

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PUBLIC BRIEFING #LagingHandaPH
HOSTED BY PCOO UNDERSECRETARY ROCKY IGNACIO
FEBRUARY 11, 2022 (11:00 A.M. – 12:03 P.M.)

USEC. IGNACIO: Magandang umaga Pilipinas, ako po ang inyong lingkod, Usec. Rocky Ignacio.

Ngayong araw ng Biyernes, siksik na naman po sa mga balita't impormasyon ang aming ihahatid sa inyo. Makakasama po natin sa loob ng isang oras ang mga kawani ng pamahalaan na handang magbigay-linaw sa tanong at agam-agam ng taumbayan.

Simulan na po natin ang talakayan dito sa Public Briefing #LagingHandaPH!

Patuloy po ang pagbaba ng mga kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa. Ayon sa OCTA Research, maituturing na low risk for COVID-19 na ang National Capital Region; pero kumustahin natin ang estado ng bansa kontra COVID-19, makakausap po natin si Dr. Rajendra Yadav, Acting World Health Organization Philippines Representative. Good morning, Doc Yadav.

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: Good morning.

USEC. IGNACIO: Doc, after experiencing Omicron surge last month, COVID cases start to decrease and are expected to continue to drop by 1,000 per day by the end of February. Can we say that the worst is over for the Philippines?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: Yes. The decreasing trend of the number of new cases is really very encouraging. We also have seen relatively low number of deaths during the recent Omicron surge and also the nationally health care utilization rate is quite stable. So for now we can say worst is over but that's only for now because we do not know how long this current favorable situation will last. We need to hope for the best but remain prepared for the worst.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Doc Yadav, the government considers crafting or shifting to its pandemic exit plan – part of being considered is lifting the alert level system. Is the Philippines ready for this or is it too early to shift for the pandemic exit plan?

Related question from our reporters from PTV, Mela Lesmoras: Do you have any inputs on what policies must they include? When do you see the perfect time for the Philippines to shift to the new normal?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So every country has a unique situation and must chart its way out of the acute phase of the pandemic with a careful stepwise approach. So it's really difficult to say and not easy to have answers for all countries. But, yes, WHO continues to support the government in all its approach as long as we take care of the three things that we know what best then opening up borders and relaxing the quarantine protocols are fine:

One of them is ensuring we have vaccines, oxygen and anti-viral for people, especially for the people who need them; Secondly, we have to continue to implement public health and social measures like maintaining physical distance, wearing well-fitting mask, avoiding poor ventilated spaces, cleaning hands, following respiratory hygiene; And thirdly, we have to restore and sustain the essential health services which have been disrupted by COVID-19.

So if we do these three things, then yes, we are on our way to living this virus.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Another question from Mela Lesmoras: For Metro Manila which is now at low risk for COVID-19, do you think it is about time to place the region under the most lenient Alert Level 1?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So, WHO have always advocated for a risk-based approach. We have to balance public health measures on one side and socioeconomic measures on one side. So as long as we can do de-risking of travel within Metro Manila or anywhere—even outside Metro Manila, having this balanced approach is welcome by WHO.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Dr. Yadav, yesterday the Philippines started to accept fully vaccinated foreign leisure travellers from visa-free countries. The government also lifted quarantine guidelines for inbound travels.

Question from MJ Blancaflor of Daily Tribune: Is the Philippines on the right track in terms of reopening its borders for fully vaccinated tourists considering that the country has reported below 5,000 new cases in recent days. Does the WHO think that the measures imposed are enough to prevent a possible spread of COVID infections?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So, we encourage de-risking travel which means that we have to take necessary steps to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection during the travel and after the travel. Blanket travel bans can give a false sense of security and destroy economies. However, we must be cautious about interpreting these easy travel restrictions and quarantine requirements. Easing travel restrictions and quarantine requirements does not mean that anyone can travel anytime, anywhere they want. We need to follow the minimum public health standards like masking and physical distancing while travelling. Travel only when necessary and keep our safe travels as small as possible. If that is taken care of, then yes, relaxing the travel requirements and quarantine requirements are a go.

USEC. IGNACIO: But aside from that, Dr. Yadav, what should the government do to avoid another surge amid loosening of travel restrictions?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So we need to continue to do what we know what's best in this situation. Have very high coverage for vaccines especially in the people who are elderly because they are more likely to develop severe COVID and die. Also when people travel, we have to ensure that they are maintaining the minimum public health and social measures and that's what we are doing and supporting the government to do.

USEC. IGNACIO: Dr. Yadav, the country started vaccinating children from 5 to 11 years old. Meanwhile, the third round of the two-day nationwide vaccination drive also started yesterday. Dr. Yadav, is the government doing well in terms of vaccination? Is there a need to focus on areas with low vaccination turnout?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So we congratulate the Philippine government for vaccinating over 60 million people so far, at least 70% of the eligible population, over 12 years old. So that is really good.

