

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PUBLIC BRIEFING #LagingHandaPH
HOSTED BY PCOO USEC. ROCKY IGNACIO
December 27, 2021 (11:00 A.M. –11:52 A.M.)

USEC. IGNACIO: Magandang umaga, Pilipinas at sa lahat ng ating mga kababayan saanmang panig ng mundo. Tapos na po ang Pasko at ngayon ay sama-sama nating inaabangan ang pagsalubong po sa Bagong Taon, kasabay niyan ay ang pagtutok po natin sa mga balita at impormasyon tungkol po sa pinakamaiinit na isyu sa loob at labas ng Pilipinas, ako po ang inyong lingkod, Usec. Rocky Ignacio, at ito ang Public Briefing #LagingHandaPH.

Una sa ating mga balita: Pinamamadali na ni Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ang pagrepaso sa 2022 national budget para po agad masiguro ang pondong nakalaan para sa recovery ng mga tinamaan ng Bagyong Odette, gayundin ang patuloy na COVID-19 response ng pamahalaan para po sa susunod na taon. Ang detalye sa report na ito:

[VTR]

USEC. IGNACIO: Malapit na pong magtapos ang taong 2021 pero hindi ang iniwan nitong pinsala sa mga lalawigang lubhang naapektuhan pagdating po ng Typhoon Odette. Ang pamahalaan ay naka-focus ngayon kung paano matutulungan makakaahon ang mga kababayan nating nawalan ng tirahan at hanapbuhay dahil po sa kalamidad. Kaugnay niyan ay kumustahin po natin ang pondong inilaan ng pamahalaan para po sa rehabilitasyon ng mga nasalanta, makakausap natin mula sa Department of Budget and Management Acting Secretary Tina Rose Marie Canda. Good morning po, Secretary.

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDA: Good morning po, ma'am, Usec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary, sa ngayon po ay magkano na po iyong na-disburse mula dito sa calamity fund para po sa mga tinamaan ng Typhoon Odette?

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDA: In accordance doon sa utos ni Pangulo, mayroon na tayong na-release noong Biyernes na isang bilyon para sa mga local government units. At ngayong araw na ito, maglalabas pa kami ng isa pang bilyon na instruction din niya. Tapos maglalabas din kami bago matapos ang taon ng apat bilyon parang ayuda para sa mga local government units na ipapahatid naman nila sa mga mamamayang naapektuhan ng Bagyong Odette.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary, immediately po ba ay natanggap na ng mga lalawigang under state of calamity ang budget na ito mula sa calamity fund?

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDA: Oo, kasi noong 24, kung hindi ako nagkakamali kasi nagku-coordinate kami sa BTr (Bureau of the Treasury), talagang tinapos nila iyan; nag-overtime sila para matapos iyan at mai-download sa local government units. So nasa accounts na iyan ng local government units kasi iyon ang importante, makarating sa kanila.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Magkano raw po iyong budget na puwede raw pong makuha para sa calamity fund under the 2021 budget, Secretary?

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDIA: This year, parang ang mari-release natin from different resources, hindi iyong calamity fund 'no, ay six billion pesos. Bakit ko sinasabing hindi sa calamity fund? Kasi may proseso kasi ang paggastos sa calamity fund 'no, kailangan may mga reports pa iyan. Kaya ang gagamitin ng mga ahensiya ay quick response fund.

So iyong mga quick response fund nila, may mga limit ang mga ahensiya diyan, mga departments. So at any given point kapag bumaba iyon doon sa level na mayroon sila, io-augment ng DBM iyan base sa request nila, automatically iyan ay walang analysis, iri-release sa kanila iyan. So quick response fund kasi iyong calamity fund, nililipat sa quick response fund para mabilis ang aksiyon.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary, nai-download na rin po ba sa mga LGUs ito pong budget na mula naman sa contingent funds ng Pangulo? In case po, magkano po ito in exact?

