PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
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MEDIA INTERVIEW BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.
FOLLOWING THE DISTRIBUTION OF RICE IN TAGUIG CITY
[Held at Taguig City University Gymnasium, General Santos Avenue, Lower Bicutan, Taguig | 4 ng October 2023]

Q: Mr. President, magandang umaga po. Hi, sir. Good morning po.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Good morning.

Q: Mr. President, kahapon po, nagkaroon kayo ng sectoral meeting at ang pagkakasabi po kahapon ng DTI mukhang nailatag na po sa inyo 'yung mga indicators para ma-lift 'yung price cap sa bigas. Ano pong desisyon niyo ukol dito, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, I think it's the appropriate time since namimigay tayo ng mga bigas. Yes, we are --- as of today, we are lifting the price caps on rice, both for the regular milled rice and for the well-milled rice.

So, tinatanggal na natin 'yung mga control pero hindi ibig sabihin basta't ganun na lang dahil kailangan pa rin natin ayusin ang agricultural sector, kailangan pa rin natin tulungan ang mga pinakamahirap, pinakagutom para kahit papaano makaahon sila.

So, to do that, we have --- we will continue the assistance that we have been giving to farmers, number one, also the assistance that we have been giving to those most under privileged families. Iyong sa pinakamababang demographic economic class dahil talaga sila ang naghihirap.

So, 'yung ating ginagawa ng DSWD, I think the Secretary will be able to… *[You want to jump in and say a few things about rice? Yes, please. Go ahead.]*

DSWD SECRETARY REX GATCHALIAN: Well, alam naman natin na multi-pronged approach 'yung ginagawa natin. Mayroon tayong naitala na isang milyon na food-poor families sa buong bansa. Sila 'yung magiging beneficiaries nung nilunsad ng Pangulo natin na pilot program na food stamps. Pero habang inaayos pa natin 'yung pilot noon, tuloy-tuloy naman tayo mag-distribute ng assistance to individuals in crisis situation.

Ito 'yung araw-araw nakikita niyo sa ating mga field office kung saan nakakatanggap sila ng food assistance at 'yung food assistance na 'yun, 'yun 'yung ginagamit nila pangbili ng bigas dahil readily available naman sa ating mga merkado ang murang bigas.

At tuloy-tuloy 'yan, it's a mainstay program ng departamento at pinag-utos ho ng Pangulo kahapon at pinagtibay naman ng departamento na paiigtingin pa natin 'yung pag-distribute ng assistance to individuals in crisis situation. Maraming salamat.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Thank you, Secretary Rex.

Iyon ang aming ginagawa dahil naman mayroon tayong ina-anticipate, hindi natin ma-control pa rin ang market pero para naman kung mayroon pang mangyari at ito'y maging mas mahirap para

sa certain sector of our society ay talagang --- ginagawa na natin ito tumutulong na tayo but we are going to continue and watch very closely kung sino ang mga tatamaan.

Bukod pa rito, because we have to support the --- again, the value chain because we are still talking about production. Ang Rice Tariffication Law, mayroong naka-mandate doon na 10 billion every year for the RCEF. Hindi RCEP, 'yung RCEF, 'yung namimigay ng mga gamit, mga tractor, mga dryer, mga harvester, et cetera.

Ang ginawa natin para matulungan pa 'yung ating mga farmer, 'yung lampas doon sa 10 billion nangongolekta ang rice tariffication. Ang 10 billion noon, linagay na kaagad para sa makinarya para sa processing ng mga farmers.

Ngayon, 'yung sobra na nakolekta, which this year is 12 billion plus ay dapat ibibigay din natin, pinaghatian natin, bibigay natin sa farmers pati pero 'yung iba doon, i-a-apply na natin, isasabay na natin para makapagpamigay pa tayo ng mga gamit para sa ating mga magsasaka, para sa ating mga mangingisda.

So, that will go into the general dryers. Siguro mayroon pang --- the cold storage for the fishermen. So, the RCEF from only the expenditure of 10 billion, it will now be 22 billion in that regard para bumilis nga talaga ang pagtulong sa ating mga farmer.

Bukod pa doon, there is --- noong tinitingnan namin kahapon 'yung statistics ang problema talaga ay dito sa NCR. Dito mataas ang presyo ng bigas. Sa ibang lugar ngayon, pag tinitingnan natin ang presyuhan, mas mababa na sa price cap kaya't doon sa ibang lugar medyo maayos.

But that's natural dahil nasa city tayo. Matagal bago dumating ang bigas dito at nagiging mahal ang transportation, storage, processing fee dahil doon. Kaya tumataas naman ang presyo dito sa NCR. Kaya naman I'm happy to announce na I gave instructions to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Speaker Martin Romualdez.

Sabi ko sa kanya, we have to do something for NCR. Kaya't nagbubuo ang House of Representatives ng isang programa na para sa mga NCR congressmen. There are 33 NCR congressmen.

Ngayon, ang gagawin is the 33 NCR congressmen will be giving the assistance na --- magbibigay tayo ng bigas doon sa iba't ibang area dito sa Metro Manila, dito sa NCR.

So, that is another measure that we are undertaking para naman hindi basta't pinabayaan na, basta't maayos na 'yung price cap, alisin na lang natin, tapos na. Hindi pa tapos 'to.

Marami, marami pa tayong ginagawa para tiyakin na ma-maintain nga natin ang presyo. Ang suplay hindi talaga problema. Ang suplay talaga hindi problema. We have, I think presently, close to 40 days. Paakyat lang nang paakyat. Umaani tayo.

So, those are the… So, we are lifting the price cap but besides that we are taking other measures para tulungan ang ating mga farmers in terms of their equipment, their processing, et cetera.

We are also concentrating on the NCR because that is where the prices are most volatile and are highest. So doon tayo mag-concentrate. Una, we'll pilot that project for the 33 NCR districts, NCR congressmen na makapagbigay uli tayo ng bigas. And the RCEF that we are going to use is going to be the totality of the collection of the Rice Tariffication Law. So, doon natin ilalagay lahat.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hello. Good morning.

Q: Good morning, sir. Can we get a reaction to the recent Pulse Asia survey that shows your lowered approval ratings? Thank you.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: It's not surprising. People are having a hard time. 'Yung bigas, 'yang hirap… Bigas ito. Iba ang usapan pag bigas. It's different from anything else, any other agricultural product. I completely understand it.

And that's why we're working very, very hard to make sure that this comes up again, not because of the survey. That's not important to me. What's important to me is that we make sure that people have enough to eat and that it is affordable to them.

Kaya hindi mo masisi ang tao. Talagang naghihihrap sila. That's why we're doing all of these things. That's why we're doing all of the things to try and maintain the prices at a level that is affordable to our people.

'Yun lang naman talaga ang kailangang gawin. And I think we're going to… I think we are slowly heading there dahil ang suplay natin napakaganda, ang distribution siguro mayroon na tayong ginagawa doon sa pass-through para sa cost ng pag-deliver nung bigas, lalo na sa mga malalayo. NCR is included there. Mayroon tayong project dito sa NCR. May program tayo dito sa NCR.

So, that's perfectly natural. It's not a surprise, put it that way.

All right. Thank you very much.

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