However, we also know that all 2.5 million senior citizens remain unvaccinated. They are not even received a single dose. So vaccinating older people is one of the most impactful ways to save lives during this pandemic.

We know that senior citizens are at high risk for developing severe disease, getting hospitalized and dying from COVID-19. With fewer restrictions and high mobility happening now, we could be putting our unvaccinated senior citizens at risk of hospitalization and death. We appeal to the governors and mayors to do everything in their power to vaccinate our priority groups as soon as possible. We need to vaccinate the high priority groups before another variant causes another surge.

Many provinces have very high number of senior citizens without a single dose of COVID 19 vaccines – some of them are like Cebu, Negros Occidental, Batangas, Cavite, Bulacan. So I appeal to these places, the authorities of these places especially the governors and mayors to vaccinate the elderly and then we can already be starting moving into the direction of living with COVID in an endemic form.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Question from our friends from the media, Evelyn Quiroz of Pilipino Mirror: The drive to vaccinate children ages 5 to 11 against COVID-19 started last Monday after initial problems over delayed deliveries of the Pfizer Biotech doses and opposition to the drive by some parents. Has the WHO encountered the so-called opposition from parents in other regions of the ASEAN?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So, WHO encourages children to be vaccinated, these vaccines are very safe, we should not create unnecessarily panic among parents by spreading misinformation. We have not seen that these vaccines are causing any more side effect than other vaccines. These are very safe vaccines and effective. If you don't vaccinate our children, they are also likely to develop severe COVID and die especially if they have comorbidities. So I encourage all parents to go out and get vaccinated for their children.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Question from Red Mendoza of Manila Times: What is your reaction to the increased opposition of some parents which is being fuelled by some anti-vaccination groups to COVID-19 vaccination because they are comparing it with the issue that surrounded the dengue vaccine nearly four years ago?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So these vaccines have been used in many countries including in younger age groups. WHO has approved them so we continue to recommend that

these vaccines should be used in children too. And I would appeal to the people who may be spreading misinformation to not do that because then we'll be putting our children's lives at stake.

USEC. IGNACIO: Dr. Yadav, based on the monitoring of WHO, what are the chances that there will be more transmissible COVID variants? What is the future of COVID variant and what can you say about the statement saying that Omicron might be the endgame for the pandemic?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. DR. YADAV: So we have lot of uncertainties about the future evolution of this pandemic. It is very dangerous to assume that Omicron will be the last variant or that we are in the endgame. New variants could emerge and these new variants could evade our countermeasures, may even become fully resistance to the current vaccines which will necessitate vaccine adaptations.

So although vaccine supplies have risen significantly everywhere, the African continent continues to struggle with vaccination rollout. As you may know, only 11% of the African population has completed full vaccination which means ... less vaccination means more transmission there; and more transmission means we have high chances of new variants emerging there. But then, this can cross over to any country. What happens in other countries affect the Philippines too, because we cannot virus-proof our international borders.

So if other countries have low vaccination coverage and high transmission of the virus, yes, we expect that we could have new variants in the coming weeks or months. Let's hope that doesn't happen. But let's be prepared for the worst.

USEC. IGNACIO: Dr. Yadav, as the Acting WHO Philippine Representative, what are your next steps or plans in the coming months regarding the Philippine COVID response? Do you have other areas or program that you would like to focus on?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. YADAV: We'll continue to provide relevant evidence, strategies and technical and operational support for the government, of course, as we have been doing in the past few months. But, at the same time, we know that many other essential services have been disrupted significantly. In fact, every service we know is affected by this – sexual health, reproductive health, natal and new born child health, nutrition, cancer, tuberculosis; so all these programs have been affected. And that's why WHO continues to support the government to scale up the COVID-19 vaccine and other measures on one hand, but also support all the bounce back of other programs that have been disrupted.

USEC. IGNACIO: Dr. Yadav, may we get your parting message for Filipinos as we continue to face this pandemic?

ACTG. WHO PH REP. YADAV: My parting message is that, we can end the acute phase of the pandemic within this year. We can end COVID-19 as a global health emergency, and we can do that this year, yes! But we have to come together as nationwide and worldwide community. Most importantly, we have to ensure that our vulnerable populations are fully vaccinated as a priority because no one is safe until everyone is safe.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you very much for your time, Acting World Health Organization Philippine Representative Dr. Rajendra Yadav. Stay safe, Doc.

ACTG. WHO PH REP. YADAV: Thank you.

USEC. IGNACIO: Samantala, humingi na tayo ng update sa ikalawang araw pagdaraos ng Bayanihan, Bakunahan 3. Ihahatid iyan sa atin ni Mark Fetalco. Mark?

[NEWS REPORT]

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: Magandang umaga po, Usec.

NVOC CHAIR USEC. CABOTAJE: Magandang umaga sa iyo, Usec. Rocky; magandang umaga sa iyo din at sa lahat ng ating nanunood sa programang Laging Handa.