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDIA: Iyong sinabi ko kaninang release na one billion, iyon po ay mula sa contingent fund ni Pangulo. Tapos iyong karagdagang isang bilyon today, galing din iyan sa contingent ni Pangulo, ni Pangulong Duterte. So bale dalawang bilyon ang ibibigay niya mula sa contingent fund. Tapos iyong dalawang bilyon naman sa calamity, iyon lilipat sa quick response fund para magamit na rin agad ng mga ahensiya para sa pagtugon doon sa mga pangangailangan. Prepositioning iyan at saka iyong mga relief efforts iyan eh, doon kinukuha sa quick response fund iyon.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Pero kumusta naman daw po iyong—iyon nga po, iyong nabanggit ninyo na quick response fund, ito naman pong sa government agencies gaya po ng DPWH, ng Department of Agriculture at ng DSWD?

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDIA: Ang DSWD, kung hindi ako nagkakamali, nag-submit na sila over the weekend ng pag-augment kasi ang kanilang limit is 1.35 billion pesos. So bumaba na iyon ng critical, parang naging 200... parang mga almost 300, parang ganoon eh. So nag-request sila ng 628 yata or parang nasa 600 plus million. At kanina I think ay nailabas na rin iyon para matugunan iyong kanilang pangangailangan kasi kulang na nga iyong quick response fund nila.

Ang isa pang nag-request ay OCD, parang a hundred million yata iyon plus ang PNP ay nag-request na rin ng 25 million.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary, kung iyon pong remaining amount, ano po, sa ipinangako ng Pangulo ay kukunin sa 2022 budget, madi-disburse ba ito agad-agad pagpasok po raw po ng taong 2022?

DBM ACTING SEC. CANDIA: Oo, ang gagawin kasi ng Senado at saka ng House ay sinabmit [submitted] na nga nila iyong budget para mapirmahan agad ni Presidente iyon at nang maging batas na iyon by next year. So kung ganoon ang mangyayari, wala nang waiting time; on January 3, puwede nang gamitin iyong 2022 natin, Usec.

USEC. IGNACIO: Okay po. Pero, Sec. Tina, basahin ko lang po itong tanong ng ating kasamahan, ano po, ni Evelyn Quiroz ng Pilipino Mirror sa inyo: At least six billion pesos of the ten billion Typhoon Odette response funds promised by President Duterte would come from the proposed 5.034 trillion 2022 national budget. What will the implications be if, for some reason, the President fails to sign the 2022 Budget?

DBM ACTING SECRETARY CANDA: Mayroon sigurong kaunting adjustment o correction kasi for this year nga, iyong six billion kumbaga parang pinunan na natin agad iyong six billion ano, Usec, itong taon na ito. So, bale, next year na iyong four billion pesos.

Kapag hindi kasi napirmahan ang budget natin at reenacted, ang mangyayari naman diyan – very unique ang sistema ng Pilipinas – puwede tayong mag-release from a reenacted budget corresponding to the requirements of the calamity. Iyon ang unique sa budget natin na kakaiba mula sa mga budget ng Amerika at ibang mga bansa, mayroon tayong reenacted provision.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary Tina, may tanong naman po si MJ Blancaflor ng Daily Tribune: When will the President sign into law the Proposed 2022 Budget? Na-identify na po ba iyong items that you he will likely veto?

DBM ACTING SECRETARY CANDA: Yes po. Parang, if I'm not mistaken, it's going to be signed tomorrow afternoon.

So, iyong items naman to be vetoed, ang naalala ko lang iyong ano eh, parang isa lang eh. Pero I don't think I am in a position to discuss it at this point kasi hindi pa nari-review yata. Hindi ko alam kung napirmahan na iyon, parang niri-review pa nila iyong veto na iyan eh.

So, hindi ako, at this point, comfortable kung idi-discuss ko na ang ivi-veto. Pero it's very few if I'm not mistaken, kasi parang maganda iyong mga naipasok ng mga legislators doon sa budget eh.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ang sunod pong tanong ni MJ Blancaflor: How will the government fund the proposed five trillion budget? Ano po ang inaasahang tax reforms or measures na dapat maipasa para po mapagkukunan ng pondo?

DBM ACTING SECRETARY CANDA: Naku, doon ho sa pagpi-finance ng ating budget, eh iyan eh under ng hurisdiksiyon ng Department of Finance. Masarap ho ang buhay namin sa Budget, kami po ay gagastos lamang. Kumbaga ang pag-raise ng mga revenues eh nasa ano iyan, tungkulin po iyan ng DOF under BIR, Customs, and other government agencies na mayroong authority to collect revenues.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Tungkol naman po sa COVID response, Secretary, magkano na po iyong final allocation daw po ng pamahalaan through the Department of Health para po sa pagbili ng mga bakuna at iba pang measures for our continued COVID response?

