

**OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY**  
**News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESS SECRETARY TRIXIE CRUZ-ANGELES**  
**WITH DEPARTMENT OF MIGRANT WORKERS SECRETARY SUSAN OPLE**  
**SEPTEMBER 4, 2022 (3:55 P.M. – 4:17 P.M.)**  
**JAKARTA, INDONESIA**

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** [Airing starts] ... since the various secretaries who will be signing the agreements on the DFA will be making the announcement, so we're just letting you know what to expect. So some of the discussions will be, for instance, on political cooperation, the signing of the Plan of Action for the 2022 to 2027, as the guide post towards the Diamond Jubilee anniversary of the diplomatic ties between Indonesia and the Philippines.

For the defense and military cooperation, it will be the signing of the renewal of the 1997 Defense and Security Cooperation Agreement. There will be dialogues and training, intelligence exchanges, high-level visits, logistics and procurement. Meantime, there will be talks also on maritime cooperation and border issues, primarily the limitation of the continental shelf, possible review of border agreements, fisheries and IUUF (Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing).

On transnational crimes, it will be again on the rescue of the abducted Indonesians, the neutralization of Indonesian terrorists in the Jolo bombing and the conferment of medal of peace on armed forces officials and a trilateral cooperation agreement.

The economic cooperation post-pandemic recovery will be highlighting the signing of the MOU on creative economy, trade and investment, agriculture, green energy, Mindanao-Eastern Indonesia trade and connectivity.

For socio-cultural and people-to-people exchanges, persons of Indonesian descent project, the 7,451 Filipinos in Indonesia and labor cooperation, signing of the MOU on culture. There will be exchange of views on regional and global issues on the West Philippine Sea, on Ukraine conflict, Myanmar and Asian centrality and Indonesia's G-20 presidency.

Ang daming pag-uusapan. Do you have any questions?

**Q:** Iyong condition o status po ni Mary Jane Veloso [off mic]...

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** We can't say, officially. It's always an issue. Perhaps it will be broach by both parties – by one or both parties. We'll have to see. I understand, since it's a pending issue, it may be inescapable but we will announce if it is taken up.

**Q:** [Off mic] Ma'am, konektado lang sa tanong ni Marlon iyong tanong ko. Lumiham po iyong mga magulang ni Mary Jane through DMW sa Pangulo. Nakarating po ba ito sa Pangulo, and may we know what he have to say about it?

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** We have no information on whether or not it has reached the President. But the President is aware of the issue.

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Yes. The letter was brought by the family to the DMW Friday afternoon, but I was out of the office, I was attending the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the POEA at the PICC. So, I was able to receive a copy of that letter halos maggagabi na on that day. But I was able to transmit that letter to the Department of Foreign Affairs, the DFA and I met last Friday even before the family came to see us. Secretary Manalo and I met with our undersecretaries at the DFA; hosted a lunch for Secretary Benny Laguesma and myself. And several items were discussed about bilateral labor talks and other pressing labor issues and this case was among those discussed.

And so by agreement, it will be the Department of Foreign Affairs that will be taking the lead primarily for two reasons: One, it has the institutional memory and knowledge from the start of the case until today; and second, I'm pretty sure Secretary Trixie will agree with me on the importance of speaking with one voice on a case that has such very sensitive dimensions as the case of Mary Jane Veloso. So the DMW will defer to the DFA, and I am sure that Secretary Manalo, I'm sure that he will be at the appropriate time, open to saying more about this case.

**Q:** Sorry, last na lang ho. Para kay Secretary Ople pa rin po. Ma'am, ang populasyon ng Pilipino sa Indonesia relatively maliit – 7,500—

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** To be exact, it's 7,448.

**Q:** Yeah. That's small in the nation of 270 million people. Posible ho kayang isa itong [unclear] and is this something that [unclear]?

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Actually, they are also a labor-deploying country. So in fact in some destination countries naggaganyanan iyong Indonesian migrant workers in terms of bilang – Indonesia, Vietnam, tayo – minsan tayo number one, minsan sila. And marami tayong mga commonalities and mga shared advocacies with Indonesia, like I'm very sure, they are also in favor of migrant worker's rights and protection.

So doon naman din sa Singapore, doon ang mas malaki talaga ang bilang – nasa 200,000. So ang population ng Singapore nasa mga five million; ang bilang ng foreign workers sa Singapore ay nasa 1.2 million, so ang butal na two million, iyon 'yung actually bilang ng Filipinos doon. Out of that number, nasa 84,000 ang domestic workers natin. So, makikita ninyo na unlike Saudi Arabia and other countries like Hong Kong, sa Singapore mas lamang pa rin iyong mga professionals. Dito naman sa Indonesia, mga professionals talaga and mga skilled na workers.

