We're hopeful it will be coming in next month. But then, we have another 2.3 through the COVAX Facility.*

Now, the reason why there has been a delay sa Pfizer is because there's been some legal problems that we have to overcome. I think our Department of Justice is already in the final phase of just making sure that both are... the agreement and the indemnity agreement is clear and that the government is well-protected also. So that one is being completed and hopefully next week si Secretary Galvez and si Mark Cohen, the Undersecretary sa Finance, will be able to complete that transaction.

So those are the two leading vaccines coming from the United States that should be coming in to the Philippines starting June, perhaps the end of May for Pfizer and then June for Moderna, and then the rest.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. So, may pag-asa po na talagang beginning next month makakarating na iyong mga made in the US na mga bakuna? Sabi ninyo po twenty million iyong Moderna pero ano po iyong expected na first tranche na darating po sa atin na Moderna?

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** Medyo maliit lang kasi talagang [unclear] nila iyan. They were able to just get some vaccines that were available. Ito kasi galing sa Europe ito, hindi galing dito sa Amerika. So, we were able to secure something like close to 200,000 ng Moderna na mauuna diyan sometime around middle of June. Pero as I said, iyong pinakamalaki starting July, August, September, palaki nang palaki na iyan.

Now the other good news, Harry, na ibinigay sa akin ng Moderna is that mayroon silang booster shots that they have already developed and they are now on clinical trials. Ito kung maa-approve ng EUA ito sometime around September, babagay iyan sa mga those that were able to take iyong Sinovac for instance o iyong AstraZeneca, they can use this booster shot, it will complement it as a matter of fact, to give it that push, to give more effectivity, specially itong mga bagong mga variants na dumadating sa atin ngayon.

So, on that, in my view magandang balita iyan at saka alam ko nahahirapan tayo ngayon diyan pero I'm very confident na by the end of this year a large majority of our people will be able to get the vaccines already.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat, Ambassador. May mga tanong lang po galing sa ating mga mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps, ako na po ang magbabasa ano.

From Melo Acuña of Asia Pacific Daily: Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga met with President Joe Biden recently. President Biden is scheduled to visit Washington next month reportedly to strengthen alliances and convince China. Have you received word President Biden will invite President Rodrigo Duterte anytime soon? That's the first question po?

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** Well, we would have known that if there was one. Right now, I think President Biden is only meeting a few of the leaders, obviously, because of the situation. Pero I understand that towards the end of this year as things get better President Biden I think, is expected to meet all the ASEAN leaders. I'm not sure where, I guess probably be in Brunei

where there's going to be a leaders' summit. But all this is still being planned out and we have no definite [unclear].

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Ang next question po niya is: What is the status of the Visiting Forces Agreement? Will there be changes in the 70-year-old Mutual Defense Treaty?

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** Well, iyong Visiting Forces Agreement pinag-uusapan na iyan. It's a continuing dialogue between our panel and the US panel and they have been in full discussions for the past several months now. We are hoping that this will be all resolved within the next couple of weeks para ma-finalize nila at ipi-present ni Secretary Locsin kay Presidente 'no.

Iyan ay talagang, obviously, it's an important piece of agreement that both the US and I think even the Philippines would like to make sure that this is something that it will be acceptable to both countries. Pero actually sinasabi ko nga dito sa mga kaibigan natin dito, I was joking with them, sabi ko sa kanila itong Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) ay kailangan sana vaccine forces agreement muna dahil that is really the priority right now na we have the vaccines coming to the Philippines as quickly as possible because there's nothing to talk about kung lahat tayo ay perhuwisyo na puwedeng hindi mabuhay.

So, that's the key and all countries are now really looking for vaccines, the supply of vaccines not only coming from the United States but also from India where it is supposed to be the large majority of these vaccines that were developed here in the United States. The Serum Institute is supposed to produce but there has been a backlog obviously because of what's happening in India right now.

**SEC. ROQUE:** From Leila Salaverria of Inquirer po: What has been the US response to [unclear] to allow the delivery of Moderna vaccines purchased by the government and the private sectors as early as May for humanitarian reasons?

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** Well, alam mo, we have been working with the US Government particularly communicate it with the White House. We had a meeting with Dr. Beth Cameron who's in charge of the vaccines at the White House and the National Security Adviser's Office and also with the State Department.

There's been some indications that they were looking at it and they wanted to really help us pero unfortunately ay itong Johnson & Johnson that was supposed to deliver a large majority of their vaccines together with Pfizer and Moderna, that was derailed because of what happened 'no.

So, there's been a delay of about two to three weeks. Medyo madi-delay iyan and obviously the supply to other countries for the Pfizer and Moderna has also been delayed. So, as I've said, Moderna made a commitment to us that they will deliver to us for sure, starting in the middle of June all the way up to the end of the year.

That's the unfortunate part. Itong Johnson nga medyo na-postpone iyong pag-vaccinate dito sa US kasi si President Biden ang commitment niya is all Americans will be able to get the vaccines, as a matter of fact it is now being done right now. We would be able to get the vaccine or we'll have access to the vaccines and he wants us to have at least four hundred million ready for Americans before they start looking at supplying worldwide. We're not the only country that's asking for this by the way, there are more than a hundred countries including their neighbors Canada and Mexico that are asking for the same thing.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Next question po ni Leila is: Could you provide us an update of the Philippine request to borrow the US excess AstraZeneca vaccines? Has the State Department responded? And if it has, what did it say?

