

**Office of the Press Secretary
Presidential News Desk**

**INTERVIEW WITH
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY VICTOR RODRIGUEZ**

[22 July 2022]

Q: Sir, meron kasing ano lumabas na isang report that you are resigning or planning to resign as Executive dahil nga daw sa pressure sa inner circle ng Marcos administration?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, even the messages that I got this morning, essentially what they said that I have resigned. But as you know, you made this courtesy call, I'm still here in my office.

That's why I said, tinitingnan ko 'yung mga itsura ninyo kanina kung meron kayong --- para kayong nakakita ng multo. But I'm just here. I hardly go out of my office. Probably that's one... I don't know how the rumor started. But...

All of us in the Cabinet, regardless of the portfolio that he or she is holding or handling, I think it must be clear that the moment he or she accepts the nomination and request coming from the President, by the President, to help him serve and run the country, I think automatic 'yun.

The moment you said yes. Automatic na rin na tinanggap mo na rin na anytime you will be asked to leave. But until that happens, then you stay, 'di ba?

Hindi naman one way 'yung pagtanggap mo eh, na pag tinanggap mo, that's it. No. Pag tinanggap mo, impliedly written na 'yan sa agreement na 'yan that anytime you may also be asked to leave.

So malinaw dito sa present administration and all those serving under President Marcos that the moment the President asks you to serve under his leadership, it goes without saying that is --- there is no permanence.

Q: Pero sir, ano 'yung magiging reason para mag-resign kayo?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Who?

Q: Kayo po.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Me in particular?

Q: Yeah.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I don't want to think about it. But of course for health reasons. Of course, family reasons. But other than that... That's why I'm saying I don't want to think about those reasons because I do not want to get sick. I don't think anyone of us here would want to get sick.

And the moment you cite that as a reason to your employer, something must be seriously wrong with your health. And I wish you all well. I hope you wish me well too healthwise.

Q: Sec, paki-clarify 'yung --- have you read the online article about your alleged resignation? Can you clarify 'yung mga allegations doon? 'Yung about sa 100 million pesos issues and 'yung --- your relationship with a certain religious group.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Well honestly, I haven't been reading those news, whether positive or adverse or neutral. So hearing it from you, maybe you can expound further so that I will have an idea on the exact content of what you're asking me now.

Q: Sir, based doon sa article sinasabi na nanghihingi daw ng 100 million para magkaroon ng position and I think ang nag --- ang nag-sumbong sa --- kay PBBM is INC.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Sinong nagsabi? There again. There again. What I have just mentioned and intimated to all of you early in our conversation, we cannot be held to explain on something na unverifiable or chismis lang dahil we do not want to end up explaining on something that need not be explained.

The amount is fantastic. Demanded by whom from whom. And you also mentioned the INC, what about the INC?

Q: Sila daw 'yung nagsumbong, allegedly.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I think it's unfair for our friends and members of the Iglesia Ni Cristo to be dragged into again --- chismis.

As you know, we are being followed and hounded by fake news as early as the campaign. And I think it will continue that way for as long as he is the President.

And do we have to explain? We will only explain things that are coming from verifiable source or sources.

But I know you understand too, if it's a fake news or bordering on chismis or "marites" I don't think it is proper for anyone, whether a government functionary or an ordinary person to be asked and made to explain.

Ang dapat siguro magpaliwanag niyan, go to the source, sino nag-post niyan, ano ba ang sources mo niyan, pakipaliwanag mo nga.

And if he or she or they can establish some degree of credibility or some degree of authenticity on what they have posted and maybe that's the time you can be asked to explain as well.

But without those basic --- without those baselines, I don't think we can make --- and we should make anyone explain, again, whether government functionary or ordinary Filipino citizen.

Q: Sir, preparation lang sa SONA.

Q: SONA na lang. Isa na lang.

Q: Preparation sa SONA. What to expect na lang sir?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: He's the one writing his SONA message. And he will be very busy. Yesterday, we tried to relax already his schedule so he can write but ang dami pa ring mga trabaho.

And this morning, we have just --- the two ambassadors, the Ambassador of Thailand and Ambassador of the United States presented their credentials to him this morning.

But this afternoon, he has devoted it, until the weekend, until morning of Monday to finalize his SONA message.

Q: Mga ilang pages sir ang kanyang speech?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Walang... It's a moving --- it's a work in progress. It's a moving thing. It's --- I think it's too premature to say right now that it's on its "x" number of page or pages. Wala pa, gumagalaw pa eh.

Q: Pero Secretary, meron po ba kayo kahit general themes?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: The general themes you can also get it naman from all the --- what's happening for the past three Cabinet meetings. It's all about our economy, the economic plans. With the face-to-face opening of this coming school year, it's all about COVID response.

And when we speak of COVID response, it's not only about health. It goes all the way to the entire cycle of economy, not just health, you go to economy, you go into education, and so on and so forth.

So 'yun, pagtutuunan din ng pansin 'yun. And related, intrinsic --- and very much related to the COVID response and opening of classes is of course 'yung digitalization. Not just in --- with respect to the education and the students. But also with the way things are being run by --- in terms of governance, he wants to see a digitalized governance and digitalized PBBM administration.

Q: Pati food security mababanggit ni Presidente?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: That's why he took head on the portfolio of the Department of Agriculture because he is aware of the impending food price crisis and probably food supply crisis.

But for now, we are really confronted with the food price crisis. For the supply, except for the supply chain, I hope we will be --- under his leadership, we will be able to institute measures to mitigate its impact on us.

Q: So it will be recovery, food security, and...

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yes, because it is his thrust, it is his vision for us not only to have food security but food sovereignty meaning we don't have to rely on much importation anymore.

If we can feed ourselves as a nation, and if we can feed ourselves as Filipinos, I think we are on our way to where we want to be, much like where our neighbors are.

Q: Sir, last na lang. How about priority bills sir, meron po bang --- may babanggitin po ba si Presidente?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: We'll wait for his SONA.

Q: May LEDAC meeting ba sir si PBBM? LEDAC, sir? Magkakaroon ba siya? Meron ng schedule?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Well, wala pang schedule. But again, all our efforts are now geared towards SONA, understandably.

And after that, we will do all these things, the LEDAC. We have to look into the budget and his --- anyway he's given by law 30 days from the opening of Congress to submit his budget proposal to both houses of Congress --- I mean to Congress.

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