

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON
SECRETARY HARRY ROQUE
FEBRUARY 6, 2018 (11:26 – 11:56 A.M.)**

ROCKY IGNACIO/PTV4: Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps and guest. Welcome sa regular press briefing ni Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque. Good morning, sir.

SEC. ROQUE: Good morning. Let me begin with the good news.

The Board of Investments reported that investments last month had a 538% surge or an increase of more than 6 fold from last years' 8 billion January figures to this years' 51.3 billion. The Department of Trade and Industry reported that the biggest project approved for January came from Apo Agua Infraestructura in Davao worth 13.3 billion.

There were also 3 solar facilities of Solar Philippines Commercial Rooftop Projects Inc., two in Cavite and one in Nueva Ecija with a combined cost of 25.9 billion and a total power capacity of 587 megawatts.

Clean N Green Energy Corporation is likewise constructing its 12 megawatts biomass energy plant in Bulacan worth 1.5 billion.

With an economic momentum on our side, we expect to achieve a yearend target of 680 billion.

More good news: we welcome the recent report of the Philippine Statistics Authority on the increase of the country's 2017 banana production from 8.903 million metric tons in 2016 to 9.166 million metric tons. This growth can be attributed to the increase in area and number of bearing hills harvested from the plantation farms in Northern Mindanao, additional expansion areas from corporate farms in Soccsksargen and relatively good weather last year.

Now, there are 545 CLOA farmer beneficiaries in North Cotabato. So these CLOAs were distributed to farmers from 7 municipalities in North Cotabato. Recipient municipalities include Kidapawan City, Arakan, Magpet, M'lang, President Roxas, Tulunan and Makilala.

On the Mayon update: as we were having our Cabinet meeting, it was reported that as of 10 p.m., last night, there was another minor eruption of Mayon Volcano. Usec. Solidum was in attendance in yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

Now so far, I will confirm that in addition to the 20 million cash handed by the President when he visited Albay, the PCSO has also approved a further 30 million to Albay. But the total assistance given by National Agencies to Albay in addition to the cash from the President and the cash from PCSO is already at 113,498,000 worth of assistance.

Now the President promised to increase his cash advance to the province from 20 to 50 million.

As promised, I have three items to report on the Cabinet meeting:

Number one, I confirm that the President ordered that henceforth only Filipinos will be allowed to conduct scientific research, lay submarine cables and explore and exploit for national resources in the Philippine Rise. The President also enjoined all members of the Cabinet to refer to the area as Philippine Rise and not as Benham Rise.

Now all licenses for scientific research are deemed cancelled, although I was informed this morning by Usec. Joel of the DFA which serves as the Chair of the Interagency Technical Working Group responsible for the grant scientific licenses to conduct research in the Philippine Rise that all research had already been concluded in the area; which is probably why the President ordered that henceforth only Filipinos now can conduct scientific research and only Filipinos can explore and exploit national resources in the Benham Rise.

Also in the Cabinet meeting, the entire Cabinet reaffirmed the President's directive that we will continue for—or to look for ways and means to effect an increase in the teacher's salary but beginning 2020 not 2019. The rationale for this is the last tranche of the salary's standardization law; the increase in the last tranche under the SSL will be implemented in 2019.

Now the effort is not just to look for ways and means to increase the salary of all public school teachers, it is also to increase the salaries of all workers in the public sector. So it's teachers and the public sectors.

Also on the third telco, there was a request from Officer-in-Charge Secretary Rio that they be given two additional months or until May to award and to ensure that the third telecoms carrier is up and about, this was not approved in yesterday's Cabinet meeting. So we stick it out with the original timeframe of a third telecoms player by March of this year. The President was empathic and issued a warning to the detractors of the entry of the third telecoms player not to test the will of government.

The President was particularly displeased with the fact that in order to have a third telecoms player we would need to find frequencies to be allotted to the third telecom player and he was displeased with the fact that frequency given to a shell company CURE which apparently was given for free would have to be bought back by government in order that the third player could be given these frequencies. The President rejected that proposal, that

we pay for frequencies that we gave out for free and he warned everyone involved not to test the resolve of the President in allowing a third telecoms carrier to enter the country.

Questions?