DBM ACTING SECRETARY CANDA: Wala po ako data ngayon dito sa COVID response unfortunately, so, I cannot give you an answer on how much we have already provided sa COVID. I am sorry for that.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Panghuli na lang po: Ano na lang daw po iyong commitment ng DBM kaugnay sa paglalaan po ng pondo para sa calamity assistance ng mga sinalanta ng nagdaang bagyo at ng pandemya?

DBM ACTING SECRETARY CANDA: Iyong ano --- kaya nga sabi ko kanina iyong paggamit kasi ng calamity fund or NDRRMF (National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund), mayroong proseso iyan. Noong nagkaroon ng Odette, bale inano muna natin, pina-prioritize ni Pangulo iyong pangangailangan ng Odette kasi immediate iyon, ano. Pero hindi ibig sabihin iyong mga nasalanta, iyong mga damaged 'no noong naabutan tayo ng Ulysses, Sendong at saka kung ano-anong pang bagyo, hindi naman ibig sabihin ay kinalimutan natin iyon o hindi na bibigyan.

Ang mangyayari niyan kasi mayroong mga ahensiya na puwedeng gamitin iyong kanilang sariling budget, lalo na kung repairs iyan o lalo na mga livelihood. Pangalawa, puwede pa ring i-charge iyan doon sa 2022 Budget. Kung hindi ako nagkakamali, mga twenty billion yata ang alokasyon natin para sa calamity fund for next year unless na-reduce iyon ng Congress, pero parang ganoon ang amount.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary, kami po ay nagpapasalamat sa inyong impormasyon at sa inyong panahon. DBM Acting Secretary Tina Canda. Happy New Year, Secretary!

DBM ACTING SECRETARY CANDA: Happy New Year din, Usec.! Thank you. Thank you very much.

USEC. IGNACIO: Samantala, base po sa talaang inilabas ng Department of Health kahapon, nadagdagan ng 433 new cases ang mga nahawaan ng COVID-19 sa Pilipinas kaya po umabot na iyan sa 2,838,640 total cases. 283 naman po ang nadagdag sa mga gumaling kaya nasa 2,777,980 na ang kabuuang bilang ng mga COVID survivors sa bansa.

Sa kabilang banda, 13 po ang naitalang nasawi, sumatotal mayroon na po tayong 51,200 na dami ng mga pumanaw sa sakit. Nasa 9,522 naman po ang active cases sa bansa, katumbas po ito ng 0.3% ng total cases sa kasalukuyan.

Isa po ang bansang Israel sa mga nanguna sa buong mundo sa kanilang COVID-19 response. Sa katunayan, isa rin po sila sa mga nanguna sa pag-rollout ng pagbabakuna panlaban po sa virus. At ngayong pinag-aaralan na rin po ng Israeli Government ito pong pagtuturok ng ikaapat na dose ng COVID-19 vaccine.

Alamin natin ang iba pang detalye tungkol diyan mula po kay Israeli Ambassador to the Philippines, Ambassador Ilan Fluss. Good morning, sir, and welcome to the program.

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FLUSS: Good morning. Thank you very much for having me.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, what do we know so far about the proposal to administer a fourth dose of vaccine to the vulnerable sector in Israel? Is this already underway or still under consideration?

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FLUSS: It's still under consideration. There's going to be another meeting to discuss this on Wednesday this week, the different opinions. So, the Israeli Ministry of Health and the special team to analyze this have not yet decided.

As you know, we are executing the boosters, the third dose, and the fourth dose is still being considered.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. But, Ambassador, some Israeli health experts are saying excessive vaccination may cause immune system fatigue and may do more harm than good. What is the Israeli Government's stand on this?

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FLUSS: It's not clear yet what's going to happen. As I said, the experts are analyzing giving the fourth dose. They have not yet decided if they will do that.

Indications are the vaccine in each month, the level of antibodies is going down and this is why they are considering the fourth dose. Again, also up to the first, second then up to the third – up to the booster, every month the level of antibodies is going down.