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** Yes, they are also looking at our request for the AstraZeneca. As you know, they have probably about 25 million doses of the AstraZeneca that has not been approved in the United States. Again, there are other countries who have been asking for the same thing.

They are already looking at it and studying the possibility of being able to advance these vaccines for the Philippines. The last word I got from the State Department is that it's already up for the committee or the one that's in charge for vaccines here in the United States to see how they can help the Philippines, perhaps donate it even to us.

But I can't really say more than that because the Charge d'Affaires John Law is also pushing it from the US embassy there in Manila.

**SEC. ROQUE:** From Sam Medenilla of Business Mirror: Is there any commitment from the US Government when it comes to providing possible assistance to the government in securing the West Philippine Sea?

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** Well, as you know, both our military – the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Pentagon – have been communicating. Secretary Lorenzana had a recent telephone conversation with Secretary [garbled] in the United States, both are obviously working together and the United States has just recently sent their USS Theodore Roosevelt and they had an operation there at the West Philippine Sea.

So we were working round the clock so to speak in terms of being able to navigate or making sure that there's the freedom of the sea and that Code of Conduct that we are pushing. At the same time, the United States is obviously waiting for us to call them if we need their assistance in removing or asking the vessels that are parked in our area of responsibility or economic zone. And both our Philippine Navy and the US Navy are working on this.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Wala na po tayong mga katanungan. Thank you very much, Ambassador Babes Romualdez at magandang gabi po sa inyo.

**AMBASSADOR ROMUALDEZ:** *Maraming salamat, Secretary Roque. Take care.*

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Makakasama din po natin ngayon si Philippine Ambassador to Russia Carlos Sorreta. Ambassador Sorreta, good morning ba ho diyan o good evening sa Russia? Pero ang tanong po ng marami, inanunsiyo na po ni Secretary Galvez na there will be at least 500,000 vaccines from Gamaleya ‘no. So ano po ang detalye nito at parang mayroon po ‘atang special temperature requirement itong Gamaleya; at magkano pa po, ilan pa pong mga bakuna ang inaasahang makukuha natin diyan sa Russia? Ambassador Sorreta, the floor is yours.

**AMBASSADOR SORRETA:** Hello, Secretary Harry! Good morning. It’s 7:22 right now here in Moscow, in the morning. It’s nice to see you.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Naku, thank you po. Napakaaga na nagising namin kayo. Sorry po. *[laughs]*

**AMBASSADOR SORRETA:** Very hard to say ‘no’ to you, Harry. When it comes to the vaccines, we are looking at five figures within the next few days or 20,000 will be coming to the Philippines and shortly after that before the end of April or early May, we are looking at six figures, almost half a million. And over the next few months we’re going seven figures, about 20 million doses before the end of the year.

We are happy about this development and although it took a while, it was unavoidable. The FDA, ginagawa ho nila iyong kanilang trabaho ngunit mayroong konting mga differences sa terminologies, sa technologies so those have been overcome. And I think there will be a delivery as scheduled based on the agreement signed by Secretary Galvez.

Oh I’m sorry, the temperature requirement. My understanding is we have complied with their requirements because they would not deliver unless they’re satisfied na maga—iyong logistics side po natin—kaya iyong unang 20,000 iyon po ay gagamitin para ma-fine tune iyong logistics on our end. So I’m quite optimistic that we will be getting over the next few months the vaccines that we need.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala naman pong possibility na madi-delay dahil nagkakaubusan ng supply? Talaga ba hong firm na iyong supply na up to [garbled] for this year ang manggagaling sa Russia?

**AMBASSADOR SORRETA:** That is a very good question ho. Kailangan ho medyo—we have to be cognizant of the realities, the demand ho is very high for the vaccine and the best we can do is to try to lock-in the supplies.

We have been monitoring the production here, we have spoken to companies, big companies and small companies na na-tap ng Russia para mag-shift ng kanilang production from the regular medicines that they produce to the vaccine. And production ho is, from all indications

will meet the very high demand. They are also looking at supplying Western Europe which also has made potentially large demand.

But overall, I think we're pretty much safe in our vaccine requirements. Of course, we have to manage our expectation nga ho. Production, there could be problems on production – many things can come up. It's a very sophisticated situation.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat, Ambassador Sorreta. I'm sure marami pa rin pong mga tanong [garbled]. [Garbled] proceed to our open forum. Usec. Rocky, go ahead please.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Roque. And good morning, Ambassador Sorreta.

Question from Llanesca Panti of GMA News Online: You said community pantry is about 'bayanihan' and should not be politicized. But NTF-ELCAC accused the community pantry organizers of using it as means of recruiting communists by using Facebook posts of other users making such accusation. Will the Palace call on NTF-ELCAC?

Similar question of Rose Novenario of Hataw about—on PNP red tagging, Jam Punzalan of ABS-CBN Online and Rosalie Coz of UNTV.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, nagsalita na po ang [garbled], tayo bilang tagapagsalita ng Presidente na itong mga community pantries exemplify the best of [garbled] at sinusugan din po ni DILG Secretary Año na nagsalita ngayon lamang na sinasabi na wala po siyang kautusan sa kapulisan na manghimasok sa operasyon ng mga community pantries.

