

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK**

**PRESS CONFERENCE BY THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
FOR TRADE, INVESTMENT AND TOURISM BENITO TECHICO**

SUMMARY

▮ The conversation revolves around a dinner attended by a Special Envoy of the President of the People's Republic of China and other individuals before the pandemic. The group, including a restaurant owner, took a photo with the President in 2020. The discussion then shifts to the implications of the photo, particularly in relation to the crackdown on POGO (Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators) operations. The participants expressed hope that the photo was not politically motivated and emphasized that the dinner was a private event. They clarify that the President's association with the individuals in the photo does not indicate any official endorsement or involvement in POGO operations.

OUTLINE

▮ Dinner and Bonding Before the Pandemic

- o Techico discusses a dinner or bonding session before the pandemic, emphasizing camaraderie and good food.
- o The group included various individuals, including a restaurant owner who was not well-known to them.
- o The dinner was followed by a photo session, which Techico described as not complicated.
- o The restaurant owner was Filipino-Chinese, and the group had a picture taken with the President in 2020.

▮ Clarification on the Timeline and Group Dynamics

- o Techico and the interviewer discussed the exact year of the dinner, clarifying it was in 2020, not 2019.
- o The group usually dines together and has pictures taken with the President, but they are not always included in these photos.
- o Techico mentions that the group has dined in various restaurants, including in Japan and Golden Jang.
- o The interviewer asks about the fourth floor, but Techico clarifies it was not in Japan.

▮ Picture with the President and Its Implications

- o Techico explains that the picture with the President and the restaurant owner was taken in November 2020.
- o The interviewer asks if the President was aware of the picture, to which Techico responds that the group feels it is unfair to the President.
- o The group believes the picture is being used to imply a connection between the President and the restaurant owner.

o Techico emphasizes that the group is private individuals and not involved in any official capacity.

P Political Motivations and Timing

o The interviewer questions the timing of the picture release, suggesting it might be politically motivated.

o Techico hopes it is not politically motivated and insists the picture is an isolated incident.

o The group has had many dinners and pictures taken with the President, but this one is being highlighted for unknown reasons.

o The interviewer mentions that the timing coincides with people being arrested, which adds to the speculation.

P Clarification and Final Thoughts

o Techico clarifies that the group is not interested in the picture and that it was taken before the President's term ended.

o The group includes various individuals, including a senior manager and a restaurant owner.

o Techico reiterates that the picture is real but the story behind it is not accurate.

o The group emphasizes that the picture does not mean anything significant and is just a normal occurrence.

TRANSCRIPT

Benito Techico: Okay, actually, ah good evening no, magandang gabi sa inyong lahat, ako po'y si Benito Techico, kasalukuyang Special Envoy of the President to the People's Republic of China for trade, tourism and investment. Nandito po ako ngayon dahil po gusto ko lang po I – pag palinaw ang istorya na kunan po dun sa litrato na nakunan kasama si Sandra Li Ong, okay? Gusto ko lang I – kwento na kami po ni Presidente at yung iba po namin pong kaibigan ay madalas po kami dati pa po nag tra – travel at sumusubok ng iba – ibang pagkain at kultura ng iba't ibang bansa, so pumu – punta po kami sa Japan, so dun kami po talagang mas nagka kilala.

Ngayon ho ay hindi lang ho sila nag pang – abot but then nag bigay naman ho sila lahat ng statement po nila, at makikita niyo na lang po sa social media ano. At Ngayon po, ay gusto ko lang po I – pag paalam, na regarding that night, yung aming salo – salo, ay isa sa mga naging dinner or bonding before pandemic, okay? Malinaw na malinaw, so ngayon, kami kami parati ang grupong iyon, so yun nga, nagka salo – salo kami for good food and culture, now yung gabing ng iyon ay nag dinner at sumusubok ng pagkain at mangyari lang po ay after dinner, may pinakilala yung restaurant owner, na

hindi din naman alam namin kung sino, so may mga kasama siyang pumasok na Chinese, at humingi ng litrato sa ating Presidente nung palagay ko mga 2020 pa po yun eh kung hindi po ako nagkakamali.

