

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**MEDIA INTERVIEW BY
PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR
FOLLOWING HIS DEPARTURE FOR HIS STATE VISIT TO THE COMMONWEALTH OF
AUSTRALIA
[28 February 2024]**

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Magandang umaga sa inyo.

Q: Sinabi po ni Senator Zubiri na gusto niyo raw po yang Cha-cha plebiscite na kasabay ng 2025 [unclear]

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Oo, pinagaaralan talaga namin yun dahil kung paghihiwalayin natin 'yung— kung paghihiwalayin natin 'yang election at saka 'yung plebiscite, parang dalawang eleksyon 'yun eh, napaka mahal.

So, baka maaari kung isama natin 'yang plebisito sa local elections na gagawin sa Mayo next year. Malaking bagay 'yun, malaking savings para sa atin 'yun kaya't 'yun, pinagaaralan naming mabuti.

There's some legal consequences because plebiscite is slightly different, not so--- plebiscite is different from an election. So, if we are able to incorporate the two exercises together, as a practical matter palagay ko makakatulong 'yan.

Q: 'Yung timetable po ng House gusto nila July po eh, paano po kaya 'yun?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Well, 'yan kausapin natin si Speaker. Sasabihin--- well hindi ibig sabihin na pagka natapos ang House or ang Senado, kailangan na ng magplebisito kailangan na--- maaari naman tayong maghintay para magplebisito, sabay na nga nung local elections.

So, titignan natin, ngayon pa lang naming ito--- we just came to that idea when we--- kasi nagpo-progress na 'yung mga resolutions sa Cha-cha sa Senado, nagpo-progress na rin sa House kaya't ngayon pinagiisipan natin, paano natin gagawin, anong mekanismo para sa plebisito.

So, we're studying it and I think there's a potential there that we can possibly exploit.

So, we'll see. It really come down to a practical thing. Mago-organize tayo--- kasi ang plebisito parang eleksyon din 'yan eh. So, mageeleksyon ka tapos magpe-plebisito ka, it's very hard also to have a plebiscite before the election kasi mabubulilyaso 'yung preparation para sa halalan.

So, 'yun na nga. We have to take all of these things into account and I think we'll come with to a good solution, I think.

Q: Salamat po

Q: Sir, wala raw po kayong objection sa PhilHealth premium rate hike? Is it still under review, sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: It's under review. The--- what we are trying to determine is that if we are going to increase the contribution from four percent to five percent, anong bawi? It's really a cause-benefit analysis. And PhilHealth has been expanding **its** services and trying to reach more people, trying to engage more people. And like for example 'yung mga pinagbabayad sa mga nagda-dialysis, has increased almost three times; the payment out for even catastrophic--- like cancer, has increased by tenfold.

So, kung may benepisyo naman, if we can justify the increase then we'll do it but if not, we won't. Ganoon lang kasimple 'yun. It's just a very straightforward cause-benefit analysis.

We're still under study but we'll come to a conclusion very, very soon.

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: Your thoughts, sir, on the development on the West Philippine Sea. There's been electronic interference, there's been sighting of a warship, how are we going to respond?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: It's worrisome because there are two elements to that: one is that the--- dati Coast Guard lang ng China ang gumagalaw doon sa area natin. Ngayon, may Navy na, sumama pa mga fishing boat.

So, nagbabago ang sitwasyon, but--- well, maliwanag naman para sa atin, we don't really--- we just watch, of course, what everybody is doing, but really for us, patuloy pa rin natin, we just defend our maritime territory. We continue to support all of our fishermen, fisherfolks who make their living from these fishing grounds at patuloy naman nating tutulungan sila.

At despite whatever else happens, bina-block tayo, kung ano, may shadow, eh patuloy pa rin ang ating gagawin dahil 'yan naman ang trabaho natin, trabaho natin tulungan natin 'yung mga fishers na matagal na, ilang henerasyon na doon nangingisda.

So, that's essentially the issue there. So, that's the basic principle there, is that the fishers must be allowed to fish in their traditional fishing grounds, which belong in the maritime territory of the Philippines.

Q: Good morning, sir. Sir, hingin lang naming 'yung statement ninyo sa naging statement ni Pastor Quiboloy.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Kay? Pastor?

Q: Quiboloy, sir, he's claiming that you and the First Lady are conniving with the US to assassinate?

PRESIDENT MARCOS: [laughter] The US--- the cases against him in the US were filed before I became President. So, I guess he's very worried doon sa ano.

Well, I would just advise him that just kung mayroon naman siyang sasabihin, if--- he has an opportunity in the hearings both in the House and in the Senate to say his side of the story. Kaya po sinasabi niya, hindi totoo lahat 'yan, hindi totoo, walang nangyaring ganiyan, 'di sabihin niya.

At pagka ganito, ano nangyayari diyan, hindi siya sisipot, pag hindi siya sumipot baka ma contempt siya, oh tapos, tuloy-tuloy. Ay, naku. Eh mas malaking gulo.

Kung makapunta siya, sagutin niya lahat ng tanong, 'di tapos na. That's why my advice for him is to just face the questioning in the House and in the Senate. Marinig natin ang kaniyang side para malaman natin kung ano ba talagang nangyayari dito.

We're trying to be fair here and allowing him, an opportunity and fora to make his case. So, I think he should take advantage of that.

Q: Pero sir, 'yung claim niya po na assassination that you've... What's your take on this, sir? [laughter]

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Walang may gustong mag-assassinate sa kaniya. Bakit siya i-assassinate? wala namang--- **why would anyone want him dead?** I, maybe, he's just very, very-- wala na, I just, hindi ko naiintindihan 'yung sinasabi niya, bakit siya i-assassinate.

Q: Baka nakafentanyl po, Mr. President [laughter]

PRESIDENT MARCOS: Hindi naman siguro. Pero hindi ko alam, siguro natatakot siya dahil sa mga pangyayari. But, I--- again, the best way to **defuse** that situation for him is to testify before the committees in the House and in the Senate.

Q: Thank you po, sir.

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