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: Usec. Myrna, ano po iyong naging basis natin kung bakit po natin pinalawig pa itong Bayanihan, Bakunahan 3 hanggang February 18 at ano po iyong magiging strategy natin para maabot natin iyong five million na target?

NVOC CHAIR USEC. CABOTAJE: Bakit natin pinalawig iyong ating NVD3 hanggang February 18? Para bigyan natin nang mas maraming panahon iyong ating mga publiko, iyong ating mga mamamayan para mag-avail ng kanilang first dose, iyong second dose at saka iyong kanilang booster para kumpleto ang ating proteksyon. Sabi nga natin na kapag lahat ay bakunado, lahat tayo ay protektado.

Ano iyong mga gagawin natin, aaralin natin kung ano iyong mga dahilan at iyong ibang areas ay mababa ang turnout. Siyempre alam natin nagbabalik pa lang iyong ating mga healthcare workers na galing sa isolation dahil nagkasakit ng COVID o kaya nagkaroon ng quarantine. Pinapatingnan din natin sa iba't ibang lugar kung baka hindi pumunta iyong ating mga kailangan magbakuna sa mga health center. Tingnan nila baka iyong health center, iyong mga bakuna center ang ilapit doon sa mga mamamayan. Tapos may iba't iba pang mga rason, at iyon ang bibigyan nila ng pansin at kanilang tutugunan.

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: Okay po. Usec., kumusta naman po iyong ating pagbabakuna sa A2 category, iyong mga seniors, dahil po sila po iyong pinaka-vulnerable at nangangailangan din po ng booster shots?

NVOC CHAIR USEC. CABOTAJE: Ngayong araw na ito iyong tinatawag nating World Day of the Sick, World Sick Day. Nananawagan din tayo kasi nakipagtulungan sa atin iyong Catholic Bishops of the Philippines na iyong may mga selebrasyon sa World Day of the Sick ay magbabakuna rin.

We will take this opportunity to increase the vaccination of our senior citizens. Isa sila sa ating mga target na sana ay mas mapadali iyong kanilang access sa pagbabakuna during this time kasi alam naman natin na sa 70% first dose at saka 60% thereabouts ang second dose. Kailangan nating mapabakunahan iyong ating mga senior citizen kasi sila ang mga most at risk, sila ang

mga vulnerable; kapag sila ay nagkasakit ay mas grabe iyong kanilang sakit, puwede silang maospital and the risk of dying is greater.

So kailangan nilang magpa-first dose, magpa-second dose at Importanteng-importante iyong mga booster; alam naman natin sa matatanda, hindi ganoon kasigla iyong kaniyang immune response sa mga bata so mas kailangan din ng booster ng ating mga senior citizens.

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: So far, Usec., kumusta na po iyong ating pagbabakuna sa five to eleven years old at nadagdagan po ba iyong naitalang adverse events?

NVOC CHAIR USEC. CABOTAJE: Iyong ating pagbabakuna ng five to eleven, mainit naman ang reception. Although, inaayos natin kasi kulang pa iyong ating mga bakuna ‘no.

Yesterday, we registered a total of 52,000 na mga batang five to eleven na nabakunahan sa NCR – 45 sites dito sa NCR, limang sites sa Region III, tatlong sites sa Region IV-A at saka sa Cotabato Regional Medical Center.

May lima nang adverse event na non-serious na ating naitala para sa mga age group na ito. Karamihan iyong—tatlo iyong rashes, ibig sabihin ay nagpantal sa extremities, tapos mayroon iyong isang sinabi natin na sumakit sa area, tapos iyong isa ay nagsuka at nasusuka.

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: Usec., ngayon po ay kabilang pa rin po iyong BARMM, Region XII sa mga may low vaccine coverage ngayon sa Bayanihan, Bakunahan 3. Ano po ang ginagawa nating hakbang para mapabilis pa po ito, ano po iyong assistance din po ng DOH doon?

NVOC CHAIR USEC. CABOTAJE: Tuluy-tuloy ang ating talastasan sa ating BARMM. Marami nang tumutulong sa kanila, hindi lang po ang DOH. Tumutulong din ang mga iba’t ibang mga grupo, including iyong ating mga bilateral partners ‘no, iyong mga UNICEF, iyong mga WHO. Nabigyan na sila ng mga refrigerators, iyong solar ref para mas makaka-store sila ng mga bakuna. May tulong din in terms of the mobilization at saka iyong pag-hire ng mga vaccinator.

Sa Region XII, ganoon din ang ating ginagawa. Tinitingnan kung ano pa iyong mga dahilan. May mga nakikita silang—anong tawag diyan? Iyong isang video ni President na nagbabalewala sa booster. Gusto nating sabihin at ipaalala sa kanila na iyon ay lumang video ng ating Presidente. Nasabi na po ng ating CabSec Karlo Nograles na hindi na ganito ang pananaw ng ating Presidente, at nag-i-encourage na siya ng ating booster. Sana ho mahinto na iyon because that’s an old video.