Ngayon ho ay ang ating Presidente naman ay pinayagan naman ho, typical eh sa Japan nga ho, pag nag tra – travel kami, o sa ibang bansa, kahit sa mga wet market pag may nakakakita po sa amin, ng papa picture din. So yun lang po, ganun lang ka simple yung storyang pong yun. Pumasok, nakipag kilala, at gustong kumuha ng picture, at pinayagan, at after that lumabas na po, so ganun lang po siya ka simple na storya, at hindi naman siya yung komplikado. Hindi siya kumplikado.

Interviewer: Sino po yung nagpa picture na yun?

Benito Techico: Yung, okay, yung nang hingi ng picture, ay yung restaurant owner, yung host.
Interviewer: Who is?

Benito Techico: Ah, hindi ko kilala, niyaya lang ho din kasi kami doon eh, okay? Ngayon, who is, yung isa sa mga Filipino – Chinese, so niyaya kami nun, at para sumubok ng pagkain, that was after I think lockdown, pandemic.

Interviewer: Sir, so you confirm na totoo yung litratong yun? Hindi siya photoshop hindi siya, hindi siya meme, hindi siya fake.

Benito Techico: Litrato ay totoo, but yung storya po ay yun, mali, ayun ang masasabi kong totoo.

Interviewer: Sir kailan nangyari yung litratong yun? 2020 or 2022? Presidente na ba si Presidente?

Benito Techico: I think 2020? Hindi pa, actually kakatapos lang ng pandemic noon eh, kakatapos lang ng lockdown.

Interviewer: So kailan?

Benito Techico: 2020, if I may check, para lang so we can, but nakakasigurado ako 2020, definitely hindi 2019 kasi 2020 naka lockdown pa po tayo eh.

Interviewer: Sir 2020 nangyari yung pandemic, so ibig sabihin?

Benito Techico: Latter part ng 2020.

Interviewer: Naka lockdown pa rin po tayo nun eh?

Benito Techico: Let me check ah, para lang sigurado, para lang may basis lang ako. May ano naman ho ito eh, meron naman basis to eh.

Interviewer: Were there other groups who took photos with the President then, Mr. Marcos at that time, other groups aside from these?

Benito Techico: No, well, usually, kami - kami, twelve kami eh, usuall kami kami lang kumakain magkakasama, actually even sa Rockwell, meron din kaming picture dun na na sa Rockwell, kami kami lang, minsan nasa Japan, minsan nasa Golden China, iba't ibang restaurant po.

Interviewer: Ito, specifically yung picture na ito, nasaan to?

Benito Techico: Ito yung sa Hao – Hao, ito yung lumabas sa, kaya ko kayo namin dinala dito para sana ipakita kay, hindi ko naman ho alam na sa (Inaudible 05:50)

Interviewer: So Hao – Hao dun sa 4th floor ng SM MOA?

Benito Techico: Yes.

Interviewer: So hindi yan sa Japan or anywhere else?

Benito Techico: No.

Interviewer: Yung parte ng grupo na lagi kayong kumakain to try out different food and culture, kasama ba dun si Cassandra Li Ong sa grupong yun?

Benito Techico: 100 percent hindi, kasi nalaman ko lang na si Cassandra Li Ong siya nung pumutok itong litratong ito, never naming siyang na meet, never namin, ni pangalan hindi naming kilala, so pumasok lang, pinakilala nung restaurant owner para kumuha ng litrato.

Interviewer: So yung sinasabi niyo pong nag pa litrato lang kay Presidente ay yung restaurant owner and Cassandra Li Ong? Nagpa - picture lang si Cassandra Li Ong sa Presidente?

Benito Techico: Yes, oo, akala nga naming that time is receptionist or what eh.

Interviewer: So hindi siya parte ng grupo?

Benito Techico: Hindi, 100 percent.

Interviewer: Sino yung restaurant owner dito sa litrato?

Benito Techico: Parang wala diyan, basta itong mga to mga kasama ni ano, ni Cassandra, itong mga to kasama ni Cassandra to, mga Chinese.

Interviewer: So nasaan dito yung talagang original na group? Sino yung mga nagpa - picture?

Benito Techico: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve.

