

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESS SECRETARY TRIXIE CRUZ-ANGELES
July 29, 2022 (1:48 P.M. - 2:04 P.M.)

MODERATOR: Magandang hapon, Malacañang Press Corps. Narito si Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles kasama sina Dr. Beverly Ho at Dr. Albert Domingo ng Department of Health.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang hapon. Nagkaroon kami ng Cabinet meeting nitong umaga, 9 o'clock. It was a special Cabinet meeting. Ang pinag-usapan po namin ay tungkol sa budget. Nagprisinta po ang Department of Budget and Management, at ipinakita iyong proposed submission for Congress. Pagkatapos ay may mga kaunting input galing sa iba't ibang mga kalihim para sa fine tuning na ito. Makakapagsumite ang department sa Kongreso on time by next week.

Bahagi din po doon sa mga diskusyon ang Balik Eskwela ng Department of Education; kinongratulate po si SILG, Secretary Benhur Abalos, doon sa 60-kilos na drug-bust na ginawa sa Pampanga; and also, ang pagdiskubre natin na mayroon tayong unang kaso ng monkeypox – gumaling na po iyong tao – kaya nandito po iyong DOH. I-explain po namin iyong why monkeypox is not like COVID. It's primarily—well, the DOH should be in a better position to discuss. So, gusto ninyo mag-discuss muna iyong DOH before you ask your questions? All right, sandali lang po. Doc? Dr. Beverly will be discussing the matter with you.

DR. HO: Thank you, Sec. I will be reading the DOH statement:

The DOH detects the first confirmed case of monkeypox in the Philippines. The Department of Health has detected the first confirmed case of monkeypox in the country. The case is a 31-year-old Filipino national who arrived from abroad last July 19. The case had prior travel to countries with documented monkeypox cases.

The case was tested and confirmed positive for monkeypox by a Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) done at the DOH Research Institute for Tropical Medicine on July 28. The case has been discharged well and it's undergoing strict isolation and monitoring at home.

DOH has completed its case investigation and identification of close contacts. Ten close contacts were recorded, of which three were from the same household. All have been advised to quarantine and are being monitored by the department. The DOH assures everyone that our public health surveillance systems are able to detect and confirm monkeypox cases.

Monkeypox is caused by a different micro-organism; it's different from COVID-19. Investigation of recent monkeypox cases in other non-endemic countries indicates potential transmission

through sexual contact. It spreads mostly through intimate sexual contact with those who have rashes or open lesions. It is not like COVID-19 that spreads mostly through air.

Now, it is now a public health emergency of international concern, everyone can actually help prevent the spread of monkeypox. We minimize close sexual contact with suspected cases especially those with rashes or open wounds. Keep our hands clean, wear face masks, cover cough using our elbows and continue to choose areas with good ventilation or airflow.

The DOH also wishes to emphasize that anyone may get it, but if you have a travel history to countries with monkeypox and then have symptoms like fever, lymphadenopathy or kulani and rashes, that's the time that you need to seek medical attention. This will help hasten recovery.

For more information, you may access our materials, please access it through an online folder bit.ly/MonkeypoxFacts.

That will be all, Sec.

PIA GUTIERREZ: Dr. Beverly Ho po. Ma'am, what is the condition of the ten close contacts? Are they exhibiting symptoms of monkeypox?

DR. HO: No symptoms for the current close contacts that's why they're all in quarantine. Still, they're being observed.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Ma'am, what symptoms were exhibited by the first case of monkeypox? At bakit po ngayon lang po nai-report ngayon po na naka-recover na itong case natin?

DR. HO: Well, as we have mentioned, the patient was tested and confirmed yesterday, July 28. But we will not be divulging any more of the clinical information because that's all within the purview now of the specialist who's looking at them.

LEI ALVIZ/GMA-7: Hi, Doc Bev. Doc, ano po iyong gender? May we ask for the gender of the first detected case?