So kami po ay ginagalang natin ang bayanihan sa ating mga kababayan sa pamamagitan ng ating community pantries at ang ating interes lamang ay mapatupad po ang minimum health standards diyan sa mga community pantries na iyan.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Medyo nag-choppy kayo sa unang bahagi ng sinabi ninyo, Secretary Roque, iyong first part lang po. Nawala po kasi kayo sa... nag-choppy kayo, Secretary.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Oo. Gaya ng aking sinabi po kahapon 'no, ang mga community pantries po ay exemplify the best of the Filipino character in times of challenges – bayanihan hindi bangayan at iyan po ay talaga naman pong pinupuri ng ating Presidente. At ang ating DILG Secretary Año sinusugan din po ito at sinabi na inorderan niya ang mga kapulisan na huwag manghimasok sa operasyon ng mga community pantries except kung kinakailangan lamang ipatupad ang mga minimum health standards.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Thank you, Secretary. Second question: Is using Facebook post of other individuals and taking them as gospel truth a policy of the NTF-ELCAC in terms of gathering information? Is this acceptable?



**SEC. ROQUE:** Siguro po tanungin na lang natin iyan sa ELCAC. Pero sa panig po ng Presidente, sa panig ng DILG malinaw po – ini-encourage po natin at binibigyang-puri natin ang mga mamamayan natin na sumasapi diyan sa community pantries.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Third question po niya: You said President Duterte is for a peaceful resolution of conflict in West Philippine Sea and stands by The Hague ruling. But he said last night we can only retake it by force on top of saying that China will never comply with The Hague ruling. How do you explain this?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Kaya nga po status quo tayo ngayon dahil hindi naman natin mababawi iyan kung wala tayong lakas para bawiin kung ano ang atin ‘no. Lalo na iyong mga artificial islands na iyan, eh modus vivendi na lang po tayo ‘no na nakaukit naman sa papel kung ano iyong ating karapatan at bagama’t hindi natin napapatupad ito ay hindi naman mabubura ng Tsina iyan.

So wala pong inconsistency doon sa aking sinasabi dahil sabi nga ni Presidente talagang tanging military might lang ang magresulta para maibalik iyong mga lugar na inu-occupy ngayon ng Tsina lalung-lalo na iyong mga artificial islands na sang-ayon sa Hague ruling ay kabahagi po ng ating exclusive economic zone.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, susunod na magtatanong si Mela Lesmoras ng PTV.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, Mela.

**MELA LESMORAS/PTV4:** Good afternoon, Secretary Roque at kay Ambassador Sorreta. Secretary Roque, my first question po, sa vaccine muna po. Dahil nga magkakaroon na nga nang mas maraming supply ang bansa, kailan po kaya natin nakikitang mababakunahan iyong group na A4; at kayo po ba Secretary, kailan po kaya natin plano na magpabakuna na rin?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, ang A4 po inaasahan natin as soon as vaccines are available, mga Hunyo magsisimula na tayo. Ako po, kakagaling ko lang sa COVID ‘no so marami pa po akong antibodies ngayon ‘no. Pero magpapasukat po ako ng antibodies at ang sabi naman nila mga 90 days po nitong antibodies natin. So habang marami pa akong antibodies, masasayang lang iyong aking bakuna ‘no, so antayin ko muna po siguro ang kaunting panahon.

**MELA LESMORAS/PTV4:** Opo. And sir sa COVID cases naman, kasi nakita namin via parang Zoom ay nandoon din naman si Secretary Duque sa meeting kagabi with President Duterte. So ano po kaya iyong mga nasabi ni Secretary Duque and mayroon po bang mga ibinilin sa kaniya si Pangulong Duterte kung paano pa talaga mas mapaiigting iyong pagkontrol sa COVID surge sa bansa?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Ang pinag-usapan nila kahapon ay tungkol doon sa ating mga protocols para sa mga bumabalik na ating mga OFWs ‘no kasi nga mas mahabang panahon ngayon ang ginugugol ng mga OFWs sa mga isolation facilities ‘no dahil ikaanim na araw sila tini-test para

sa PCR at umaabot nang dalawa hanggang tatlong araw iyong resulta. Pero ito nga po, sang-ayon kay Secretary Duque ay dahil sa mga new variants 'no na iniawasan nating makapasok sa Pilipinas. Gustuhin man natin na ibalik sa dati na after 1 day ay nagpi-PCR na at kung negative palalabasin na ang mga OFWs, eh mas importante na mapigil natin iyong pagpasok pa nang mas maraming mga variants na mas nakakahawa.

**MELA LESMORAS/PTV4:** Opo. And final question na lang po, Secretary Roque. Kasi napapansin natin na sa Talk to the People ng Pangulo, dumarami iyong Cabinet members na kasama at nagri-report sa taumbayan. In a way, ito na po ba iyong parang Cabinet meeting natin or if hindi, kailan po kaya iyong susunod na Cabinet meeting? Ano po iyong schedule ni Pangulong Duterte, may mga mahalagang gagawin po ba siya this week?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Nasa MECQ pa po tayo kaya mahirap na magkaroon ng Cabinet meeting dahil limited tayo to 10 'no or 10% 'no of the capacity eh marami kaming mga miyembro ng Gabinete 'no. So sa ngayon po nakikita ninyo naman na hangga't maaari iniimbitahan ang maraming mga kalihim para magbigay ng ulat sa kanila, sa taumbayan kung ano iyong ginagawa ng kanilang mga opisina. So for the time being given the MECQ classification eh ganito po muna siguro ang patakaran.