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: Panghuli na lamang po, Usec. Ano po ang mensahe natin sa ating mga kababayan ngayon po na in-extend na nga po natin iyong Bayanihan, Bakunahan 3 hanggang February 18 po?

NVOC CHAIR USEC. CABOTAJE: Nagbibigay tayo ng maraming oportunidad, mas maraming pagkakataon, ready po iyong ating mga health center, iyong ating mga bakuna center,

ready na po iyong ating mga health care workers na magbakuna, ready na po iyong mga preparation.

Kailangan na po iyong mga tao pumunta sa kanilang bakuna center. Huwag ninyo na pong hintayin na kayo ay tawagan ng ating mga health center na due na iyong third dose. Kapag tatlong buwan na po pagkaraan two-dose ninyo, iyong second dose, puwede na kayong pumunta ngayong NBD 3 sa anumang bakuna center.

Ang ating direktiba, dapat walang uuwi na pupunta sa bakuna center na hindi nabakunahan. Marami po tayong bakuna, it's enough for everyone.

MARK FETALCO/PTV4: Muli po, marami pong salamat, NVOC chairperson USec. Myrna Cabotaje.

At iyan muna ang pinakahuling balita. Mula dito sa NVOC, balik sa iyo, USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Maraming salamat sa iyo, Mark at kay USec. Myrna Cabotaje.

Ilang buwan bago ang pagtatapos ng termino ni Pangulong Duterte, binigyang-diin ni Senator Go na dating Special Assistant to the President na titiyaking magiging maayos ang turnover ng administrasyon sa kung sinuman ang iluluklok ng taumbayan na susunod na maging Pangulo sa darating na halalan. Narito ang report:

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC. IGNACIO: Alamin naman natin ang naging sitwasyon sa unang araw ng muling pagbubukas ng bansa para sa mga dayuhang turista at para pag-usapan ang pagbabago sa protocol para sa mga papasok na foreign nationals, muli nating makakasama si Bureau of Immigration Spokesperson Dana Krizia Sandoval.

Good morning, Ms. Dana!

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Magandang araw po sa inyo, USec. Rocky at sa mga tagasubaybay po ng Public Briefing Laging Handa PH.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ms. Dana, sa obserbasyon ninyo, kumpara noong mga nakaraang araw, nasa ilang inbound travelers po ang naitala ng Immigration kahapon, gaano po karami dito iyong foreign nationals? Ganito rin po iyong tanong ng ating kasamahan sa media na si MJ Blancaflor ng Daily Tribune: Kumusta rin daw po iyong pagpapatupad ng health protocols as far as Immigration personnel are concerned?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Well, marami-rami po iyong dumating kahapon during the first day of implementation nitong pag-o-open po natin ng borders.

Kahapon po, nagtala po tayo ng mahigit sa walong libo na arrivals and iyong ating implementation po ng health protocols, tuloy-tuloy po iyan. Talagang sinisigurado po natin na

iyong Immigration areas po natin ay clear po at hindi po nagsisiksikan at nasisigurado po natin ang implementation po ng strict social distancing sa area.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ms. Dana, ano po iyong projected number of arrivals sa mga susunod na linggo lalo't may ilang mga panibagong guidelines na rin po iyong inaprubahan ng IATF kahapon?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Actually, ini-expect po namin, USec. Rocky, na unti-unti pong tataas iyong bilang ng mga dumadating po na pasahero habang tumatagal po. Siguro for the next coming weeks tataas po iyan ng mga 20% to 30% and hopefully po we will be reaching na sa 10,000 to 12,000 by the end of the month.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Bigyan-daan ko lang iyong tanong ng ating kasamahan sa media.

Mula po kay Evelyn Quiroz ng Pilipino Mirror: The Philippine Government recently allowed the entry of fully vaccinated tourists from visa-free country starting February 10 subject to the presentation of required documents that include the proof of inoculation. Was the BID consulted or in any way involved in the decision to open our borders?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yes, kasama po ang Bureau of Immigration sa mga representatives po. May representatives po tayo diyan sa IATF at natatanong po tayo for technical matters involving Immigration matters po – mga visas, mga permits po ng mga foreign nationals.

Nakikita po natin na malaking bagay po iyong IATF because this is a consortium of different agencies na nailalagay po at nailalabas po ang kani-kanilang mga adhikain at ang mga kani-kanila pong opinyon dito po sa crafting ng policies po natin for international travel.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ms. Dana, wala naman po bang nagkaroon ng problema dito po sa mga dokumento partikular iyong mga accredited national vaccination cards?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Actually, yesterday, USec. Rocky, nakapagtala po tayo ng apat na mga foreign national na hindi po natin pinapasok. Most of them po ay hindi po proper iyong mga documentation nila dahil ang mga vaccination cards po nila tsinitsek po iyan ng Bureau of Quarantine (BOQ).