DR. HO: I think we will not go into that but as long as you know that the patient is a 31-year-old Filipino national.

LEI ALVIZ/GMA-7: And ano po iyong travel history niya? Saang bansa po siya galing?

DR. HO: All we can say is that the patient traveled to areas with confirmed cases of monkeypox that are typically non-endemic areas.

LEI ALVIZ/GMA-7: And dumaan naman po siya, Doc, sa screening 'no when he arrived at the airport?

DR. HO: Yes, dumaan po sa screening. But we all know 'no that the symptoms do not necessarily come out earlier 'di ba; iyong iba much later.

LEI ALVIZ/GMA-7: Thank you.

MARICEL HALILI/TV-5: Doc, good morning. Ma'am, just to remind lang po the public: Ano po iyong SOP with regard po sa monkeypox, like iyong naging close contact noong case? Gaano katagal iyong kanilang quarantine? And paano po iyong nagiging screening noong mga arriving na Filipinos? Kailangan may symptoms muna before undergoing sa test, ganoon po ba?

DR. HO: Yes 'no. So, basically for the close contacts of this case, as with any other cases based on our guidelines, you need to quarantine for 14 to 21 days based on the onset of your symptoms 'no. So, we'll just need to observe them for that duration of period kasi doon iyon puwedeng lumabas.

As to passengers coming from abroad, some of you who might have travelled would note that the Bureau of Quarantine One Health Pass, it also asks screening questions about monkeypox. So, that's the first line. Second, fever nga iyong isang symptom 'di ba. So, mayroon pa rin tayong mga temperature screening na available sa airport natin. Then, of course, iyong mas hindi lang makikita 'no would be the rashes 'di ba kasi kung naka-long sleeves iyong pasahero 'no. But efforts are ongoing now para matingnan 'no kung mga naka-jacket, puwede silang papatanggal iyong jacket but then this would be probably the most difficult to screen from afar.

MARICEL HALILI/TV-5: Ma'am, at least may we know kung saang area po iyong case?

DR. HO: All we can let you know now is the case is recovering well at home. I think we wouldn't be divulging any more information other than that.

MARICEL HALILI/TV-5: Thank you, Doc.

MODERATOR: Doc Ho, question from Job Manahan/ABS-CBN Online: How soon can we avail of the smallpox vaccine or vaccines for monkeypox? And sino po ang priority na makakakuha nito if ever?

DR. HO: Well, now discussions are ongoing. I think we've mentioned it in our previous press conferences that we're working with the US government to secure the vaccines. There's not a lot that's available in the market. Also that it's only a select population group that will have to be vaccinated. Again, it's not like COVID that all of us need to be vaccinated.

MODERATOR: Follow-up from Job: Is DOH prepared to contain another global health emergency like monkeypox?

DR. HO: Our systems are in place, but we all need to work together. We also need the public to be vigilant, particularly the key population groups who are at utmost risk. And based on what we know about monkeypox, lifestyle 'no, there is a very clear need to be more careful about who we interact with, particularly sexual intimate contact.

So, I think what is clear to us is we're working closely with those population groups so that they will have better preparation risk perception that this is a disease that would probably concern them more than the general population.

MODERATOR: Any other questions for Dr. Ho? Thank you very much, Dr. Ho. We are now entertaining questions for Secretary Angeles.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: No more questions? Okay na tayo?

MODERATOR: Pia Gutierrez?

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Ma'am, iyon sa sinabmit [submitted] po na proposed budget, ano po iyong mga priorities po?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, the topmost of course is still the rightsizing. But the same priorities hold true, the Constitution requires the biggest budgetary allocation for education. So, it's still the same. Hindi po masyadong nagbago from last year. I would like to remind you that most of the budget was created by the last administration.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: How much po will be allocated for the country's COVID response?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Ma'am, we don't have details kasi pina-fine-tune. The presentation was for today so that the secretaries can fine-tune the particular budgets. It will be finalized and then submitted to Congress next week.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Thank you po.