**MELA LESMORAS/PTV4:** Okay. Thank you so much, Secretary Roque.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yes. Back to Usec. Rocky, please.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes. Secretary, hindi ko lang po alam kung na-mention ninyo na 'to pero— dahil humabol po ako dito sa briefing. From Ace Romero of Philippine Star: What was the President's decision regarding the lower pork tariff, is he standing by it or he is open to withdrawing it? Why did he decide that way?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, na-cover po natin ito sa presentation natin, pinanindigan na po ni Presidente iyong desisyon ng kaniyang mga economic managers at ng Department of Agriculture na magpapasok ng 400,000 metric tons sa pamamagitan ng MAV sa mas mababang taripa 'no. At sabi naman ng Presidente ito po ay, number one, para maibsan nga iyong kakulangan ng supply na naging dahilan kung bakit naging napakamahal ng baboy sa palengke; at pangalawa, ito po ay temporary 'no habang hindi pa nari-repopulate ng mga local growers iyong kanilang mga alaga dito sa ating bayan 'no. At importante na maibaba sa lalong mabilis na panahon ang presyo ng baboy kasi ito po'y nagku-contribute sa mataas na inflation rate.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** From Jam Punzalan of ABS-CBN Online: To quell criticism that the government seems to be on autopilot and is just going through the motions, would you be able to share what is the next big step or goal of government to fight the pandemic? How soon can we achieve this goal?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Ang naging istrategiya po ngayon ay, unang-una, pinalalakas po natin iyong healthcare capacity natin. Kaya nga po ngayong araw na ito nagkaroon ng groundbreaking ceremony para sa isang 500-bed modular hospital for mild and moderate COVID 'no diyan po sa Luneta. At patuloy po ang paggagawa natin ng additional beds dahil alam natin na bagama't kakaunti lang iyong porsiyento na nagkakasakit na kinakailangang maospital, eh dadami rin po iyong numero, habang dumadami ang mga numero.

Alam po natin na ang kasagutan ngayon ay localized lockdown instead of itong malawakan pong MECQ pero napilitan tayong gawin ito dahil nga kinakailangan nating mapalakas pa iyong ating health system 'no. So sunud-sunod naman po iyong mga pag-i-inaugurate at pagbubukas ng mga additional na kama at ito po ay bukod pa doon sa mga additional kama na pinaku-commit natin lalung-lalo na sa mga pribadong hospital dahil nga po doon sa pag-utos ng Presidente sa PhilHealth na bayaran ang halos sampung bilyon na pagkakautang sa mga pribadong mga hospital.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Thank you, Secretary. Ang sunod pong magtatanong, si Triciah Terada ng CNN Philippines.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead please, Trish.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Hi! Good afternoon po, Secretary Roque. Sir, just a quick clarification on one line that you mentioned earlier – iyong bagama't hindi natin mapapatupad – pertaining to the arbitral ruling. Is this, sir, an admission na hindi natin mai-enforce iyong 2016 arbitral ruling dahil wala tayong capacity to do so? And ito na po ba iyong magiging policy until the end of the President's term?

**SEC. ROQUE:** It's not a policy; it's a reality in international law. Ang one different feature of international law is wala tayong enforcement mechanism lalung-lalo na sa mga arbitral tribunal awards. It is theoretically binding on parties thereto, pero wala tayong police na mag-i-enforce niyan, wala tayong sheriff na magi-enforce. The enforcement mechanism is based solely on the fact that no country would want to admit that they are in breach of their obligations under international law.

So ang mga pamamaraan to enforce it, puwede sana sa Security Council, kaya lang nandoon ang Tsina, permanent member po siya ng Security Council at mayroong veto vote. So, one vote from China hindi po ma-approve ng Security Council o iyong tinatawag na collective security measures under chapter 7 of the United Nations. Another is iyong parang uniting for peace resolution na ginamit sa Congo wherein it is the General Assembly that will authorize the enforcement, pero malabo iyon, kasi napakadaming bansa at siyempre iyong mga number ng bansa na papanig sa Tsina, we expect eh lalo pang dadami ngayon, dahil lumalakas naman ang influence of China. So, it's not the Philippine saying, we cannot enforce it, it's just the nature of international law sa ngayon na wala tayong enforcement mechanism when it comes to arbitral awards.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** Sir, if I am not mistaken si Ambassador Babe Romualdez said something like the US counterpart is just waiting for our call. Can you help us put this into context? What kind of help can we expect from the US government and at the same time what stopping us from seeking this help?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi ko po napansin iyong sinabi ni Ambassador Babes Romualdez. I don't want to put words in his mouth. So in answer to your question, I am not sure what he meant by it. Kasi pinakinggan ko naman, parang hindi ko naman nakita na parang his assessment is they are just waiting for a request and they will act. Ang katotohanan niyan, dalawang beses na tayong nawalan ng isla at sang-ayon sa Mutual Defense Treaty they could have come to our aid, pero hindi naman nangyari. I am talking about when we lost mischiefs reef at saka iyong Scarborough, of course, during the time of President Aquino.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** Sir, iyong statement po ni Pangulo kagabi, to many, it sounded like we are giving way too much to China. Doesn't that statement give the China the upper hand in the situation? And kung hindi po natin sila, sir, mapipigilan sa mga ginagawa nila ngayon, what makes the President so confident that we can beat them and stop them in case they start or begin drilling oil?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I will disagree with your conclusion, kasi for the first time, I thought, that the President made it clear, "Sige, I can tolerate siguro iyong mga fish resource na nawawala, pero I will not tolerate kapag langis na ang mawawala sa atin. I will not hesitate to send my gray ships", ang sinabi niya ano, kung ang talagang nag pag-uusapan nga ay langis at iba pang mga mineral resources diyan sa pinag-aagawan na West Philippine Sea. So, I think on the contrary hindi nagbibigay ang Presidente sa Tsina, he made it very clear "Kaibigan tayo, makikipagkaibigan ako, but there is a limit to our friendship." Pagdating na sa mga valuable resources na sa tingin ko ay talagang pag-aari ng Pilipinas, paninindigan niya iyon. I don't give at all anything to China. I think he just made it very clear na may limit at may hangganan ang pagkakaibigan.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** And, sir, when the time comes, the President confident that we can still take back whatever is ours?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Basta ang sabi ni Presidente, hindang-hindi mangyayari sa kaniyang administrasyon iyong nangyari sa Scarborough Shoal. Walang isla na mawawala sa Pilipinas habang siya ay Presidente