So, the fourth booster is really being seriously considered, but as I said, there's not enough medical evidence on what will happen if we give the fourth booster. So, it is still being analyzed, but it seems to me that this might be the direction.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, may we know how is the vaccination rate [is going on] in Israel as of now? How many received their primary doses and how many already got the booster or third shot?

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FLUSS: Yes. Israel population is about 9.3 million citizens, less than 10% of the population of the Philippines. Until now, about six and a half million got the first dose, these include children from five and above. About six million got the second dose and about 4.2 million people have received also the booster.

What we are seeing today is actually, I wouldn't say growing hesitancy, but people are not rushing now especially the younger generation is not rushing to get vaccinated, especially not for the booster, so we have less than 50% who got the booster until now.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, do we have as to how many Filipinos in Israel are already fully vaccinated?

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR FLUSS: Well, that's easy. All Filipinos in Israel are fully vaccinated. They got—including the booster. It is freely available, there is no limitation, it is up to them and since a lot of them are taking of elderly people and elderly people are the most vulnerable one and must protect once ---

So—to the best of my knowledge, all Filipinos – caregivers, diplomats and other Filipinos in Israel have been fully vaccinated and there is no obstacle in receiving their vaccination.

Just to—regarding the Omicron, I would like to emphasize that distribution in Israel is that the numbers are growing – 1% has passed away but they have also some medical preconditions, they were not the healthy person. And today, we have 1,118 positive confirmed to Omicron out of those 723 people who came from abroad, who entered Israel. We have another 861 suspicious cases where we believe it might be Omicron but we're still doing the sequencing to identify if it is

really the Omicron. And for that reason, we have also the protocols in Israel are being a little bit more strict.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, how this one known death alarmed the government and what other precaution were put in place in response to the Omicron threat apart from administering a fourth dose?

AMBASSADOR FLUSS: So, I would say the most important one is really considering the fourth dose and increasing the level of—the number of people getting the third dose. The 1% I said who passed away, the adults who have other medical conditions, so it is not alarming. However, the numbers are growing and if the numbers are growing it means that there'll be also more people hospitalized and more people in serious conditions.

So for that reason, we have to take precautions and we are introducing more strict protocols on—for example, people coming from abroad, Israel is still close to foreigners but Israelis who are traveling and coming back are not allowed to travel now to what we call red countries and there are about 70 red countries. Those who do come back have to go into a two-week quarantine; if they are fully vaccinated, they can do it to one week quarantine, 7 days together with a PCR test at the beginning; as they enter the country from another PCR after 7 days.

We are also strict with the green tag – anybody wants to enter into a shop—going to shopping malls has to be either vaccinated or tested and their negative test. And people who are not vaccinated are able to enter shops that are supplying essential goods such as food and pharmacies to buy medicines. So we are introducing more strict regulations now in order to deal with the Omicron.

USEC. IGNACIO: But, Ambassador, what are your thoughts on the restrictions that are currently in place here in the Philippines to prevent the Omicron spread? Is it somehow at par to the ones in placed in Israel?

AMBASSADOR FLUSS: Well, I'm not an expert so the condition in each country are very different so—I feel that the suggestion in the Philippines is good, I can see the numbers which are still quite—which are very extremely low, which is very promising. And I see in general the people are obedient so I feel quite comfortable but again I'm not an expert so I cannot give you an expert advice on how the government here is responding. But it seems that they are also looking on what is happening globally and taking good care of the health situation here in the Philippines.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, there were reports that this new surge is caused by Omicron variant may once again overwhelm hospitals in Israel. How is the government preparing for the worst?

AMBASSADOR FLUSS: Well, the Israeli hospitals are well equipped by now and are quite ready to deal with the... with the surge of patients. And that's again, I think the main challenges is to make sure that they are not overwhelmed and that they are not... getting us to more than 100% of the capacity and this is why we're introducing more strict regulation in order to treat. As much as possible the numbers are low but when we see what is happening in other countries and we see the numbers, it seems that this might also be the case in Israel.

As I said, we are trying to control [garbled] as much as possible and spread it on a longer time plus vaccination, plus one more thing is much more testing and sequencing so hopefully others

will avoid or make sure that the hospitals can function properly. But as I said they are fully equipped and the teams are there, hopefully will not to reach to such as situation.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, Israel has been one of the forerunners in COVID-19 response yet the surge of cases still happened because of the Omicron variant. What may be the cause of this surge? Did people relax in following protocols way too soon?