CRESILYN CATARONG/SMNI: Ma'am, on another topic po. Will the President certify the bill for the creation of the Department of Disaster Resilience po?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: The President merely talked about it last time. We'll have to wait for him to put in writing if this is going to be a policy directive.

CRESILYN CATARONG/SMNI: Lastly, ma'am, from my end. Iyong meeting po ni PBBM with the SolGen and Chief Presidential Legal Counsel the other day regarding the ICC po. Sabi po ni SolGen, mayroon daw po silang napagkasunduan doon sa pulong. May we know kung ano po iyon?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: There are no details out about it yet.

CRESILYN CATARONG/SMNI: But the meeting itself, Ma'am, was it because po iyong order ng ICC na mag-comment po iyong Pilipinas regarding po sa—?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: We have no details, so we don't know even what the topic was about.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Secretary Trixie, ano lang po iyong mensahe ng Malacañang sa publiko ngayon ngang may monkeypox na, may mga paalala? At ano po kaya ang reaksiyon din ni Pangulong Marcos dito nga sa monkeypox?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: First of all, it's only one case, number one. Number two, as you can see, it doesn't affect the entire population. Number three, this is not like COVID that can be spread by air very easily and could possibly be fatal. This is not particularly fatal, but it is of concern.

So his primary concern was to get the information out so that people will be aware, but also to be aware that the systems of the DOH are in place and that this is not the same as COVID.

VANZ FERNANDEZ: Ma'am, good afternoon. The DOST on Thursday made a statement urging President Marcos to strengthen the program Balik Scientist Program to lure back scientifically educated individuals back to the Philippines through employment and opportunities and allowances. This opens the entirely new question on how the President plans to deal with Filipinos of all professions choosing to work abroad over here at home. What economic and employment programs does the President have in line to grant Filipinos a better career and financial opportunities here at home to help the economy rather than leaving for another country?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: The primary program is to get the economy back on track post-COVID. So a good economy, a thriving economy is going to help bring back all Filipinos. So that's the primary aim/goal right now as it was mentioned in the SONA. For particulars, regarding Balik Scientist Program will have to wait since the call has just been recently made.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary Angeles, magandang hapon po.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang hapon.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Secretary, napag-usapan po ba iyong susunod na magiging alert status since tayo ay July 29, malapit na iyong August 1?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Susunod na alert status. That would be called on by the DOH, so we will have to wait. Anyway, right now, it is status quo. So we'll maintain the alert levels for now. But the entire process is also continuously under review, so we'll have to wait.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: So we expect announcement siguro bago mag-August 1 po?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Yes, sir.

ALVIN BALTAZAR/RADYO PILIPINAS: Follow up lang, Secretary. Is it true na hinire [hired] po ni Pangulong Marcos si dating Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque na maging ano niya, private counsel to the tune of 20 pesos?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, as you know, any communication between attorney and client is privileged and, therefore, confidential. And therefore, we cannot even confirm whether or not he has been hired as counsel. That would be really up to the client to make the announcement, and no such announcement has been made yet.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Hi, ma'am. Ako ulit. So, ma'am, may we know if the Marcos administration already has plans on what to do with the PCGG? Kasi si Justice Secretary Boying Remulla says, he wants to expand the mandate of the commission to go beyond recovering the ill-gotten wealth of the Marcoses. Is this going to be the direction of the Marcos Administration po?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Since it is Secretary Remulla who has made the proposal, we'll have to wait for him to bring it up. So right now, there is no policy.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Pero, ma'am, as early as now, what does the Palace say to those who are concerned that the Marcos Administration will either abolish or dilute the mandate of the PCGG?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: We don't respond to speculation, ma'am.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Thank you po.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: All right. Thank you, everybody.

MODERATOR: Maraming salamat, Malacañang Press Corps.

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