It's the BOQ that confirms kung ito po ba ay legitimate or kung ito po ba ay readable or ito po ba ay within the guidelines set by the IATF. Once makita po ng BOQ na hindi po tugma doon sa guideline set by the IATF or hindi kaya po nagkaroon ng falsification doon po sa kanilang mga vaccination cards, they turn it over po to the Bureau of Immigration who implements the exclusion of the foreign national.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ms. Dana, may clarification lang po na tanong mula kay Leila Salaverria ng Inquirer: Ilan sa 8,000 na dumating kahapon iyon pong foreigners?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Ang foreigners po, nasa siguro 27-30% po ng total na dumating kahapon. Iyon po iyong actually na ini-expect natin for the next few weeks, nasa ganiyang mga figures din po maglalaro ang ating arrival.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Pero sa datos ninyo, marami-rami rin po iyong bilang ng mga dumarating na partially vaccinated o unvaccinated na kailangang mag-quarantine?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Sa mga Filipino lang po magiging applicable iyong pagiging partially vaccinated or unvaccinated dahil sila lamang po ang puwedeng pumasok with those status. Sa foreign nationals po, definitely 100% hindi po puwedeng pumasok muna ang mga unvaccinated sa ngayon following the guidelines po from the IATF.

USEC. IGNACIO: Kaugnay naman dito sa bagong inaprubahang guidelines ng IATF para sa foreign nationals, banggitin lang po natin ulit sino lang po iyong mga pinapayagang makapag-extend ng kanilang stay sa Pilipinas beyond thirty days?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Yes. Malinaw po doon sa most recent na IATF Resolution na iyong mga visa-free po, limited lamang iyong kanilang stay to thirty days. Kung kinakailangan po nila na magtagal dito for any other reason, kailangan po nilang pumasok dito with entry visa and entry exemption document na makukuha po nila from any Philippine Embassy or Consulate po na pinakamalapit sa kanila. With that po maaari na po silang mag-extend.

USEC. IGNACIO: Pero, Ms. Dana, ongoing pa rin po ba ang implementation nito o sakop ba nito iyong mga dumating kahapon? Kailangan pa rin daw po ba ng entry exemption document para daw po sa mga nakauwi na at qualified na mag-extend ng kanilang stay sa Pilipinas?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Well, since, USec. Rocky, iyong resolution was issued yesterday, today po natin i-implement iyan; so, lahat po ng mga dumadating ngayon iyan po ang magiging patakaran po natin following the IATF Resolution.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Inatasan po ng IATF na kilalanin ang national vaccine certificate mula sa apat pang mga bansa kabilang po ang South Korea, Timor-Leste, Brazil at Israel. So, ano po ba ang ibig sabihin nito para sa mga inbound travelers mula po sa mga nabanggit na bansa?

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Well, mas mapapadali na po siguro ang kanilang pagpasok because recognized na po ang kanilang vaccination certificate once na ma-check po ito ng Bureau of Quarantine at makita po na talagang legitimate ito then magiging smooth and seamless na po ang kanilang pagpasok ng bansa.

Malaking bagay po ito, USec. Rocky, because South Koreans, alam po natin iyong mga South Koreans are really the top in arrivals pre-pandemic; so, makikita po natin na malaki po iyong maidadagdag niyan doon sa turismo po natin at siguro nakikita natin na mas tataas pa po iyong bilang ng mga South Koreans na papasok po dito sa bansa

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Ms. Dana, kuhanin ko na lamang iyong mga paalala ninyo sa ating mga kababayan at maging sa foreign nationals na magbabalik-bansa.

BI SPOKESPERSON SANDOVAL: Siguro po always reminder po natin na siguraduhin po nila na kumpleto po ang kanilang mga documentation and kasama po sila doon sa mga kategorya na maaari pong makapasok ng bansa following the guidelines from the IATF. Makikita po nila ang information sa aming website, it's www.immigration.gov.ph.

Kung sila naman po ay may mga katanungan about this travel restrictions o iyong mga requirements po sa papasok ng Pilipinas. They can visit po ang aming Facebook pages, [facebook.com/official Bureau of Immigration](https://facebook.com/officialBureauofImmigration) and [facebook.com./immigration.helpline.ph](https://facebook.com/immigration.helpline.ph). May buttons po doon for messenger, puwede po silang magtanong 24/7 po may mga personnel po kami na nakahanda para sumagot po sa kanilang mga katanungan, Iyon lamang po, USec. Rocky. Maraming salamat po!

USEC. IGNACIO: Maraming salamat po sa inyong impormasyon, Bureau of Immigration Spokesperson Dana Krizia Sandoval.