Interviewer: So si Cassandra is not? Pero wala diyan yung restaurant owner?

Benito Techico: Hindi talaga, wala, pakikita ko yung para lang may basehan kayo ha.

Interviewer: Sir ano ang reaction niyo po dun sa sinasabi ni Atty. Topacio na this picture actually shows why POGO operations multiplied during the time of President, he's implying that talagang kaibigan ng Presidente si Cassandra Li Ong.

Benito Techico: Nung time ni President Marcos, nag multiply ang POGO?

Interviewer: This picture shows why POGO multiplied during the time of "President Marcos"

Benito Techico: Palagay ko po hindi eh, at analytically, na I – cocompute niyo naman kung kailan pwedeng I – tayo ang mga building, ilan years po ba ang kailangan para I – tayo ang mga building. Opo and then si President Marcos ay umupo lamang noong 2022 of July diba? July so technically speaking, parang imposible yata yun.

Interviewer: And ang sinasabi din po na this is also a clue kung bakit nagkaroon ng crackdown sa POGO operations.

Benito Techico: Clue for?

Interviewer: Now that it has been revealed, parang it shows na parang this is a clue na why there is now a crackdown on POGO operations.

Benito Techico: No, not at all, I think beforehand it's been more of na official na ang pag crackdown nung SONA, although I think hanggang towards ang declaration now is binibigyan sila ng panahon para mag wrap up lang naman po eh diba?

Interviewer: Why do you think is Atty. Topacio coming out with this picture? Anong sa tingin niyo ang motibo and then naming the President showing that Cassandra Li Ong has a picture with the President and the First Lady?

Benito Techico: Sa totoo lang ho, mas magandang less talk, less mistake no, dahil ayaw naman natin paikutin ng paikutin at lalo lang lalala ang strasyon, sa totoo lang, sa panahon ngayon hindi naman na para mag putakan, ay mas maganda move forward, paano tayo iimprove, paano tayo uusad kapag pana'y hanapan ng butas na kahit hindi na nga nagkakamali ay gagawin pang storya ay sana naman.

Interviewer: Pero sir, kasi, it's already a story, do you think it's politically motivated?

Benito Techico: Ah, I don't hope so, I don't hope so, I don't hope na it's politically motivated, palagay ko mas malalaman na lang ating kapwa Pilipino ang pakay, sana naman po hindi, okay? Ayaw naman po nating mang husga.

Interviewer: So this is just an isolated incident where?

Benito Techico: This is one of the dinners that we have eh, hinahanap ko lang yung mga pictures ho para at least kayo mismo ho ay nakaka ano naman ho kayo, na mas, hahanapin ko tong picture na to my date stamp ho dito eh.

Interviewer: Have you talked to the President regarding this picture?

Benito Techico: No, never.

Interviewer: You're speaking because?

Benito Techico: Because our group feels that it's so unfair diba? It's so unfair to the President that he keeps on working hard and then yet hindi matapos tapos ang mga pag hahanap ng storya, ayaw na lang natin mag salita ng, I mean walang katapusan.

Interviewer: So para linawin lang na walang kinalaman ang President ay Cassandra Li Ong?

Benito Techico: Yes.

Interviewer: Taliwas sa sinasabi ni Atty. Topacio?

Benito Techico: Yes, 100 percent, yan ang siguradong – sigurado po ako.

Interviewer: Sir may mga private individuals dito, hindi ba sila mag aano, mag take legal action against Atty. Topacio considering na?

Benito Techico: Well siguro kapag ganun, kaya nga ho kami nag salita para lang ay nanawagan na sana po, move forward no, eh tignan natin kung hanggang saan ho, siyempre hindi naman ho tayo lawyer, so let's see.

Interviewer: Yung timing ng paglalabas nito na hinuli si Cassandra Li Ong, hinahanap sila Alice Guo, what do you think about this? The timing, these people are being arrested, now they're showing a picture?

Benito Techico: I think it's coincidental, now that na capture sila Cassandra Li Ong, I think all the more that they will be able to tell na kung talaga bang kung kakilala ho namin, that's the first time and the last time we met.

Interviewer: Sir yung sa taon – taon ng picture na yan, kasi yung 2020 naka face mask pa tayo noon eh.