AMBASSADOR FLUSS: People in general [garbled]—I mean watching and seeing the numbers and people are worried and they are expecting the government to do more. And I have to add that also in schools we have more strict rules. On the other hand, there is a sense of a fatigue. So globally we are living in this pandemic for almost [garbled]. So there's also fatigue in the Israeli public but the leadership is giving very clear and strong messages – the challenge is to balance between closing down the economy or continuing letting the economy run within [garbled] pandemic.

So we have here trying to balance between two extremes in a way or the two—between the two extremes and finding the way in maintaining the public health and on the other hand, keeping the government and society healthy from that aspect.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, what can the Philippines possibly learn or pickup from the Omicron surge experience of Israel?

AMBASSADOR FLUSS: I think that both countries were, in a way, the Omicron came in late although I think in Israel the numbers are higher than the Philippines. So we'll be happy to again share our experiences and also our regulation in how we are dealing the situation. As we see today, the pandemic is a global – we get different challenges and new surprises with the Delta, now it is the Omicron.

We have to learn from each other on our protocols, on our efforts, on our practices and to see what can be adopted locally and whatever will bring will help the countries to deal with it. So we are working as part of the global community and it's important to have exchanges between countries. And as I said Israel and the Philippines have had some exchanges and I think we should continue that, sharing the experiences.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ambassador, we would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Israeli government for sending over assistance to the typhoon victims in the south. What more assistance will the embassy and the government provide in the next coming weeks if any, Ambassador?

AMBASSADOR FLUSS: So we sent immediate response... we prepared—immediately responded. We sent some foods, hygiene kits, rice and solar panels to create energy, water purification systems to Cebu, to Bohol and to Siargao. This was very important for us to show the sympathy and the close relations and we care about the Philippines and what is happening here. We are now looking how to continue for the longer run we are going to continue working.

On the medical side, were working with the hospitals here in rebuilding some of the medical facilities that were affected and there are quite a few. Now we are in discussions with the government here – what should be long term response? I have to say that the Israeli embassy is also were in touch with the Israeli civil society which has already seen the devastation and they're also joining the efforts. There are already some Israeli NGOs that have started working here and then will stay here also for the long run and we are supporting them and we're doing this in

coordination between us at the embassy and the Israeli government and Israeli NGOs and civil society so would here to stay.

USEC. IGNACIO: Lastly, Ambassador, your message please to our viewers and to the Filipino people.

AMB. FLUSS: Well, we are living in a challenging time, it's a global world, global challenges, and worst we have the Omicron variant coming now and the same time, dealing with the super typhoon Odette so, it is challenging times. But on the other hand, the Filipino are extremely resilience and happy people and strong. And my message to you, to the Philippine government and Philippine people is that keep the spirit, keep strong and still mark-up challenging times in front of us. I hope and pray that next year would be a better year. Israel is a partner, it's a friend of the Philippines. Israeli people are friends of the Filipino people and we will continue with this partnership and friendship and work together for, hopefully, a better 2022 for all of us together.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you for joining us today, Israel Ambassador to the Philippines, Ambassador Ilan Fluss.

AMB. FLUSS: Thank you for having me.

USEC. IGNACIO: Samantala, last week hanggang next week, asahan na po ang mga pagtitipon ng mga magkakapamilya at magkakaibigan dahil sa holiday break. Pero ang paalala ng mga eksperto, sumunod pa rin sa health protocols lalo't ngayon pa lang po ay kinakikitaan ng bahagyang pagtaas ng OCTA Research ang COVID-19 reproduction rate dito sa Pilipinas. Alamin po natin ang detalyeng iyan mula po kay Dr. Guido David. Magandang umaga po, Dr. David and welcome back po sa Laging Handa.

DR. DAVID: Yes, magandang umaga, Usec. Rocky. And belated Merry Christmas sa inyo and happy holidays.

USEC. IGNACIO: Doc Guido, gaano po kalaki iyong itinaas nitong reproduction rate natin ngayon kumpara po sa reproduction rate ng bansa pagpasok pa lang po ng December?