USEC. IGNACIO: Narito naman po ang pinakahuling datos ng COVID-19 cases sa Pilipinas:

- Nasa 4,575 po ang nadagdag na mga bagong kaso ng COVID-19 kahapon, kaya umakyat na ito sa kabuuang bilang na 3,627,575.
- Siyamnapu't apat na (94) katao naman nadagdag sa mga nasawi, kaya umakyat na 54,783 ang total death tally,
- 3,479,485 ang mga gumaling sa sakit matapos makapagtala ng dagdag na 7,504 new recoveries.
- Ang active cases natin ay nasa 2.6% o katumbas ng 93,307 ng kabuuang bilang ng mga tinamaan ng COVID-19.

Sa muling pagbabalik ng face to face classes sa mga nasa low risk areas, nadagdagan pa ang mga eskuwelahan na kabilang sa expansion phase sa iba't ibang lugar sa bansa, iyan po ang ating pag-uusapan kasama po natin si Undersecretary Nepomuceno Malaluan ng Department of Education. Good morning Usec., welcome back sa Laging Handa.

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Yes, magandang umaga sa ito, USec. Rocky at sa lahat ng iyong mga tagasubaybay.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. USec. kumusta po itong pagsasagawa ng expansion phase ng face to face classes nitong mga nakaraang araw at kumusta po iyong naging pagtanggap ng mga magulang at estudyante sa muling pagbabalik ng physical classes?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Well, kaya maganda iyong nagkaroon tayo ng pilot face to face ay tumaas iyong kumpiyansa ng ating mga stakeholders na matagumpay na mai-expand natin at iyan din ang naging dahilan noong pagkumpiyansa rin ng Office of the President that we can go

now into the progressive expansion phase. At nag-umpisa nga tayo nitong progressive expansion dito sa mga lugar under Alert Level 2 - sa NCR, sa Batanes, sa Bulacan, sa Rizal and Cavite at gayundin sa Southern Leyte at saka Biliran.

Iba-iba ng mga dates na pinili iyong ating mga paaralan. Marami sa kanila ay itinaon doon sa pag-umpisa noong third quarter nitong ating school calendar. Katatapos lang natin noong kanilang midyear calendar break at naging maayos ang feedback sa atin noong mga nag-umpisa na and this will be progressively increased in the coming days at lalo na kung itong ating Alert Level 2 ay lumawak pa after February 15, which is covered by the existing alert levels.

And kung ang pag-uusapan iyong mga paaralan sa buong bansa na handa na basta maging Alert Level 2 ay ang report sa atin ng mga regional directors, we have more than 6,000 schools that are ready to join the expanded phase at parami ng parami ang handa na iyan, basta ma-comply na nila iyong ating school safety assessment, USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Pero kung Alert Level 2 pa rin po tayo by next month, nasa ilang private at public schools po iyong ini-expect naman natin na madagdag dito sa expansion phase? Simultaneous pa rin po ba iyong magiging pagbubukas sa mga paaralan sa ibang mga rehiyon sa mga susunod na buwan?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: As soon as pumasok na sa Alert Level 2 iyong mga lugar na kasama doon sa mahigit 6,500 schools natin ay mag-uumpisa na, and it will increase on a rolling basis as soon as na wala pa doon sa 6,500 plus natin ay ma-comply iyong ating schools safety assessment.

And so, tuluy-tuloy naman iyan dahil iyong mga paaralan na after looking at their checklist at may mga gaps, if they fulfill that, then they will join the number of what we call compliant schools, so kaya nga natin tinawag USec. Rocky ito na progressive expansion phase, this is on a rolling basis and we will see our targets kung ano ang magiging saklaw sa kabuuan ng ating 60,000 schools nationwide including the private schools.

Mas marami ngayon ang bahagdan ng public schools na kasama dito sa mga handa na na paaralan. We have to check on our private schools on their intent to also join the expansion phase.

The other factor USec. Rocky, ay kung ano ang magiging advice sa atin ng Department of Health kung ano pa ang puwedeng pagpapalawig ng maaaring gawin kung patuloy na mag-improve itong ating COVID situation.

Kagaya din ng nabanggit kanina ng ating kinatawan sa WHO, that there are number of factors to consider in further relaxations of the protocols and that includes the vaccination levels at saka itong continuous observance nitong ating safety protocols. So, those are considerations that will continue, dahil patuloy pa rin iyong ating close partnership and coordination with the Department of Health in our decisions moving forward sa ating expansion phase.

Maaari na rin nating sabihin USec. Rocky na kabahagi na ito noong ating pag-normalize or pag-transition to... iyong sinasabi natin na exit program. Of course, that is with a lot of hope that the COVID situation will continue to improve.