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: Sir, may hinaing po iyong mga teachers na iyong 2015 and 2017 nilang performance based bonus hindi pa naibibigay?

SEC. ROQUE: Well ano po iyan, naidulog ko na rin po sa DBM at sa DEPED at gumagawa naman po sila ng hakbang. Parang mayroon lang unliquidated pang halaga ang DEPED at inaayos lang po nila iyong mga pigura at nagre-reconcile sila ng accounts para po mailabas na iyang performance bonus.

ROSE/HATAW: Hanggang kailan po maghihintay ang mga teachers?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, ang sabi ko nga po kinakailangang mailabas na iyan sa lalong mabilis na panahon.

ROSE/HATAW: May assurance po na within the first quarter of this year?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pong timeframe; pero sabi ko urgent naman na ilabas na iyan and they're saying that nagre-reconcile lang sila ng mga figures.

PIA RANADA/RAPPLER: Sir, just to clarify on Benham Rise. So sir the President is—

SEC. ROQUE: Philippine Rise.

PIA/RAPPLER: Philippine Rise... is only allowing—is only banning foreign research but access to it is not—wala namang order to ban—

SEC. ROQUE: Well of course under UNCLOS everyone is entitled to freedom of navigation because this is exclusive economic zone. So navigation can proceed but henceforth no scientific research will be allowed and no other foreign entity will be allowed to explore and exploit for natural resources in the area.

PIA/RAPPLER: And sir given that—now he is only allowing Filipino only research there, did he also give directives on funding to make sure that we actually get to conduct research in the Philippine Rise?

SEC. ROQUE: There was no indication on funding. He just said 'because our sovereign rights in Benham—in Philippine Rise is unquestioned. We do not need to share it with anyone as of now.' He came up anyway with an assessment that as of now everything is preliminary and he even joked, 'We have enough fish for the time being. We don't need foreigners to assist us in getting our fish in the Philippine Rise.'

PIA/RAPPLER: Sir can you confirm that the ship Ke Xue Hao has left the Philippines?

SEC. ROQUE: It had concluded its scientific research. There are no foreign entities conducting scientific research and I was informed of this fact by the DFA at around 9:30 this morning.

IAN CRUZ/GMA7: Kailan po particularly...?

SEC. ROQUE: Alin?

IAN/GMA7: Lyon pong isyu na iyon.

Q: [OFF MIC]

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po alam. I'd just had to verify if they're ... will be affected the ongoing scientific research. But I was assured that although there are more than 30 licenses issued since we were awarded an extended continental shelf by the UN Commission on the Extended [Limits] Continental Shelf, that all research had been concluded.

Q: Opo. Sir, sabi po ni Associate Justice Carpio, may kapangyarihan ang Pilipinas na pagbawalan ang China na magsagawa ng exploration at research sa Philippine Rise ang China dahil nga daw po tumanggi silang sumunod doon sa arbitral ruling.

SEC. ROQUE: Well, we're just asserting that only Filipino companies and Philippine entities can conduct the research. No particular reason was given other than it's undisputedly subject to our sovereign rights.

INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHIL: Hi, sir. Sir, earlier, si Secretary Alan Cayetano said that the President expressed approval for the conduct of China's research over Benham Rise. So with this pronouncement, does that mean na hindi po iyon pala iyong naging scenario before?

SEC. ROQUE: No. The Chinese concluded their research. And that's why the President now has said with everyone having concluded the research, we will now limit it to Filipinos... the conduct of research will now be limited to Filipinos.

INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHIL: So basically, sir, iyong Chinese research was still allowed by the President?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, it was allowed.

INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHIL: Sir, there are proposals for—or calls na dapat daw po iyong research na na-conclude na, whatever was collected by Chinese officials be confiscated. What do you say to that?

SEC. ROQUE: What I know is according to the guidelines, they must be shared with Filipino scientists. And one of the entities that conducted the joint scientific research was the UP Institute of Maritime Studies.

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: Hello ulit, sir. Sir, sa ikalulubag lang ng damdamin ng Malacañang Press Corps. Allowed po ba talaga si Secretary Manny Piñol na mag-break po ng mga napag-uusapan sa Cabinet meeting sa social media?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, the expressed order of the President yesterday was for the Office of the Spokesperson to make the announcement today.