**Q:** Salamat po.

**Q:** [Unclear] bakit hindi ninyo nasama sa itinerary ng Pangulo iyong pagbisita po niya kay Mary Jane Veloso, considering the she is already incarcerated here for 20 years?

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** As Secretary Ople said, for matters that are of this sensitive nature, the President will have to – how do you call this? We cannot say more, we cannot say more than that. We cannot even guess as to why, but because it is of such a sensitive nature, then we proceed with deliberation.

**Q:** [Unclear] the DSCA—

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** Wait. We proceed with deliberation if we proceed at all. So I'm not saying that we're proceeding with anything, but the President is aware of the issue. Beyond that, we cannot discuss.

**Q:** Okay. On a separate topic, on the DSCA. We will renew it, it's a 1997 agreement that will be reviewed now. [Unclear]...

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** On such a matter, I think we should leave that to the DFA to announce.

**Q:** [Unclear/off mic] Kay Sec. Toots po. Ma'am, follow-up lang doon sa doon sa OFW concerns, aside po kay Mary Jane, ano po iyong common concerns po ng OFWs dito sa Indonesia, ano po iyong agenda natin?

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Yes, well, unang-una, ang primary agenda natin talaga is makadaupang-palad iyong mga OFWs na nandito 'no, kasi first state visit ni Presidente. And I think it's symbolic na sa unang araw pa lang, gusto niya na ang una niyang maka-meet iyong ating OFWs. So it tells a lot about his concern for our workers. And please remember, after the elections, hindi naman pa siya nakaikot para kumustahin sila. So this is the first time.

And also, the reason why the DMW, in my person, was invited, so we can also discuss with the FilCom leaders the flagship programs of the new department. So on the side, after the President's speech and also for tomorrow, I will be having coffee with some of the FilCom leaders just to touch base with them and also solicit their suggestions and listen to their grievances, and hopefully the Department of Migrant Workers would be able to make a difference in several of the reform areas that we need to address.

For Singapore naman, the good news is that Facebook Singapore is actually hiring Filipino workers. For the first time, Facebook has requested for accreditation as an employer which speaks a lot about the excellence of our Filipino IT professionals. And Grab Singapore, another multinational brand, is also keen on hiring from us.

And on a third point, there are ongoing talks between the Department of Migrant Workers and the Ministry of Health of Singapore because the MOH has reached out to us and has expressed their desire to explore ways of recruiting or hiring more of our health workers for employment in Singapore through a possibly – hindi pa kasi sarado iyong talks and iyong pipirmahan namin na document, but possibly through a government-to-government arrangement.

**Q:** [OFF MIC] Ma'am, bukod po kay Maryjane, mayroon pa po ba tayong kaso na Filipino workers na tinututukan dito sa Indonesia?

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Dito sa Indonesia, siya iyong pinaka-urgent. Mayroong, sa pagkaalam ko, more than 60 death row cases all over the world ngayon. But again, the data and the information is with the DFA. Siguro at an appropriate time, kapag fully constituted na kami, so we would be in a better position to be handling some of these cases if not all of them.

**Q:** [OFF MIC] Secretary Ople, regarding the figure, the more than 7,000 Filipinos, obviously, they are the documented ones. How about iyong undocumented, mga ilan kaya sila [unclear]

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** It's really difficult, kasi madalas they also don't want to go to our embassy kasi nga natatakot sila baka may repercussions. But we do appeal to our workers who are tourists in terms of documentation but are clandestinely working 'no, in various companies and households worldwide – we appeal to them, please approach our embassy; look for our labor attaché; let's discuss ways para ma-regularize kayo so that you can be part of the global work force that the Department of Migrant Workers has been tasked by law to monitor, assist and develop programs for.

**Q:** Ma'am, Secretary [unclear], call for the President to issue a statement seeking support for the wearing of facemasks? The doctors are saying na [unclear] in Cebu. So doctors are concerned [unclear] if they [unclear] mas maraming patients. They are counting on the President [unclear] magsalita para iyong kaniyang persuasion ay iba raw ang dating. What does Malacañang say to that?

**SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** Primarily, this is a matter for the DOH and it will be the DOH who will primarily advice the President on health matters. That being said, we will also have to wait because right now, although the issue is raging, there is intervention by the SILG, the Secretary of Interior and Local Government, and he has asked Cebu to kindly defer their plan. I understand that the response has been that they will not defer. So we will wait first for further action on the part of the Department of the Interior. And so all of that will be taken into consideration by the President.

**Q:** [OFF MIC] But in general, can we say that the President is supportive of the facemasks mandate?

**SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** We'll have to wait for a more definitive statement.

**Q:** [OFF MIC] For now, we wait for advice from DOH?

**SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** Okay. What we can say is that he (President Marcos) values the opinion of the DOH, but he will likewise listen to everybody.

**Q:** [OFF MIC] Good afternoon, Secretary. Ano po ba iyong maaaring asahan ng sambayanang Pilipino mula po dito sa back-to-back state visits? Iyong mga pakay ni Pangulong Marcos dito sa Indonesia and Singapore. And how much po iyong inaasahan natin na maaaring investment na makukuha po ng BBM administration from [unclear]?

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** Well, some of the agreements are for signing. But, I think the amounts will still have to be either discussed or announced later on. There are others that are for talks. So, diplomatic talks, we will have to see later on kung ano ang ibubunga nito – iyong sigurado natin, iyong pirmahan na.

**Q:** Kay Sec. Ople. How did the Filipino community react, when they found out that the President will visit them?

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Siyempre excited sila 'no, and sabik sila na mapakinggan diretso mula sa ating Pangulo kung anuman iyong mensahe. Karamihan sa kanila nanunood ng vlogs ng ating Pangulo. And ang report sa akin ng ating Labor Attaché sa Singapore, marami talaga nagpaalam sa kanilang mga employers para lang maka-attend. At iyon, very high iyong moral nila kasi kakaiba din naman – alam ninyo, parang first kiss, first love and first state visit.

I mean, this will go down in history – in answer also to one of the questions 'no – this will go down in history for the whole of the President's term that his first visit was here in Indonesia and that says a lot about the kinship, the deep and abiding friendship between the two countries; and then, Singapore also. So, back to back siya, pero I'm sure, it will be extremely memorable, and I'm sure maraming magpapa-selfie, matutuwa kasi nandiyan iyong first family, nandiyan din.

**Q:** [Unclear] last week and the parents said, she was very sure na pagbisita dito ni Presidente BBM, makakalaya si Mary Jane. Do you have any idea where the hopes of the family and Mary Jane is coming from? Mayroon po bang informal or unofficial na dumalaw kay Mary Jane to check on her condition?

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Alam mo sa aking pananaw, kasi kung magulang ka, laging ang iisipin mo na kung ano iyong best na mangyayari. I mean, ibig sabihin, hindi bibitiw ang kahit sinong magulang sa pangarap na makapiling ang anak. So, saan ba pinagmumulan, saan iyong hugot sa ganoong pananaw? Hindi namin alam. First time ko narinig na nakatawag si Mary Jane.

Alam mo, I think, what's important is that we just keep praying, kasi may diplomatic track, pero mayroon ding Divine track. Iyong Divine track is that of prayers. So, let's just continue to hope and pray with the family.

Hindi naman nagtatapos sa visit iyong anumang pag-uusapan tungkol kay Mary Jane. Kaya nga diplomatic track ang ginagamit ng ating Department of Foreign Affairs.

**Q:** Sec, may dala po kayong kopya noong letter ng family [ni Mary Jane]?

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Na-i-turnover ko na. Na-turnover ko na.

**Q:** Bukod sa DFA, mayroon din po bang kopya [unclear]

**DMW SEC. OPLE:** Ang usapan kasi namin ni Secretary Manalo, siya na ang bahalang mag-ano. I am pretty sure naman na mag-uusap sila ni Pangulo.

**Q:** [Unclear] Memorandum of Agreement on Cultural Cooperative—for Secretary Trixie, will this translate into jobs [unclear]

**PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES:** (Garbled)

In the Cabinet, do not contradict each other, instead we support each other's efforts and I think that given the history and the experience of a career diplomat like Foreign Affairs Secretary Manalo, and all of his Undersecretaries are also career diplomats.

So, I have no doubt in my heart that he will do everything that is possible to discuss this case and also to look at other opportunities for collaboration in strengthening migrant workers' rights and protection not only here in Indonesia but also in Singapore and throughout ASEAN.

So, ipagpaumanhin na po ninyo; we really would like. I think the call of the times is for us to be more prudent and circumspect, kasi hindi po biru-biro iyong nakataya dito.

So, maraming salamat po.

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