USEC. IGNACIO: USec. para lang din po malinaw, ito pong grade o year level na pinapayagan sa face to face classes, ito po ba ay discretion ng mga paaralan na kasali sa expansion phase or DepEd pa rin po iyong nag-a-approve nito, paano daw po iyong sistema dito?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Ano na ito, noong pilot phase natin ay ang kasunduan natin with DOH ay limited ito sa first key stage kindergarten to grade three at saka iyong senior high school in the tech-voc track. Pero dito sa ating progressive expansion ay binuksan na natin ito at maaari na na kasama ang lahat ng baitang dito sa ating expansion phase.

A school can still have a... ibig sabihin, hindi lahat kaagad, it depends also on their capacity, pati ang mga classrooms available and so on. But as much as possible, kasama naman ang ating framework, iyong equity in access to the face to face classes na lahat mabigyan ng pagkakataon dito. So, ibinukas na natin sa mga rehiyon, sa ating local units ang pagpapalawig nitong grade levels na kalahok sa face to face classes, USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Pero USec, paano naman po namu-monitor na name-maintain itong pagsunod sa health protocols?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Yes, kasama iyan doon sa ating joint guidelines with the Department of Health na umiiral pa rin ngayon. So, all of the protocols, hindi lang naman iyong school safety assessment ay isang beses mo lang na ma-comply. Kung hindi dapat tuluy-tuloy ang pagpapatupad niyan, kaya nga mayroon silang mga committees, mayroon silang mga safety officers sa paaralan.

Kaya nga mayroon tayo na shared responsibility dito kalahok mula sa ating local governments at saka sa mga Parents Teachers Association at mga guro, mga magulang. So tuluy-tuloy iyan at ang maaari din kaming magsagawa ng mga visitation in some of these schools. But I have seen the monitoring, that is being done by our regions.

We have decentralized already the supervision of the expanded phase dahil parami na nga ng parami na schools ito unlike during the pilot phase that the central office is able to really closely monitor it's and every pilot schools.

Ngayon, we have authorized our regional directors to a greater supervision, authority and mandate dito sa expansion phase natin but certainly kasama iyong monitoring standards natin para ma-ensure na tuluy-tuloy iyong ating pagpapatupad ng mga protocols natin at makikita rin naman iyan, USec. Rocky, kung tayo ay matutuloy natin na there still incidence leading COVID as we have seen during the pilot implementation phase USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo USec., regarding naman daw po sa haba ng oras na puwedeng itagal ng mga estudyante sa paaralan ano po, napag-usapan rin po ba kung posible bang mahabaan since

nagsimula na rin po iyong pagbabakuna sa mga bata at ano rin po iyong sentimyento ng mga magulang at teachers tungkol dito, kung mayroon man po?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Well, doon sa feedback natin doon sa pilot implementation doon sa ating mga surveys na ginawa ay isa iyan sa mga nabanggit iyong kakulangan ng oras na inilaan dahil nilimitahan natin ito to three hours for kindergarten and four hours for the higher grade levels.

Ngayon ang ating panuntunan pinalabas ni Secretary Briones in the interim ay basta hindi sila doon manananghalian sa paaralan. So, mostly ay half day pa rin ang schedule nitong ating expansion phase but kaya nga progressive expansion we will have to discuss this with the Department of Health.

Alam mo kasi, USec. Rocky, hahaba iyong ating protocols na io-observe kung hahayaan natin na mananghalian iyong mga bata sa paaralan because that will extend to our canteens to the protocols during meals and it will also increase the risk assessment for the conduct.

So, that will have to be closely coordinated with the Department of Health and then it's a public health aspect of the expansion phase and our standing arrangement with the DOH is we are guided by the DOH with respect to health standards.

So for now, dito sa ating unang batch nitong expansion phase ay half day pa rin ang ating per day during the week. Hindi naman isang araw lamang iyong schedule noong mga bata but iniwasan natin iyong pag-take nila ng lunch break sa schools to avoid exposure incidence within the school setting USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo USec, umarangkada na rin po iyong bakunahan sa 5 to 11 years old. Pero so far, may natatanggap ba kayong sulat kontra sa vaccination roll out sa mga bata kung mayroon man po at ano po ang nagiging tugon ng DepEd dito?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: So far, ay we have fully supported itong pagbabakuna. Ibig sabihin iyong mga information materials and awareness materials na ginagamit ng Department of Health and the NTF ay ating pinapalaganap sa ating mga paaralan at sa ating mga social media platforms.

Noong opening nitong 5 to 11, nandoon mismo si Secretary Briones, at binuksan din namin iyong aming learner information system para ma-tag itong mga mag-aaral natin na nabakunahan na naka-enroll sa atin ngayong current school year.

So, we are improving our data monitoring, wala pa naman kaming mga major incidents na masasabi ho tungkol sa opposition ng mga magulang. It is more in... siguro baka mas napapansin iyan doon sa mga areas na hindi sila pumupunta pa even as the vaccination sites are open but we are doing our part in the education component as well as assisting in the vaccination program.