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** All right. Thank you very much, Spox.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat, Trish. Yes. Usec. Rocky?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes, Secretary from Leila Salaverria of Inquirer: When the President told China that he is not so much interested in fishing because there is not much fish to quarrel

about and that he will only take action when it starts drilling for oil, what does this mean for China's poaching in our EEZ?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Alam ninyo the poaching, napakalaki kasi nitong West Philippine Sea and not the entirety of West Philippine Sea is actually fertile, although karagatan iyan, so mayroon talagang isda. Pero bago pa madiskubre o nagkaroon ng expectation na may langis diyan, nagsimula naman talaga tayong nakakuha ng langis diyan sa Palawan na malapit diyan sa disputed West Philippine Sea na iyan ay hindi naman talaga kilala itong body of water na ito for fishing dahil ang description niyan sa mga mapa ay dangerous grounds kasi mabato iyan. At talagang ang gamit diyan talaga ay bilang sea lanes pero it's not really renowned for fishing. Kaya iyon iyong konteksto na sinasabi ng Presidente. Although, dahil sa laki nga po niyan, may mga areas talaga na renowned for fishing kagaya ng Scarborough Shoal, pero ang Scarborough Shoal po ay hiwalay talaga iyan doon sa Kalayaan Group of Islands na pinag-aawayan. So, we cannot make a conclusion na iyong buong area talaga is rich in fisheries. Pero ang sinabi nga ni Presidente, he may tolerate dahil ano naman ang magagawa natin ngayon 'no, we may tolerate na may ibang nangingisda habang hindi naman pinipigilan na mangisda ang mga Pilipino mismo, pero pagdating nga sa mga scarce resources kagaya ng langis at natural gas eh paninindigan ni Presidente ito.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Ang second question po niya: What happens to Filipino fishermen who were harassed by China or affected by its activities? What kind of assistance can they expect from the government, given these statements from the President?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Alam po ninyo, minsan ako ay naging abogado ng mga mangingingisda diyan sa Scarborough. Pinagbawalan sila noong panahon ni Presidente Aquino, pero sila po ay malayang nakapangisda muli ngayon. At bagama't mayroong barko doon ng Tsina eh hindi naman sila pinipigilan ngayon. At iyan naman po ay reports din na ni-reiterate kahapon din ni Secretary Lorenzana na nakapangisingisda na naman po iyong ating mga mangingingisda na nais mangisda diyan sa West Philippine Sea. So wala pa naman pong report ngayon na pinagbabawalan ang ating mga kababayan na mangisda.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Ang susunod pong magtatanong si Joseph Morong ng GMA 7.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yes, Joseph, please.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Hello, sir! Good afternoon.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Good afternoon.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Good afternoon, Ambassador Sorreta. Sir, my question is for you. Last night, sir, si Secretary Lorenzana said during the meeting that there is no hindrance 'no for the President, for anyone, any official to go to the WPS. Is the President interested in going to Kalayaan or Spratlys?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, if there is a reason to do it. The President was emphasizing na kung kinakailangan akong pumunta, pupunta ako at ang sabi naman wala naman pong hindrance.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** And he said yesterday, sir, that it doesn't achieve anything when you go there and it doesn't establish anything, is that correct, from the statement of the President last night?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I think, it's an expression of fact. Kasi alam ninyo in international law, may tinatawag tayong critical date, the critical date is when issues are joined and any tribunal ruling on an issue i-ignore lahat ng mga ginawa ng mga partido. After that critical date kasi everything will be self-serving. Kung ang pinag-uusapan ay disputed land territory, then iyong test is the superior claim to effective occupation. So binabalewala lahat iyong ginagawa after the critical date, kasi nga lahat iyan self-serving.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Sir, in other words, sir, do you think if ever he goes there, may point o wala naman?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I don't think it will damage, I don't think it will add, because if it is to be brought to judicial settlement, ia-apply din iyong critical date concept na anything after the issues are joined, the tribunal will ignore and base its evidence on superior claim prior to the critical date.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Sir, di po ba si Presidente sabi noong 2016, he will Jet Ski to stake our claim in the Spratly. So what happens to that campaign promise, sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, that was a metaphor but I think he has reiterated that when he said na there are limits to our friendship. Hindi ako papayag na mawala, na mangyari iyong nangyari sa administrasyong Aquino na nawalan ng isang isla habang sila po ay naninilbihan sa gobyerno.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Sir, can I go back to some of the statements of the President last night, as far as putting his foot down 'no – sabi niya iyong oil drilling that is the time that he will put his foot down, he said, sir, and I'm quoting, "Kapag nag-umpisa na silang mag-drill ng oil diyan, sasabihin ko talaga sa China, is that part of our agreement, because it is not part of our agreement. I am also going to excavate, to drill my oil there. If you say you own it, I own it." Sir, he mentioned of an agreement. What is this agreement? What did the President agree to and ano iyong mga negotiations niya, sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, ang alam kong mga pinag-uusapan ngayon iyong Code of Conduct. Alam ko pinag-uusapan din iyong joint exploration 'no. Pero wala pa pong napipirmahan bagama't mayroon lang framework na napagkasunduan na on how to proceed discussing the joint exploration. So iyon po iyong posibleng mga kasunduan na inaasahan nating magbubunga dahil nga dito sa malapit na relasyon natin sa Tsina.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, iyon pong sa 2016 Arbitral ruling ‘no, sabi ng Tribunal, as far as the nine-dash line claim of China is concerned, the Tribunal, “Concluded that there was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within the nine-dash line,” and nai-extinguish iyon because incompatible siya with the EEZ of other countries such as ours. But, sir, the President said yesterday that the question remains forever. Sir, ano iyon po bang statement ni Presidente, what does it do to the ruling of the Tribunal? Does it invalidate that finding of the Tribunal?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala po. It’s a statement of fact that according to the Tribunal bereft of legal basis iyong claim to historic waters and therefore, in so far as the Tribunal held that some of the waters fall within our EEZ, then these waters fall within the sovereign rights of the Philippines.