Benito Techico: Papakita ko, may hawak actually na facemask si Presidente dito eh, ayun ho oh, tignan niyo ho, may hawak siyang facemask.

Interviewer: So nag tanggal lang ho lahat?

Benito Techico: Nag tanggal lang po lahat. Actually si Pepe Ortega sa statement din niya at si ano, nag usapan ho sila during Protesto po yan eh, so nag usap sila na hindi nila I – aadd yung kabilang bigote ng matatapos ito, pakita ko lang yung picture para lang, may date stamp po ito, para sure tayo ha. Ayoko lang po magkamali, I can give you an exact date, sandal lang po ah, later pakita ko po sa inyo siguro yung Japan, may iba pang lugar para lang makita niyo na kami kami lang talaga, actually wala pala akong ganitong picture, but I can, papakita ko na lang yung, may bigote si Pepe Ortega, para.

Interviewer: I'm sorry, nasaan ho kayo rito?

Benito Techico: Dito po sa likod.

Interviewer: Ah hindi kayo nakita? Ah ito, ito kayo.

Benito Techico: Ito na lang, yang picture na yan kasi wala po ako eh, hindi ko alam kung sino yung nag pipicture, ito ho oh, ito, ito si Pepe Ortega oh, ganito ang buhok niya noon, may bigote rin siya, ang date na ito ay November 22, 2020 pa, ay hindi, ay tama November 22.

Interviewer: So ito po'y somewhere around.

Benito Techico: Last part of 2020,

Interviewer: December? Or November?

Benito Techico: November.

Interviewer: Sir yung Benny niyo Benedict ba or Benjamin?

Benito Techico: Benito, Benito Techico.

Interviewer: Sir, special envoy to ano po?

Benito Techico: To China.

Interviewer: Sir for clarification po, your speaking of because kasama po kayo sa picture? Not because may posisyon po kayo?

Benito Techico: Yes, because kasama ako sa picture, at kaming magkakasama at yung iba kasi ho nasa province, yung iba naman nasa abroad, so nag decide na lang kami na mag (Inaudible 16:42) ng statements.

Interviewer: So they wanted to come? And ito yung mga statements nila?

Benito Techico: Iba iba ho ang mga statements sa iba pa.

Interviewer: So dahil hindi sila makakarating, I – pinrintout na lang?

Benito Techico: May pahabol pa, may pa habol pa diyan, kung maiintay niyo.

Interviewer: Would you press any charges or not?

Benito Techico: Hindi naman ho tayo mahilig mag hanap ng gulo so ano lang naman tayo, sa ngayon, I don't think so.

Interviewer: No? not filing any charges?

Benito Techico: Sa ngayon? I don't think so.

Interviewer: How about the others Sir? Have you talked to them?

Benito Techico: Sa totoo lang, kami yung forward – looking na magkakasama, hindi naman po kami, para saan pa, diba ho? Hindi naman ho tayo di naman natin kailangan depensahan sarili natin kasi wala rin patutunguhan eh, sayang lang ang oras natin, pero kung kakailanganin, pero hindi naman siguro.

Interviewer: Would like to add some more Sir?

Benito Techico: Well basically I just wanted to encourage lang na let's move forward, wala tayong patutunguhan niyan dito sa crisis dito kapag panay gawa ng story.

Interviewer: Do you have a message for Atty. Topacio? Siya nag labas eh?

Benito Techico: If ever meron man, Atty. Topacio, let's just move forward, yung katotohanan lamang, kapag totoo ka, itong litrato na to, yung storyang ipinalabas, ay sige lang, pero pag hindi po, wag naman po sana, kung meron kayong hard evidence na sinasabing ganito, wala ho tayong magagawa, pero ako, 100 percent ang sinasabi ko ay imposibleng totoo ang istorya, may kanya kanyang perception kasi no, may kanya kanyang perception, may kanya kanyang analysis, photo or images can tell a a lot of stories, so baka lang iba ho ang nag advise, mali yung advise sa kanya baka lang ho?

Interviewer: Kay Cassandra? May gusto kayong sabihin?

Benito Techico: Wala naman ho kasi ever since hindi.

