

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF EXECUTIVE SECRETARY LUCAS BERSAMIN
MAY 29, 2025 [2:18 P.M. – 2:44 P.M.]

PCO SEC. RUIZ: Good afternoon everyone, members of the Malacañang Press Corps, ladies and gentlemen. In today's press conference, we're going to be joined by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin along with his two undersecretaries, Usec. Leonardo Roy A. Cervantes and Undersecretary Al-Azree J. Mohammadsali.

The ES will give us an update on the second tranche of resignations from the Cabinet. He will first give us a statement then afterwards, there will be an open question-and-answer forum. We would like to introduce now, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin.

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Good afternoon, Malacañang Press Corps.

Upon the directive of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., we are announcing today the acceptance of the second tranche of courtesy resignations from select officials in the Executive Branch. As the President himself stated, *"When we see shortfalls in performance, I don't leave it at that. I don't do things pang-optics. If there is a problem, I like to fix it."*

This process is part of a rigorous and ongoing evaluation of government performance not only at the Cabinet level but across the entire bureaucracy. The President has been clear from the beginning, *"We are not just looking at the top levels, we are going deeper into the agencies, into the systems and into the quality of public service being delivered on the ground."* The people expect results and the President has no patience for underperformance.

In line with this, the President has also instructed the heads of Government-Owned and Controlled Corporations to submit their courtesy resignations. He has further indicated that senior officials will likewise be included in the continuing review. Each resignation accepted is based on a careful assessment of whether the standard sets by the President for efficiency and leadership have been met. Some have delivered, others have not.

The following officials have been informed that their resignation have been accepted.

The first one, Solicitor General Menardo I Guevarra – he is to be replaced by replaced by UP Law Dean Darlene Berberabe. Dean Berberabe will enter the service as the new Solicitor General. She took her oath this morning before the President on the strengths of her broad experience as an academic and legal professional.

She graduated summa cum laude in Philosophy in the University of the Philippines and was the class salutatorian in 1999 of the UP College of Law. While she was a student, she already worked at the Quisumbing-Torres law firm. She later joined Procter and Gamble as general counsel. In 2010, she assumed as the chief executive officer of the Pag-IBIG Fund and there, she became known for her transformational leadership, good governance, integrity and excellence. Her strong philosophy background will help her use the wisdom and the ethical leadership she has gained from deep reflection and rigorous study to competently perform her tasks as the Solicitor General.

The second whose resignation is accepted is the resignation of CHED Chair Jay Prospero E. de Vera III. He will be replaced by CHED Commissioner Shirley Agrupis. We are grateful for the service—

No! There is another one that I will have to announce – the PNP Chief. The incoming PNP Chief is Police Major General Nicolas D. Torre III. The turnover of command will happen June 2nd.

We are grateful for the service of those who are stepping down. A smooth transition is being implemented to ensure continuity and stability in their respective institutions. This is not a purge, let me remind you of that. This effort is the President's commitment to a government that works fast, delivers results and meets the expectations of the Filipino people. As the President has said, he will not hesitate to make the necessary changes to keep the government moving forward.

Thank you. I will now take your questions.

CHRISTIAN YOSORES/RADYO 630: Good afternoon po, ES. Ano po kaya iyong naging rason ni President Marcos Jr. doon po sa pagtanggap niya ng courtesy resignation ni SolGen Guevarra?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Well, si SolGen Guevarra has been there since the beginning 'no and maybe it is time for him to go to another venture. And so, the President accepted his resignation to allow for fresh blood to come in.

CHRISTIAN YOSORES/RADYO 630: One follow-up lang po. If I may point, sir, last March, SolGen Guevarra recused himself to represent the Philippine government na mag-represent po doon sa cases filed at the Supreme Court ng children ni former President Duterte in relation po sa pag-arrest sa kaniya ng ICC. Nakaapekto po ba iyon as factor kung bakit tinanggap po ng Pangulo iyong resignation?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: I don't think that that was a factor at all because if you recall, there was a strong clamor for the termination or removal of Solicitor Guevarra at that time. The public perception that gave rise to this clamor must have been about his taking the opposite side of the issue. But, you know, he and the President had a conversation about this, and the President respected his ethical decision to recuse.

Now, if there was a reservation about his professionalism at that time, the President could have already removed him. But the President continued to repose trust in him. So, up to the decision to accept his resignation, Solicitor General Guevarra was still there.

CHLOE HUFANA/BUSINESS WORLD: Good afternoon, ES.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: Good afternoon.

CHLOE HUFANA/BUSINESS WORLD: Sir, how many GOCC heads submitted their resignations already? And ilan po ang total na hinihintay natin?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: Practically, all GOCCs or their leaderships have submitted but we are still awaiting for the submission of other GOCCs. The GCG actually is on top of this situation; it has issued a memorandum. And although that memorandum said that the GOCC resignation should come through us, we will make it clear to the GCG that only the heads of the agencies, the resignation of the heads of agencies should be reviewed by us. And the

GOCCs are anyway under an annual term basis, and it is about this time, June, that the GCG reviews the performance of the respective boards of their GOCCs. I cannot give you the exact number now because it increases every day.