Pero ang problema nga po, pagdating sa enforcement. Kasi pati iyong mga ilang artificial islands are found in waters that are found within our EEZ. And only the [unclear] the Philippines has the power to build these artificial islands, in fact ‘no.

Pero iyan po iyong dilemma natin ‘no, wala kasing international police; ang international police sana under Chapter 7 of collective security measures ng United Nations, pero may veto vote po ang China doon and I don’t think a Chapter 7 resolution will ever emanate from the Security Council.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, in terms of enforcement, si Justice Carpio issued a statement and he mentioned two incidents ‘no, in 1987 and 2019 when the UN General Assembly approved a resolution in 1987 against the US to comply with the international court ruling favoring Nicaragua; in 2019, UN General Assembly to the UK to return to the Chagos Archipelago. Justice Carpio said, and I quote, “Getting a UN resolution in your country’s favor is already a huge victory because that means the world community is behind your country. That strengthens enormously your country’s position and weakens greatly your adversary’s position. A country cannot just fold up and give up just because the other side is stubborn. That is a childish mentality.” Comment first, and then doesn’t that answer your concern about enforcing the PCA ruling?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, that’s a personal opinion of Justice Carpio which I think is erroneous, because as you know, only Security Council resolutions are binding on all member states. And of course, GA resolutions are non-binding. They are not even recognized as sources of international law except in so far as they may evidence customary law; so talagang it’s a political document but that’s all that there is to it.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, last na lang. May mga doctors yata, sir, hindi pa nakakatanggap ng kanilang mga salary. I read one na ang sabi sa kaniya May pa ang kaniyang sunod na suweldo. Bakit, sir, nangyayari sa mga doctors natin ito?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Ipagbigay-alam ninyo na lang po sa akin kasi we will follow up with the DOH dahil hindi dapat nangyayari ito.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Thank you for your time, sir, and I pray for your full recovery, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you very much, Joseph. Maraming salamat. Next question, Usec. Rocky.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** From Kris Jose of Remate: Sa issue po ng withdrawal of support sa Pangulo, although pinabulaanan naman daw po ni Secretary Delfin Lorenzana. Pero nakikita ninyo ba ang pangangailangan ng magsagawa ng loyalty check sa hanay ng sundalo?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Absolutely wala pong necessity. Sabi ni Presidente, kung ayaw sa kaniya ng military, uuwi siya ng Davao.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Ang second question po niya: Reaksiyon po sa sinabi ni WHO Representative to the Philippines Dr. Rabi Abeyasinghe na kulang pa rin ang hakbang ng pamahalaan para protektahan ang frontline healthcare workers ng bansa. Kailangan daw na tiyakin ang kaligtasan ng kalusugan ng healthcare workers laban sa COVID-19.

**SEC. ROQUE:** I think this has to do with the fact na 63% pa lang ang health workers ang nababakunahan. I think as a general conclusion, lahat po ng medical frontliners na gustong magpabakuna ay mabibigyan po ng bakuna. Pero marami po talaga sa kanila ang nag-aantay ng kanilang preferred brand at hindi naman natin po sila mapipilit.