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: So magmula po ngayon, kayo na po ang official na mag-announce lang, wala na pong iba?

SEC. ROQUE: There's even an executive order to that effect.

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: So ire-remind po natin iyong iba pang Cabinet members tungkol doon sa executive order na iyon?

SEC. ROQUE: No, in the spirit of collegiality, I'd rather not. But I think, every Cabinet member knows that existence of that executive order.

PHILIP TUBEZA/INQUIRER: Sir, good morning. Ano po iyong rason na binigay ng Pangulo kung bakit niya pinagbawal ang research ng mga dayuhan sa Philippine Rise?

SEC. ROQUE: You know, it was not in the agenda. But he started the meeting by saying, perhaps because there is no dispute on our sovereign rights in Benham Rise and because all research had been concluded, we should now declare this as exclusively for Filipinos. It was really more of a statement; there was no discussion on the matter.

PHILIP TUBEZA/INQUIRER: May nabanggit po kasi si Secretary Piñol na mayroon daw pong statement ang isang foreign diplomat about the ownership of the Philippines doon sa PH Rise?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, you know, let's just say that there was something to that effect mentioned by the President. And supposedly he read it in a briefing, but I get the same briefing and I have not found it. But I will check, because there's one briefing that I'm unable to open in my cellphone.

But—no, I think it's just the fact that where there is a dispute, then let us explore joint exploration, joint scientific researches. But where there is no dispute, then for now, let's limit it to Filipinos.

Now, it's not an absolute rule. He said that henceforth, all those who want to conduct research in Philippine Rise must in addition get the permission of the National Security Adviser, Secretary Esperon.

PHILIP TUBEZA/INQUIRER: Sir, iyong results po ng study ng Chinese, do we still expect them to share it with us?

SEC. ROQUE: **SEC. ROQUE:** Yes, that is in the guidelines; that's a requirement.

PHILIP TUBEZA/INQUIRER: Kailan po kaya nila ibibigay iyon?

SEC. ROQUE: I leave it to the Filipino co-researchers to obtain it.

PHILIP TUBEZA/INQUIRER: May preliminary na nai-share sa Palasyo?

SEC. ROQUE: I do not know. I'm only announcing what the President said yesterday, last night in the Cabinet meeting.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, clarify ko lang iyong sagot ninyo kanina. So foreign groups or other countries can still apply for permits?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, yes. He says that although all scientific research permits are deemed cancelled, any new application, in addition to an application to be filed with the Inter-Agency Technical Working Group, will have to make a separate application with the Office of the National Security Adviser.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: So parang ban, sir—or they have to get ...

SEC. ROQUE: It's a revocation of all licenses. And henceforth, any foreign entity that wishes to conduct research can apply to the usual body, and in addition, there must be personal approval of the National Security Adviser.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, so if I'm a foreign entity, sir, and I have a pending request for a license to conduct explorations there, all I have to do is to re-apply? Ganoong ba, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes. You have to apply to the inter-agency and you must get the personal approval of the National Security Adviser.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sir, you also mentioned that there are more than 30 foreign licenses have been issued, all of them finished na iyong ...

SEC. ROQUE: All of them finished, I was told.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: So aside from China, sir, anong mga bansa po ito?

SEC. ROQUE: Can I have the cellphone? Wait, I will read for you.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: So that's 30, sir, 3-0?

SEC. ROQUE: I will read for you the numbers. Okay, USA - this is from 2000 to the present. USA, 13 granted; China—I will read the application and the granted or denied ha. USA: 13 applications, granted – 13; China: 18 – applications, granted – 2, denied – 11; Japan: 9 – applications, granted – 9; Korea: 4 – applications, granted – 4; Germany: 2 – applications, denied – 2. But I was told that all these researches from 2000 to the present have concluded.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: So, sir, how different is this policy—I mean, the only thing that seems different is that there is another step which is to get the approval of the NSA. So it's not really a ban on foreign exploration and scientific research?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, it's not really a ban. I guess, it's just a directive that we want Filipinos to do it as much as possible, that we're reserving it for Filipinos.

INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHIL: Sir, similar lang. Because at the start you said that only Filipinos from now on can conduct research—

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, but there was that colatilla. Yes, there was that colatilla that he said, all—because I had to clarify it. So what's the status? Because I read the same numbers so what's the status? They're all cancelled. If they want to apply, they must in addition, get the personal approval of the National Security Adviser.

INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHIL: Sir, is there any reason why the President saw the need for additional procedure, or specifically getting the approval the National Security Adviser?

SEC. ROQUE: Obviously, it's national security issue.

INA ANDOLONG/CNN PHIL: So again, sir, puwede pa rin ang foreign basta they apply and they secure all the necessary permits?

SEC. ROQUE: Let's put it this way: He has caused the revocation of all licenses given to foreign entities to conduct scientific research in the Philippine Rise. Henceforth, all foreign companies that wish to conduct such scientific research must apply to the inter-agency and must get approval from the National Security Adviser. But all existing licenses are deemed revoked.

VITO BARCELO/MLA STANDARD: Sir, good morning. Sabi po ninyo Filipino lamang ang puwedeng mag-restore doon Benham Rise. What if a Filipino makipag-partner sa foreign investors, puwede po ba ito?

SEC. ROQUE: They need to comply with the 60/40 rule, because a Philippine corporation is 60% owned by Filipinos.

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: Sir, could we just ask kung ano po iyong mga licenses na na-revoke, sir. Nabanggit po ba ni Presidente?

SEC. ROQUE: Inisa-isa ko na ngayon.

Q: Sir, before we move on. Sir, I understand ano iyong figure na iyon, hindi naman yata solely for Benham Rise iyong figure na iyon? Kasama yata iyong Luzon Straight doon?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I am reading from a memorandum of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs. This is to Executive, to the President and these are MSR applications in Philippine Benham Rise.

PHILIP TUBESA/INQ: Sir, lilipat lang po sa kabila. Sa West Philippine Sea naman. Sabi po ni Senior Associate Justice Carpio na kowtowing to China or appeasing China would embolden Beijing to militarize the—

SEC. ROQUE: That's his judgment. The President does not kowtow to any other country. The President is accountable to the Filipino people; he is adopting a policy that he thinks is best to serve the Philippine interest.

He may have a different perception of what is best to the Philippine interest, my challenge is get out of the judiciary, get into policy making or even run for President.

PHILIP/INQ: Follow up, sir. He is saying that the Palace should at least file a protest.

SEC. ROQUE: I do not know if a protest... another protest will be filed. I have confirmed that we have filed many protests already. So I do not know if daily protests are necessary depending on the actual state of completion of these facilities. You know what I am saying? It's not as if we did not file any protests, we have, but whether or not, we should do so on a daily basis, that's something the DFA will determine. But I would think that once we have protested what we deemed is an act that threatens international peace in the area, then that is a continuing protest.

PHILIP/INQ: Would this issue kaya sir, be raised in the bilateral committee meeting, iyong bilateral mechanism between the Philippines and China?

SEC. ROQUE: We have frank and open and regular discussions with Chinese officials. The problem is you're inquiring about the fact that construction has been completed. So these will be discussions from the time that they reclaimed, to the time that they have put in improvements, to the time that they are finishing, to the time that it has finished. That is why I said yesterday, this is not really news. It's been there 'no.

So whether or not you want us to protest daily, I do not know if that is wise, we can even protest every minute if you want. Maybe someone can volunteer to protest every minute if they want.

CATHERINE VALENTE/MLA TIMES: Sir, may we know lang po iyong real situation sa NFA rice?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I just talked to—because I promised to address this. I just talked to CabSec Evasco, in fact I invited him to join us, but he had just landed in Gen San. He says that situation really is under control. There is a standby order for 250,000 metric ton of rice. So, of course we will not allow our inventory to be depleted.

PHILIP/INQ: Sir, clarification lang po doon sa telco sa third player. Kasi you mentioned yesterday na the President before stated that it would be China. So tama po ba na parang sila na, iyong China Telecom na o magkakaroon pa po ng bidding in March?

SEC. ROQUE: As I said, it was offered, it appears to have been accepted. But we need to comply with all legal requirements including the holding of a bidding. So while we have offered it, they will participate in the bidding.