DR. DAVID: Well, noong early December, Usec., nasa 0.33. Iyon ang pinakamababang reproduction rate na nakita natin sa NCR. Pero sa ngayon nasa 0.85 na siya. In fact, last week nasa 0.44 siya, so parang halos dumoble siya kumpara sa last week. Ang maganda – hindi naman magandang balita – pero we have to put it in context na sa ngayon, less than 1 pa rin naman iyong reproduction number, iyan naman iyong mahalaga eh. So, hindi pa naman talagang pagtaas ng bilang ng kaso iyong nakikita natin. What I mean is iyong trending, hindi pa talagang solid na trending pataas.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Doc Guido, may tanong po ang ating kasamahan sa media ano po. Tanong sa inyo ni Lei Alviz ng GMA News: Ano po iyong basa daw ng OCTA Research sa pagtaas ng daily cases, ADAR, reproduction number, positivity rates sa NCR? May indikasyon bang Omicron-driven na ito?

DR. DAVID: Tama si Lei Alviz na tumaas iyong reproduction number, nasabi nga natin 0.85. Iyong ADAR natin sa NCR ay less than 1 pa rin naman, nasa 0.82. So, basta less than 1 iyong ADAR, okay pa rin naman siya at iyong positivity rate natin tumaas din, nasa 1.4%, medyo tumataas ng bahagya. Ngayon, ito kapag ikumpara natin sa nakaraan na holiday season noong 2020 noong December, nagkaroon din tayo ng holiday uptick.

So, hindi natin masasabi ngayon na Omicron-driven ito dahil nakita rin naman natin ito last year. Siguro doon sa pagtitipun-tipon ng mga kababayan natin, kaya kailangan doble pag-iingat lang naman din ang kinakailangan natin. Sa ngayon, hindi pa natin masasabi kung may factor iyong Omicron, pero ang sinasabi lang natin base sa nakaraan na taon ay may nakita rin naman tayong holiday uptick.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Tanong pa rin po ni Lei Alviz ng GMA News: Dahil po sa posibleng reduced testing ngayong holiday season, maaari bang mas marami pa ang actual cases at sa January na natin makikita iyong real picture?

DR. DAVID: Well, tama rin iyong sinasabi again, ni Lei Alviz na reduced iyong testing natin at nangyari din iyan last year na during the holidays, may mga laboratories na sarado, kaya mas mababa iyong testing output natin. At ngayon, hindi lang dahil sa holidays, dahil din sa recent typhoon, iyong mga affected areas, mas mababa din iyong testing nila dahil may mga laboratories na affected din. So, dahil dito, hindi pa natin nakikita iyong complete picture, ganoon din ang nangyari last year, naghintay tayo hanggang mga first week of January, bago natin nakita iyong clear picture.

Ang nangyari naman noong January this year lang, noong January of 2021, iyong uptick ay bumalik na siya sa normal level. so bumaba ulit siya. Iyon iyong sanang gusto nating makita ngayon na after January, kapag na-resolve na iyong testing, iyong kakulangan natin sa testing at iyong mga closed laboratories ay bababa ulit sa normal levels ang bilang ng kaso. Iyan iyong gusto nating mangyari.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ito naman pong tanong na ito mula kay Leila Salaverria ng Inquirer: Does OCTA see a reason to tighten restrictions given the increased in reproduction number? Would it recommend a higher alert level in January?

DR. DAVID: There is no need to increase restrictions at this time, because connected ito doon sa sagot ko kay Lei Alviz na it could just be a holiday uptick, which means na after the holidays, possibly bababa din iyong number of cases and iyong positivity rate. Pero sa ngayon kasi, hindi pa tayo puwedeng gumawa ng premature na intervention, kasi hindi pa kumpleto iyong nakikita natin na larawan. Pero at the same time, magandang reminder na rin sa ating mga kababayan natin na patuloy ang pag-iingat at pagsunod sa minimum public health standards, pagsuot ng face mask and magpabakuna iyong mga hindi pa bakunado.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Katanungan naman po ni Leila Salaverria ng Inquirer, pati na rin po ni Evelyn Quiroz ng Pilipino Mirror: Should we be alarmed by the recent increase?