Pero sa amin po, walang tigil ang ating pagmumungkahi sa mga health professionals that the best vaccine is the vaccine that is available.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** From Rosalie Coz of UNTV: Ano po ang gagawing hakbang ng Palasyo kung gagamitin ng iba ang ganitong inisyatibo para mamulitika kaugnay ng isyu ng community pantries?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala po, dahil bahala na po ang taumbayan na maghusga laban doon sa mga iepal dito sa community pantries na ito.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, susunod na magtatanong ay si Melo Acuña ng Asia Pacific Daily.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, Melo.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Good afternoon, Secretary. Magandang hapon po. Ang tanong ko ay para muna sa inyo, nabanggit ninyo rin lamang po iyong tungkol sa South China Sea, sa West Philippine Sea, mayroon framework na napagkasunduan ang Pilipinas at Tsina: Magkakaroon pa po ba ng katotohanan at magaganap pa ba iyong joint exploration ng Pilipinas at ng Tsina?



**SEC. ROQUE:** Ang kinakailangan na lang po ngayon siguro ay iyong kasunduan sa panig ng bansang Tsina at ng Pilipinas dahil ang pagkakaintindi ko, iyong mga pribadong mga kumpaniya ay tapos na sila ng kasunduan. Pero siyempre, hindi naman pupuwedeng pumasok sa kasunduan ang mga kumpaniya lamang nang walang tratado 'no sa panig ng kanilang mga bansa.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Hindi po kaya magiging masalimuot ito kung anong bansa ang pagbabayaran ng buwis sapagkat may kinalaman ito sa sovereignty doon sa pook na pagdarausan ng paghahanap ng krudo o ng petrolyo?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi naman po siguro dahil lang naman Pilipinas at Tsina ang magkakaroon ng joint exploration agreement kumbaga. Worldwide, ang nature po talaga ng langis it's a straddling resource. Kasi kung nasa ilalim po iyan ng land boundary, it is shared by adjacent states 'no. Ganiyan din po ang anyo ng langis sa continental shelf na tinatawag natin. So napakadami na pong pumasok dito sa joint exploration agreements, joint development agreements, at marami na pong models na puwedeng pagbasehan kung paano paghahatian ang tanging-yaman na ito.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Opo. Do we have the luxury of time to have it into fruition because we are in the last months of the Duterte administration?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I think the President would want these joint exploration and joint development as part of his legacy.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Yeah. My question for Ambassador Sorreta if you please, Secretary?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, please.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Yeah, Mr. Ambassador, good afternoon from Manila. Former Ambassador to Manila, Ambassador Khovaev said they plan na magkaroon ng pabrika o gawaan ng bakuna sa Pilipinas. Ano na po kaya ang nangyari doon sa balak na iyon, itutuloy pa po ba ng Gamaleya iyong kanilang pagtatayo ng pabrika o laboratoryo sa Pilipinas, Mr. Ambassador?

**AMBASSADOR SORRETA:** Thank you very much, Sir Melo. Yes, the discussion with private entities in the Philippines continues on this. This will have to be in partnership with the private sector. Gamaleya knows that we have great technicians and medical experts when it comes to pharmaceuticals and production. They're known around the world as—many of our frontliners are at the frontlines of developing vaccines. They know this, and they already have production agreements with many countries that there are models for this.

But this issue, if I may, Secretary Harry, if I may touch, the President's policy of broadening the frontiers of our foreign policy is bearing fruit. We did not have excellent relations with Russia

in the past so we were not able to develop technical, scientific and medical cooperation and this, in a way, contributed to the delays. If we had deeper relations in the past with Russia, we would have experts exchanging views over the years, scientists working together and of course, language training, and this would have led to earlier approval, I think.

So it's very important that countries where we have no difference; we may have differences with our allies, we don't get in between that and we develop and broaden the frontiers of our foreign policy as the President has done. And I hope it continues because the fight between Russia and the US is not our fight for example, particularly in our region they are not rivals that affect us in a way.

So if we had I think deeper relations with Russia and exchanges, people to people, science to science, technical-technical, I think there is much more to reap particularly in the future in terms of health cooperation and science, technology, communication and energy [garbled].

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Mr. Ambassador, may specific timeline for us to meet our goals?

**AMBASSADOR SORRETA:** Yes. By the end of the year, we're hoping twenty million doses of the vaccine and earlier than the end of the year. They have dedicated production, I have seen it, they have done what we've asked and we're hoping that barring any untoward event, any negative circumstances, we will get our twenty million.

Marami ho ditong nagtatanong sa akin na mga OFWs kung kailan makakakuha iyong kamag-anak nila ng kanilang vaccine and I told them it will be coming. The Filipinos have also availed of the Sputnik Vaccine.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** I see. Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador. Thank you, Secretary. All the best!