CHLOE HUFANA/BUSINESS WORLD: Sir, follow-up question. How would their resignations impact their operation?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: Well, there is no appreciable impact of all, negative at that, because all these people who offered their courtesy resignations are expected to continue performing their functions, discharging their duties until their replacements have been appointed. And that is expected of all public servants, no one abandons because that is part of the obligation of a public servant.

CHLOE HUFANA/BUSINESS WORLD: And last question for me, sir: Could this signal potential policy shifts or realignment in state-run corporations that might affect private sector partnerships or public-private joint ventures.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: No, not at all. The stability of policies will continue. The policy directions have been issued to these offices by the President and the governing or the supervising cabinet secretaries so there is a clear path for all of them to see, to follow and to traverse.

ACE ROMERO/PHILSTAR: Secretary, good afternoon. Maaari bang humingi kami ng detalye bakit po si General Torre na 2-star general ang napili ng Pangulo bilang susunod na hepe ng PNP?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: Wala akong maibibigay na detalye diyan. You know, the appointment of elements or the officers of the PNP, they have to be kept confidential. We should respect that confidentiality, but it's the President's discretion which I consider to be absolute because he is actually—well, you cannot consider that commander-in-chief kasi civilian iyan 'no pero more or less, ganoon. No one can question the use of that discretion, call it "inscrutable". But right now, the considerations that weighed in the choice of General Torre should be respected.

ACE ROMERO/PHILSTAR: Kasi he oversaw many high profile operations including iyong kay Pastor Quiboloy and then recently iyong pag-aresto kay former President Duterte. May kinalaman po kaya iyong naging handling niya ng mga ganoong operations sa naging choice ng Pangulo?

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY BERSAMIN: Hindi ko masasabi iyan dahil alam mo si Presidente always demands performance. Kahit na ano iyong pinagawa sa iyo, you must exhibit high degree level of performance, so maybe that is one. I am not going to discount that, but there may be other qualities of General Torre that he might have considered in comparison to the qualities of those others who were not given this responsibility.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Good afternoon, ES. Iyon pong pagkaka-appoint ni General Torre, inaasahan po ba na magkakaroon ng mga demoralization sa hanay po ng PNP, iyon pong pagkaka-appoint sa kanya ng Pangulo?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Bakit naman?

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Dahil kung titingnan po ang mga background ng iba pang contender, hindi po kaya magdulot ito ng problema sa hanay?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Palagay ko naman hindi, dahil professional ang mga hanay ng kapulisan. They are all very great professional eh, very decorated individuals so they just follow the commander-in-chief or what the President desires.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: So, hindi po naman ito reward sa kaniya, another reward ng Pangulo iyong kaniyang [unclear]?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Alam mo, lahat ng promotion ay reward iyan 'no, but most promotions are given on merit. So, let us assume that this was given on merit because you know it was not an easy decision on the part of the President. He considered, to my recollection, five names and you must probably have an idea of who those five were. But as of this time the decision was already made, and it favored Police Major General Torre. By the time he accepts this appointment he will have the four stars – that is the regulatory rank, the stars.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Thank you po.

IRA PANGANIBAN/DZRJ: Yes. General Torre will be serving one year and nine months, if my calculations are correct, that means he will be one of the longest chiefs of the Philippine National Police to serve. Does this mean there are going to be more of activities that he has been doing in the past that we can expect in the future like what happened to the KOJC, the Duterte incident and all other incidents that General Torre has been involved in?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Well, let him show to us. I do not understand too well the question 'no. Performance is always depending on the situation. In these kinds of operations of the police, he was given an assignment – iyong KOJC ang sinasabi mo. He went at it like it was an ordinary thing, very professional – so, we should praise him for that. There may be other situations like arresting a kidnapper – that's another kind of operation. So, let us not judge a person on the basis of one that he had done very excellently, baka iyong next na ano niya palpak siya eh ibig sabihin noon it's not going to be easy for us to predict.

IRA PANGANIBAN/DZRJ: Follow up lang. So, serving for a year and nine months, the longest I remember of a Chief PNP serving very long is something like six, seven months, eight months at most. A year and nine months, does this mean better stability for the Philippine National Police considering that you are going to have a chief that is going to serve for quite some time now na matutuluy-tuloy iyong mga proyekto nila?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: You know, look at it this way, all PNP chiefs serve at the pleasure of the President whether they have a term or not. If the President wants to terminate them he could that but let us just expect that General Torre will be there until the end, that's all I can say. Will be there performing his best up until the end. Everybody of us would like to do that ourselves.

IRA PANGANIBAN/DZRJ: Thank you, sir.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA INTEGRATED NEWS: Yes. Good afternoon. May we know the reason why the President accepted the resignation of CHed Chair Popoy de Vera?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Well, as far as I know because the thinking of the President is his own thinking. As far as I know, although this is not the official reason, you know si CHed Chair de Vera has been there for two terms na, second term na niya ito. Maybe the President wanted to give a fresh start to the CHed or maybe there were other reasons.