DR. DAVID: In a way, Usec, medyo expected nga iyong uptick eh. Bakit expected? Kasi last year nangyari din iyan eh at due to the holidays. Kaya nga ang government agencies natin, iyong mga local governments and the Department of Health nag-iisyu talaga sila lagi ng warning na even as we enjoy the holidays, let's continue to practice minimum public health standards para maiwasan itong mga upticks na ito. So sa ngayon, hindi pa natin masasabing alarming, pero let's wait for more data. Siguro by January, we can reassess kung ano iyong nangyari sa pandemic situation natin.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Tanong naman po ni Carolyn Bonquin ng CNN Philippines: Kailangan na po bang i-flag ang nakitang pagtaas ng daily cases at ADAR sa NCR? Ito na po ba ang simula muli ng pagtaas ng kaso?

DR. DAVID: Unfortunately, sa ngayon hindi pa natin nakikita iyong totooong trend. So we have to wait until January kung tumataas pa rin sa January, then we have to reassess iyong situation, Usec. Pero tulad ng sinabi natin, kung temporary uptick lang naman iyan dahil sa holidays, dahil sa pagtitipun-tipon. Kung bumaba din iyan by January then, wala namang cause of panic talaga. Ibig sabihin mawawala rin pala siya. Last year ganoon rin iyong nangyari.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Pero, Doc. Guido hindi pa po tapos itong holidays, ibig sabihin po ba possible talagang mas tumaas pa iyan hanggang sa January?

DR. DAVID: Well, we cannot rule out that possibility, Usec sa ngayon. Again, incomplete pa, hindi pa kumpleto iyong larawan na tinitingnan natin. Let's hope for the best. In the meantime, habang hindi pa natin nakikita iyong buong datos, sana iyong mga kababayan natin, magtulung-tulungan tayo. Yes, hindi pa tapos iyong holidays, pero hopefully winding down na iyong mga parties halimbawa, iyong mga social gathering, baka mas kakaunti na lang. At kapag sumunod naman tayo sa public health standards matutulungan talaga nito na makontrol iyong number of cases sa NCR at sa buong bansa.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Sa breakdown naman daw po sa mga rehiyon, anong lugar iyong kinakitaan na may pinakatumaaas na reproduction rate? At dito po sa NCR na kung saan karamihan ay bakunado na, tumaas pa rin po ba daw?

DR. DAVID: Well, actually sa NCR iyong may nakita tayong pagtaas ng reproduction number. Sa ibang mga regions mababa pa kasi iyong mga case numbers nila, so hindi pa klaro. Hindi pa natin masasabi talaga kung may pagtaas dahil kapag nag-a-average sila ng less than 10 cases, eh napakababa nito. Kahit gumalaw ng kaunti, hindi natin masasabi na talagang may increase until magkaroon ng increase na medyo, you know, mas malinaw na pagtaas ng bilang ng kaso.

Unfortunately, dahil sa kakulangan sa testing dahil sa recent typhoon ay incomplete din iyong larawan natin sa mga probinsiya at sa mga affected areas ng typhoon. So unfortunately, kailangan nating maghintay, Usec., hanggang mga January siguro para makita natin iyong complete picture kung ano ang nangyari dito sa mga ibang regions. Pero sa NCR, may nakikita talaga tayong uptick sa pagtaas sa positivity rate.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Tanong naman po ni Red Mendoza ng Manila Times: Comparable po ba ang pagtaas ng mga kaso ngayong period na ito sa parehong period last year? Tingin ninyo po ba sumisipa ang pagiging complacent ng mga kababayan natin?

OCTA RESEARCH DR. DAVID: Well, doon sa pangalawang tanong, yes, tingin ko medyo nagiging complacent nang konti ang mga kababayan natin. At iyong sabi ng mga iba naming kasama na doctors, fellows ng OCTA Research, ay may mga bagong kaso na nakuha raw nila sa social gathering kaya sila nag-positive sa COVID.

Kung ikukumpara natin last year, iyong base number kasi last year ay mas mataas eh; ngayon, mababa eh. So kahit na may konti na tayong pagtaas, we are still at low risk dito sa NCR. Siguro kung iku-compare natin iyong rate of increase, medyo mas mabilis ngayon. Pero iyong overall numbers, mas maganda pa rin iyong numbers natin ngayon kumpara sa last year.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Kailan po raw lumabas iyong holiday surge noong nakaraang taon; posible bang makita rin natin ang epekto ng holiday surge by first week ng January pa lang?