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you very much, Melo. Thank you, Ambassador. Next question, Usec. Rocky?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes, Secretary, from Genalyn Kabling of Manila Bulletin: What's the next government action if China refuses to pullout its vessel from Julian Felipe Reef and other part of the West Philippine Sea and lay claim to these areas?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Kampante po tayo na dahil nga sa malapit na pagkakaibigan aalis at aalis din naman sila diyan sa darating na Mayo kung nandiyan pa sila.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Ang second question po niya: Will the government set-up its own version of community pantry across the country after some pantries were reportedly closed due to red-tagging concerns?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, malinaw po na nilinaw na rin ng DILG na wala pong basbas iyang mga red-tagging na iyan 'no at wini-welcome po natin ang mga community pantries na iyan. Well, kanina po inanunsiyo ko lang na nagkaroon ng extension iyong pamamahagi ng financial assistance until 15th May. So, iyan naman po ang toka ng gobyerno, ang pagbibigay ng financial assistance. 23 billion po siya ngayon ang ibinibigay nating financial assistance.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Secretary, ang susunod pong magtatanong ay si Pia Rañada ng Rappler.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, Pia.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Hello, sir? Can you hear me?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yes, go ahead.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Yes, sir! Sir, seeing that the NTF-ELCAC is a task force created by the President, will the Palace hold accountable anyone in the NTF-ELCAC responsible for sharing those red-tagging post about community pantry organizers?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I think the President has spoken through my office, the DILG has spoken, and unless their concern is about health protocols not being observed, they should let this community pantries alone.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** So, sir, are you saying that the NTF-ELCAC is wrong in red-tagging these organizers of community pantries?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Let's just say the President welcomes all initiatives na makakatulong sa ating kababayan habang tayo ay nasa pandemya.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Sir, from Ace Romero, he just wanted this to be asked. Will the Palace ask the anti-insurgency task force to stop linking community pantries with communism, since there are concerns about the safety of organizers?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Desisyon na po nila iyan basta nagsalita na po ang ating DILG Secretary at nagsalita na rin po ako bilang tagapagsalita ng Pangulo na dapat walang hahadlang doon sa mga efforts na nagbabayanihan ang ating mga kababayan.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Sir, what will happen to NTF-ELCAC officials who continue to make post or make claims about community pantry organizers?

**SEC. ROQUE:** You know naman that's part of the free marketplace of ideas. Sa tingin ko kahit anong sabihin nila eh basta nakikinabang ang taumbayan diyan eh maniniwala pa rin ang mga kababayan natin sa community pantries.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Pero Sir, the danger here is iyong red-tagging po. Parang people fear that the posts by a government task force might attract danger or people who believe in this post na parang recruitment efforts iyong community pantries. Baka ma-endanger iyong buhay ng mga organizers ng mga pantries na ito. So, will the Palace do anything to stop this kind of danger from bearing fruit?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Nagsalita na po tayo bilang bibig ng Presidente, nagsalita na po ang kalihim ng DILG, welcome po natin iyong mga community pantries. Let's leave it at that.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Okay. And then, sir, lastly, because si FDA Director General Eric Domingo said that it was the President himself who ordered the Ivermectin trials to begin. So, sir, may we know the reason of the President for ordering this?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Natural! Nais malaman ni Presidente kung talagang may basehan na na epektibong gamot ang Ivermectin para sa COVID. Kasi kung siya ay epektibo at mura, bakit naman natin hindi magagamit pero kinakailangan mapatunayan munang ligtas at epektibo itong Ivermectin.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** Nagka-debate po ba among the task force officials and the President because the DOST said a week ago that there was no need for the Philippines itself to conduct these trials in the Philippines kasi marami na raw trials abroad? Was there a discussion on this?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala po. DOST is conducting iyong kanilang clinical trials dito like any other drug 'no. Kasi itong Ivermectin naman it is used as a veterinary medicine and it's not used for COVID-19, so gusto lang nating masigurado na ligtas at epektibo siya laban sa COVID-19.

**PIA RAÑADA /RAPPLER:** All right. Thank you, sir!

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat. Usec. Rocky?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes, Secretary. From Sam Medenilla of Business Mirror: May nabanggit si President Duterte sa meeting with Cabinet members yesterday – If he will have a dialogue with members of the Senate to discuss EO 128 and the proposed MAV adjustment for pork?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I think ang nangyari kahapon po ini-explain ni Presidente kung bakit sinang-ayunan niya iyong rekomendasyon ng DA at ng kaniyang economic team for the 400,000-metric ton na MAV importation at lower tariff. But of course, that is subject to revocation if Congress wants dahil sa Saligang Batas talagang exercise of delegated authority lang po ang ginagawa ng Presidente pagdating sa tariff fixing and it can only be exercised kung Congress is not in session. So, pagbalik ng Kongreso kapag sila ay nag-convene na muli at nais nilang i-override iyan eh iyan po ay hurisdiksiyon naman po ng Kongreso.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Second question po niya: Will President Duterte now certify as urgent the Bayanihan 3 after the hearing of the economic impact of the ECQ and MECQ in NCR Plus?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi pa po dahil ang paninindigan po ng ating economic team, gagamitin po muna natin ang 2021 budget.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Thank you, Secretary Roque. Iyon lang po iyong mga questions natin.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay! Dahil wala na po tayong mga katanungan, salamat po sa ating mga naging panauhin, si Philippine Ambassador to the United States Babe Romualdez, Philippine Ambassador to Russia Carlos Sorreta.

Maraming salamat sa ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps at maraming salamat, Usec. Rocky.

Sa ngalan po ng inyong Presidente, ito po ang inyong Spox Harry Roque na nagsasabing: Pilipinas, napakadami na po nating pagsubok na nadaanan. In the end, pinapatunayan po that the Filipinos will always prevail.

Mabuhay po kayo at magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat!

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