Hindi natin madi-discount that may factor diyan iyong mga intramurals doon sa CHEd. I do not know, I cannot particularize because I'm just generally aware of those particulars. A collegial body like the CHEd always comes under such pressure from within but I'm not going to say that that was the reason, I'm just guessing. That played a lot in the acceptance of the resignation.

PCO ASEC. VILLARAMA: Anymore questions for the Executive Secretary? Christian Yosores.

CHRISTIAN YOSORES: Sir, one last na lang po, balikan ko lang po iyong sa Solicitor General. Mayroon po bang initial na marching orders or instructions si President kay Atty. Berberabe as the new SolGen?

EXEC. SEC. BERSAMIN: Well, the best thing that I could say about this is she took her oath this morning already and that is a very strong indication of confidence on the part of the President.

I am not privy if the President and the Solicitor General had any lengthy conversation on any marching orders. But it is expected that the new Solicitor General being a brilliant and intellectual person must have understood her clear task of defending the interest of the Philippine government.

The Solicitor General is the statutory counsel of the Philippine government, and she must now stand equal to that job, to that responsibility. I expect no less from her as the President certainly does. So, we look forward to working with her.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Who provoked the President na magkaroon ng ganitong courtesy resignation?

ES BERSAMIN: Iyong provoke? Results of the election.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: Sinong nag-ano?

ES BERSAMIN: Wala, the President is a very spontaneous person, if you had observed him, he was never confrontational. But, you know, he is a very sensitive person, like all of us. When we are given a message from others, we react. I think the President should be given that human side. This is his response to what he probably observed during the elections, we must deliver more. So, he is undergoing this performance check on all of us in the cabinet, as well as in the positions of leaderships in the agencies and offices. So, that is how I see it.

VANZ FERNANDEZ/POLICE FILES: We know that the President is a soft spoken, kaysa naman, sir, na mapapahiya na sisibakin na lang bigla, mas mabuti iyong nangyaring ganito, courtesy resignation.

ES BERSAMIN: Yes, the President is very patient, ayaw ko lang sabihin na tolerant. What we expect from him is his true self, showing off his true personality. He is very decisive, I will just tell you that, he is very decisive about things, he is very focused. And based on my working with him closely in the past three years, nearly three years na, he will never back down from any controversy. He confronts the controversy, not the person. So, I hope that answers your query.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: ES, hindi po hair follicle test ito, ES. Kasi si General Torre po ay nai-appoint na as PNP Chief. How about iyon pong courtesy resignation ng iba pang mga involved doon sa illegal arrest diumano ni dating Pangulong Duterte? Iyong resignation po nila DILG

Secretary, DOJ Secretary Remulla, are we expecting na sa mga susunod na araw ay mayroon na rin pong resulta?

ES BERSAMIN: I do not like your qualification of the arrest as illegal. That is an opinionated statement made by somebody. We will not name who she is. But, from our point of view, the arrest was perfectly legal according to International Law. We have debated in the public domain for a long time. But no one can tell me now that that was an illegal operation procedure. You know, when these representatives of the executive were invited to the Senate investigation called by the committee on foreign affairs, I immediately transmitted a letter telling the Senate President and the Chairman of that committee that we are going to claim executive privilege for all the parts that are covered by executive privilege, they respected it. And if they concluded from there that the arrest was illegal, I cannot help them at all.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: But the question po is iyong assessment po sa performance nila ng Pangulo, kailan po natin inaasahang babanggitin kung tinanggap ba ng Pangulo iyong resignation po nila or hindi?

ES BERSAMIN: Sino sila?

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Si Secretary Boying Remulla po and Secretary Jonvic.

ES BERSAMIN: Declined iyong resignation niyan. Sino pa?

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: Si Secretary Jonvic Remulla.

ES BERSAMIN: Declined din.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: How about Secretary Año?

ES BERSAMIN: I do not know yet because that is a personal thing for the President, Security Adviser iyan and actually that resignation letter was not coursed through me. Because it's personal, they have a personal thing diyan, kung ayaw ni Presidente tanggapin, it's up to him.

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: How about Secretary Gilbert Teodoro po?

ES BERSAMIN: Hindi rin. Gusto mo bang lamunin tayo?

EDEN SANTOS/NET 25: So, iyon pong tatlo declined na po ng Pangulo?

ES BERSAMIN: Yeah, definitely declined na iyan.

PCO ASEC. VILLARAMA: Thank you very much, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin, Honorable Undersecretaries, thank you very much. We now turnover the floor to Secretary Jay C. Ruiz.

PCO SEC. RUIZ: Thank you to the Malacañang Press Corps. By the way, your IDs are ready, we will now distribute your IDs, but of course the accreditation will still continue. Ayusin na lang natin iyong—we will talk about it.

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