OCTA RESEARCH DR. DAVID: Last year, nangyari iyong uptick before the Christmas holiday. Ngayon, nakita natin around the Christmas holiday. So posible nating—iyong sinasabi nating January, ang sinasabi lang natin ay mas malinaw iyong magiging larawan natin sa situation ng pandemic by January dahil mas kumpleto na iyong testing natin at makikita natin kung nag-sustain iyong trend na patuloy pa ring tumataas.

Pero iyong kung patuloy siyang nangyari sa January, hindi naman lahat masasabing January surge nangyari; posibleng nagsisimula na ngayon pero January natin makukuha iyong confirmation. Pero sa ngayon kasi iyon nga, it's too early to say kasi puwedeng bumaliktad naman iyong ... or mag-reverse iyong trend at by January ay makikita natin, mababa na iyong bilang ng kaso, sasabihin natin ay wala naman pala, it's just an uptick due to iyong mga ...slightly due to complacency ng mga kababayan natin.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ano raw po iyong—in case lang po 'no, ano raw po iyong posibleng mangyari sakaling hindi mapigilan iyong pagtaas ng reproduction rate ngayong holiday season?

OCTA RESEARCH DR. DAVID: Well, huwag naman sanang mangyari iyan, Rocky. Pero, of course, kung makita nating patuloy na tumataas, we have to reassess iyong situation natin.

Ako personally, I don't think babalik tayo sa panahon na kailangan nating mag-lockdown dahil marami na tayong bakunado sa NCR and in many of the metropolitan areas.

Iyong vaccination natin will help prevent us from getting severe COVID, iyan iyon nakita natin sa mga datos sa ibang bansa. Maaaring makuha natin iyong virus, pero hindi magiging severe at hindi tataas iyong hospitalization natin so protected pa rin iyong mga hospitals natin. Iyan iyong inaasahan natin based on data na nakikita natin sa other countries kaya mahalaga rin na iyong mga hindi pa bakunado ay magpabakuna; at iyong mga nagpabakuna na, kung eligible na sila for booster shots ay magpa-booster na rin para madagdagan iyong protection natin against severe infection.

Again, iyong hinahabol natin is protection from severe COVID na nahihirapan tayong huminga. Kapag nakakuha tayo ng virus pero bakunado tayo at nakuha natin ay mild lang, hindi na tayo maho-hospitalize, hindi na mao-overwhelm iyong hospitals natin.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Kami po ay nagpapasalamat sa inyong impormasyon at panahon. Ingat po kayo, Dr. Guido David ng OCTA Research. Happy New Year din po!

OCTA RESEARCH DR. DAVID: Happy New Year, Usec. Maraming salamat!

USEC. IGNACIO: Samantala, daang mga pasyente at benepisyaryo ng Malasakit Center sa Quezon Memorial Medical Center ang muling tumanggap ng ayuda mula sa pamahalaan at kay Senator Bong Go. Ang detalye sa report na ito:

[VTR]

USEC. IGNACIO: Nagpulong ngayong araw ang iba't ibang ahensiya ng pamahalaan para po sa pinakahuling assessment sa pinsalang dala ng Bagyong Odette sa lalawigan ng Cebu. Naroon po ang kasama naming si Eunice Samonte. Eunice?

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC. IGNACIO: Maraming salamat sa iyong report, Eunice Samonte.

Isa po ang Baguio Flower Festival o Panagbenga sa mga inaabangan mapaturista man at residente ng lungsod. Alamin natin iyan kay Debbie Gasingan ng PTV Cordillera kung matutuloy ba pa ang pagdiriwang na ito sa Pebrero 2022.

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC. IGNACIO: Alamin naman natin ang latest sa Davao Region, may report ang aming kasamang si Hannah Salcedo.

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC. IGNACIO: Maraming salamat po sa ating mga partner agencies para sa kanilang suporta sa ating program at maging ang Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas o KBP.

At dito na po nagtatapos ang ating programa sa araw na ito. Hanggang bukas pong muli, ako po si Usec. Rocky Ignacio at ito ang Public Briefing #LagingHandaPH!

##

--

News and Information Bureau-Data Processing Center