PHILIP/INQ: So hindi pa rin po sigurado na sila?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, let's just say that let's separate diplomatic from the day to day realities on the ground. So we honor our commitment as a sovereign state, but there has to be compliance with local procedures.

CATHERINE/MLA TIMES: Sir may nagpapatanong lang po, regarding po doon sa third telco. Iyong Globe and PLDT paid for their frequency to government. Does the President want them to return this for free?

SEC. ROQUE: They did not pay for the frequencies; they bought it from an entity that got it for free from the country. Frequencies are owned by the state. They were given for free. And the President last night was emphatic since we gave these frequencies for free, he will not allow the holders to benefit from a free privilege by charging us anything to enable the third telecoms carrier to operate.

Unfortunately, I left my notebook, because I wrote down verbatim what the President said, it included a lot of curse word. *[laughs]*

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: Sir, puwede ninyong banggitin kung sino iyong tinukoy ni Presidente na nagbenta nung frequency na ibinigay sa kanya ng libre?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi pa nga nagbebenta. Sisingilin daw tayo. Naniningil.

ROSE/HATAW: Sino iyon, sir? Sige na, sir.

SEC. ROQUE: it's enough.

ROSE/HATAW: Kakasuhan iyan, sir. Kakasuhan niya?

SEC. ROQUE: The President just said, do not test my resolve. Sayang wala iyong notebook ko, gusto n'yo bang basahin ko iyong mga mura-mura. Okay it's enough to say that the warning is "do not fuck with government."

IAN/GMA7: Secretary, ilan po bang mga frequency ang naka-assign sa Globe and Smart na legal talagang dapat nasa kanila para magkaroon iyong susunod na telecom?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko alam, but there was a mention yesterday of about 300. I forget what the measurement is, 300 mega... I don't know if it's megahertz, but 300 will be given to the third telecoms carrier which would have been enough and that this would be sourced from various sources, including a frequency to a shell company that has since been bought by a very big telecoms company now. Now there was also talk about using Transco and the President said, we will use Transco because that is ours - the facilities of Transco.

Again the warning: Do not impede the operation of a third telecoms company.

KRIS JOSE/BANDERA: Sir, may panawagan po si Senator Gatchalian kay Pangulo na magtalaga na po ng dalawang bagong Commissioners ng Comelec, para daw po hindi maantala iyong paghahanda for the election.

SEC. ROQUE: The President knows that; that will be forthcoming.

HENRY URI/DZRH: Secretary, how the Palace are going to dispute the latest allegation of Senator Trillanes? Pupunta ba kayo sa Senado, pupunta ba ang Pangulo, may ipapadala ba siyang mga tauhan doon para harapin sakali na imbitahan ang Office of the President or the First Family to answer all the allegations?

SEC. ROQUE: He who alleges must prove. Let's see the documents. Let's see if they are authenticated. And it is always been our position without authentication all these documents are hearsay. So what's there to dispute?

HENRY/DZRH: Sa inyong pag-uusap na kayong dalawa lang ng Pangulo. Meron bang sinasabi sa inyo ang Pangulo, ano bang masamang tinapay sa kanya talaga ni Senator Trillanes. Bakit hindi siya tinatantanan?

SEC. ROQUE: Eh wala naman po siyang nababanggit. Pero talagang sabi niya, eh sanay naman ako diyan, doon sa Davao meron talagang—may isang tao doon na hindi siya tinantanan, so okay lang.

IAN/GMA7: Sir, ang nabanggit po yata ni Senator Chiz, hindi yata iimbitahan, pero kung gusto raw ng Pangulo na pumunta, welcome siya doon sa Senado.

SEC. ROQUE: Eh kung may dahilan sana, eh kaso nga wala namang authentication iyong mga dokumento, eh bakit natin pag-aaksayahan ng panahon. Hinahayaan naming mag-desisyon ang Senado dahil sila ay co-equal branch of government, pero kung walang authentication paano ka mag-i-imbetiga. Eh meron ka namang secrecy of bank deposits laws.

ROCKY: Okay thank you Malacanang Press Corps. Thank you Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you and good afternoon.

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