Interviewer: Si Cassandra ang nag sabi na, siya yung nag papa tunay ng authenticity of the picture.

Benito Techico: Authenticity, we never denied that the picture is real, maraming nag tetext saakin, that I always say totoo po yung picture, at the minute to the first second na may nag text sa akin, I said the picture is real, but the story is not. Ganun na lang ako nag rereply, para ano, unang una ho, para lang scientific na lang po eh, ilan po ang upuan diyan, ilan ang taong naka tayo diyan, dun pa lang ho, kayo na ang humusga, kasya po ba ang lahat ng tao na yan diyan?

Interviewer: Pero naupo si Cassandra sa tabi ni First Lady?

Benito Techico: Yes, kasi po sila yung guest na pinakiusapan nung host na kung pu – pwede, siyempre, alam mo naman very malambing naman ang ating First Lady, so she would always accommodate diba? So even sa mga ordinaryong Pilipino, Pilipina, kahit sabihin natin dito sa mga waiters, waitress, kung makipag picture sila, papayag at I – huhug pa niya. Yun pagka na experience niyo siguro, I'm sure maraming maraming pictures si First Lady na katabi ang waiters, waitress, kahit ano sa buong mundo, lalong mas normal na mamamayan na mas malapit sila.

Interviewer: Sir you were trying to show us the picture nung may time stamp, ibig sabihin may copy kayo nung picture?

Benito Techico: Wala nga eh, akala ko lang meron, nung hinanap ko wala, kaya nag hanap na lang po ako na picture na may bigote, si Pepe Ortega, ito ho ay, wala po akong kopya nitong picture kasi wala naman ho akong interest na magkaroon nitong picture dahil not for us, it doesn't mean anything at all, yung picture ho ay kami kami lang ho at hindi po namin ho pinopost yun.

Interviewer: Yung grupo niyo po na laging umaalis to try out food and culture, kasama niyo ho si Presidente at First Lady?

Benito Techico: Minsan kasama, minsan hindi, that was before the, ngayon hindi na siyempre.

Interviewer: Yes pero before?

Benito Techico: Before yes kasama, nung una kasama namin si President, tapos si First Lady rin ho ay may time na may kasama din siya.

Interviewer: Pero yung time na yun hindi pa siya Presidente?

Benito Techico: Hindi pa, yun 100 percent, after maging President wala, wala ng mga culture trips.

Interviewer: Sir yung owner tiyaka si Cassandra Li Ong, anong connection nila?

Benito Techico: Hindi ko talaga alam, sa totoo lang, hanggang dun sa picture, dun ko lang nalaman si Cassandra Li kasi nung lumalabas Cassandra Li, ay hindi naman ako nag interest dun sa story, kasi wala naman kaming interest dun so hindi ko talaga rin ho alam, so hindi rin ako pwedeng mag imbento no, so hindi ko alam, nung lumabas lang yung litrato, dun ko lang nalaman

na ah, okay, siya pala si Cassandra Li, naalala ko na may ganung picture, na may pumasok, kasi nakikita naman nag papaalam sakín nag papa picture, so yun ang masasabi ko, so definitely hindi kami interesado dun sa picture .

Interviewer: So yung restaurant owner nay un na nakiusap na magpa picture kasama niya si Cassandra Li Ong para magpa picture?

Benito Techico: May iba pa, may iba pang Chinese.

Interviewer: Pero isang grupo sila na parang.

Benito Techico: Parang typical celebrity pag may nakitang fans.

Interviewer: So kakilala ni restaurant owner si Cassandra?

Benito Techico: Palagay ko ho, diba? Or baka po bisita rin ho.

Interviewer: Hindi si Cassandra ang direktang nagpa picture kay Presidente? It was through the restaurant owner?

Benito Techico: Hindi naman siya mag bu – butt in, yun yung VIP room eh, hindi naman makakapasok basta basta yun eh.

Interviewer: So nasa VIP room kayo nun?

Benito Techico: Yes, pwede niyo ho picturan isa isahin yung mga ano, para makita niyo yung mensahe. Just typical celebrities, and knowing President Marcos, sikat siya sa Chinese diba? So that's a very very normal na magkakaroon ng fans.

END