As we expand also itong ating face to face classes and our monitoring and tagging of the students that are vaccinated or not we will have greater opportunity to go directly to parents to encourage to have their children included in this 5 to 11 age group.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. USec., tungkol naman sa pagsasagawa ng in person graduation ceremonies. Tingin ninyo kakayanin na rin po maisagawa ito ngayong taon lalo tumataas na po iyong bilang ng mga nababakunahan at nagsisimula na rin pong magbakuna sa mas mababang edad?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Medyo malayo-layo pa naman, USec. Rocky, iyong ating graduation. Iyan ay towards end of June if I recall corrective based on our present calendar at ibig sabihin ang mas tinututukan natin ngayon ay itong progressive expansion ng face to face classes and other school based activities.

By the way doon sa ating naging rekomendasyon sa Pangulo, noong nag-present si Secretary Briones sa Pangulo at doon sa ating written report ay ang ating hinihingi ay progressive expansion of face to face classes and school based activities and of course graduation is a school based activity and there are other school based activities that we can include.

So, it will also depend on the level of relaxation of face to face protocols and as I mentioned that's a public health decision that we have to do consultation with the Department of Health but kung tuloy-tuloy ito, hindi malayo na iyan ay maging posibilidad na USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo USec., sa iba namang usaping ano po, kaugnay naman sa nalalapit na halalan. Kumusta po iyong pakikipag-ugnayan ng DepEd at Comelec para po sa mga guro na makikibahagi sa paghahanda para sa election?

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Well, mayroon tayong Undersecretary na nakatutok diyan si USec. Pascua, sila ang directly coordinating with our Comelec of course we are interested to know kung may effect ito sa timing. Siyempre malamang magpapatupad dito sa mga active COVID cases ang health and safety protocols and those will be very important information.

I am sure magkakaroon ng simulation or dry runs ito at as always ay ang atin namang Department and our teachers on their own have showed that under most circumstances that they are always ready to assists in this democratic exercise.

So, as I mentioned may coordination tayo at a high level with the Comelec and we anticipate iyong mga... ibig sabihin partikular changes siguro sa oras at saka sa voting place protocols and certainly dapat ay mas maagang malaman ito ng mga guro natin para makapaghanda ng mabuti.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Maraming salamat po sa inyong oras, Department of Education Undersecretary Nepomuceno Malaluan. Ingat po kayo USec.

DEPED USEC. MALALUAN: Yes, Thank you also USec. Rocky at sa inyong mga tagasubaybay.

USEC. IGNACIO: Sa harap ng pinaigting na bakunahan kontra COVID-19 tinitiyak ng pamahalaan ang lahat na kabilang sa eligible population ay mabibigyan ng proteksiyon. Sa katunayan, kahit ang persons deprived of liberty sa Quezon City BJMP Female Dormitory, binigyan na rin po ng primary dose at booster shot. Ang update alamin natin sa ating kasamang si Louisa Erispe, Louisa:

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC IGNACIO: Maraming salamat sa iyong report, Louisa Erispe.

Bilang bahagi sa pagsasakatuparan ng de-kalidad na serbisyong medikal para sa bawat Pilipino, aabot sa isang daang milyong pisong (P100, 000, 000) pondo ang ibinahagi ng Office of the President sa Rizal Medical Center. Ilalaan po ang nasabing pondo para sa pagbili ng mga bagong kagamitan na makakatulong sa operasyon ng ospital. Narito ang report:

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC IGNACIO: Sa muling pagbubukas ng bansa para sa mga banyagang turista, ilang pamilya at tourism workers sa Calatagan, Batangas ang sinadya ng outreach team ni Senator Go para po mamahagi ng ayuda at makatulong sa kanilang patuloy na pagbangon. Narito ang detalye:

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC IGNACIO: Para sa pinakahuling pangyayari sa iba pang mga lalawigan sa bansa, puntahan natin si Merry Ann Bastasa ng PBS-Radyo Pilipinas.

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC IGNACIO: Maraming salamat sa iyo, Merry Ann Bastasa ng PBS-Radyo Pilipinas.

Sa Cordillera Region patuloy ang pagsasakatuparan ng mga programa sa ilalim ng Build, Build, Build program ng pamahalaan. Ang detalye mula kay Eddie Carta ng PTV-Cordillera:

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC IGNACIO: Hospitalization rate sa Davao Region patuloy na bumababa. Ang detalye sa report ni Jay Lagang ng PTV-Davao:

[NEWS REPORT]

USEC IGNACIO: At iyan po ang mga balita at talakayang tampok namin ngayong araw. Ang Public Briefing ay hatid sa inyo ng iba't ibang sangay ng PCOO sa pakikipagtulungan ng Department of Health at kaisa ng Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP).

Ako po si Usec. Rocky Ignacio, magkita-kita tayo bukas dito lamang sa Public Briefing
#LagingHandaPH.

###

--

News and Information Bureau-Data Processing Center