

Presidential Communications Operations Office

News and Information Bureau

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE  
WITH DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR)  
UNDERSECRETARY JONAS LEONES,  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DILG)  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY EPIMACO DENSING,  
AND DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM (DOT) ASSISTANT SECRETARY FREDERICK  
ALEGRE**

**APRIL 5, 2018 (11:23 A.M. – 12:37 P.M.)**

**ROCKY IGNACIO/PTV4:** Good morning, Malacañang Press Corps and guests. Let's now have Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque. Welcome back, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you, it's a pleasure to be back and belated Happy Easter to all.

Let me begin by giving you a briefing on what transpired in the Cabinet Meeting yesterday although it's been reported already. The Cabinet approved the Philippine Oral Health Program, and approved the issuance of an executive order that would among others appropriate specific amounts for the hiring of more dentists to be deployed particularly in the rural areas 'no. We also approved the Pasig River Ferry Convergence Program which would lead to the reopening of the Pasig Ferry System.

And the President has also informed the Cabinet that he has authorized the resumption of peace talks subject to the condition, number one, that the NPA-CPP-NDF would honor a genuine ceasefire that there should actually be no shooting if and when the peace talks resume; number two, that the CPP-NPA would desist from collecting revolutionary tax while a ceasefire is ongoing; and number three, is that the CPP-NPA would not insist on a coalition government 'no, because that is absolutely not part of the bargaining table 'no.

So if the CPP-NPA would agree to these conditions, then peace talks could resume; and if peace talks would resume, the President said he's even able and willing to grant Joma Sison an assurance that he can come home without being arrested for the purpose of participating in the peace talks. Now former Congressman Nani Braganza was deployed yesterday to meet with the bargaining panel of the CPP-NPA to relay this information to them.

Now also yesterday, the Cabinet and the President approved the recommendation of the three departments – DENR, DOT and DILG for a maximum closure of Boracay for period—maximum period of six months. Now at the end of the meeting, the President though clarified that one of

the first things that will be done upon closure of Boracay is validation on which resorts are complying with the existing environmental rules and regulations. And although he did not commit anything as far as the complying resort owners are concerned, he has promised that the validation will be done quickly, and he will see right away what can be done for those who have been validated to be complying with environmental laws. And of course, the six-month period is by way of a maximum period as recommended by the three departments.

Now proceeding to three items of good news, on the Cavite Gateway Terminal - The Philippines will soon have its first barge terminal according to the Department of Transportation. The Cavite Gateway Terminal is now 85% complete, with its expected inauguration within the second quarter of 2018. This will allow the transshipment of cargo from Manila Port to Cavite via barges. Once completed, this would help decongest the traffic in Metro Manila.

The Philippines is indeed a fun and safe destinations, Forbes Magazine cited the Philippines as one of the five spots in Asia that are booming for tourists for 2018. It attributed the increased tourist attention to the country's improved local infrastructure and air connectivity which are all part of the Department of Tourism's priorities to improve flight accessibility. According to the latest Tourism statistics, the country welcomed a total of 1,406,337 international visitors for January to February alone, which is 16.5% higher compared to 1,210,817 total for the same period in 2017. We expect that this added convenience will vastly increase the number of international travelers in our country, improve the overall tourism experience and contribute to more people-to-people exchange.

And finally, magandang balita po para sa mga magsasaka sa Negros Occidental. Ayon sa Department of Agriculture and—Department of Agrarian Reform, sa pagpapatupad ng continuing Agrarian Reform Program sa ilalim ng administrasyong Duterte, umabot sa higit kumulang na 1,823 na ektarya na lupain ang ipinamahagi sa 1,940 Agrarian Reform beneficiaries sa Negros Occidental noong nakaraang buwan. This agricultural lands cover 108 landholdings in 23 municipalities in the province with crops classification of 65% of sugarcane, 15% rice field, 10% corn, 7% root crops and 3% mixed trees.

Now, let's open the floor for questions first. But let's reserve the questions for Boracay for last.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER:** Good morning, sir. Sir, for the record, what's the status of Justice Secretary Aguirre?

**SEC. ROQUE:** He's Secretary of Justice.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER:** Sir, did you get a chance to talk with him last night about reports the he was on the way out?

**SEC. ROQUE:** No, I did not have that opportunity. But he was there as always, he seemed normal. There was no indication that he was on his way out. It was—there was nothing extraordinary in effect 'no. He was just there like always.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER:** Did the President say anything about him?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Nothing at all.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER:** Did the President say about any Cabinet movement?

**SEC. ROQUE:** None. None in this meeting.

And I'd like to clarify that the President issued the statement on possible revamp in a meeting with select opinion writers 'no here in Malacañang as well. And I believe, many of them have written about it 'no.

**ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW:** Hi sir, good morning. Sir, ano po iyong magiging epekto nitong inaasahang pagbabalik sa peace talks ng gobyerno at ng CPP-NPA po doon sa petisyon na i-declare na terrorist organization iyong CPP?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, tingnan muna po natin kung magkakaroon ng kasunduan na ituloy muna muli ang peace talks 'no, dahil ipaparating pa lang kahapon 'no—kagabi ni dating Congressman Braganza iyong desisyon ng President.

**ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW:** May nabanggit po si Presidente na posible niyang ipatigil iyong petisyon tungkol doon sa terror tag?

**SEC. ROQUE:** That's a possibility, pero sa ngayon po 'antayin muna natin kung ano magiging kasagutan ng CPP-NPA.

**ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW:** Sir, ano po ibig sabihin ni Presidente doon sa bibigyan niya ng suporta huwag lang daw po mangolekta ng revolutionary tax? Paki-paliwanag po iyon.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, he will find ways and means to assist members of the CPP-NPA by way of providing them livelihood and housing if possible; provided that they cease and desist from collecting revolutionary taxes

**ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW:** So, synonymous po iyon sa pagiging—pagbabalik-loob na iyong panawagan niya, parang rebel returnees na iyong turing niya doon?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I did not get that impression. I think the President was just saying, "Tingnan natin kung anong pangangailangan ninyo," pero as a precondition for iyong resumption ng peace talks, itigil ang pangongolekta ng revolutionary tax.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** Hi Sec., good morning. Sec., ngayong itutuloy na iyong peace talks, anong mangyayari doon sa Proclamation Number 374 na nilagdaan ng Pangulo noong Disyembre, tagging CPP-NPA as a terrorist?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well that was actually the question of Rose, and there's an actual petition 'no pursuant to the Human Security Act 'no to declare them as terrorist. My answer earlier was, we don't know in the first place if the CPP-NPA will agree to the terms of the President 'no, because the terms are not subject to negotiation. Number one, is absolute ceasefire; number two, cease

and desist from collecting revolutionary taxes; and no coalition government ‘no as part of the agenda.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** How about po iyong sa mga na-arrest na may arrest warrant na mga consultant ng NDF?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Eh alam ninyo naman po ‘pag natuloy muli ang peace talks, magkakaroon uli sila ng ‘free pass’ na tinatawag ‘no. Oo, JASIG para makapag-participate ‘no doon sa peace talks. At ‘yan nga po ay ibibigay din ni Presidente kay Joma Sison mismo.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** Bago iyong desisyon ng Pangulo - last na lang sir - may pag-atake ang NPA sa Davao kamakailan and noong isang araw din sa Alabel, Sarangani Province na nag-displace ng mga ibang families.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well actually, na-inform po ang Presidente na may atake ‘no. In fact ang atake was in Mindanao ‘no, some tribal leader ‘no, some indigenous leader. Pero ang sabi naman niya, “Well, let’s keep an open mind,” because hindi pa naman tayo nag-a-agree to resume the peace talks. So sa ngayon, wala pa naman peace talks so—of course, wala pang breech to speak of.

**REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO:** Sir, what prompted or made the President to have a change of heart and mind. Kasi parang as far as I see, parang hindi pa nakamit iyong condition na enabling environment. Kasi ongoing iyong mga attacks, extortion and all those mga inaayawan ng Pangulo bago i-resume iyong peacetalks?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I can only surmise that it is the President’s commitment to achieve a lasting peace for the country. Iyong briefing na ginawa niya kay Secretary Dureza at kay Secretary Bello came immediately after a short briefing he had with selected congressional leaders about the BBL.

So nakikita ninyo na seryoso si Presidente na makamit ang kapayapaan: sa number one, laban sa mga Muslim; at laban din sa mga komunista.

**REYMUND/BOMBO RADYO:** So now, what’s the guidance of the Executive to the AFP, considering the recent pronouncement of the President? So, there would still be expected operations, active operations against the NPA or halt for now?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala pa naman pong kasunduan na tuloy na ang usapan at isa po iyan sa pre-condition. Hindi naman tayo papayag na tuloy na naman ang usapan, tapos patuloy na naman ang kanilang pag-atake. Kaya nga natigil iyong peacetalks, eh! Dahil nga habang nag-uusap ng kapayapaan, eh patuloy ang pamamaril sa ating kasundaluhan at sa civilian. So, sa ngayon po, wala pang kasunduan muli, pero inaasahan natin na kung tatanggapin ng CPP-NPA iyan ay susunod ang parehong partido doon sa kanilang kasunduan na habang nag-uusap, absolute ceasefire.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Hi sir, good morning. Sir, just one quick clarification, iyong tungkol po doon sa mga political detainees na pinakawalan. I understand, it will depend kung ano iyong

mangyayari sa kanila following iyong magiging respond ng CPP-NPA. But then habang hinihintay po iyong what will happen to the agreement, ano po iyong instruction ni Presidente doon sa mga law enforces? Will they still pursue iyong mga may arrest warrant or status quo?

**SEC. ROQUE:** So far po, ang sagot ni Presidente noong sinabihan siya na meron na namang bagong pag-atake, matapos ma-anunsiyo iyong kagustuhan ni Presidente na ngang ituloy ang peacetalks, ang sabi niya ay wala pa naman tayong kasunduan na ituloy. So, I supposed, in response to your question, habang wala pang kasunduan na ituloy ang peacetalks, tuloy pa rin po ang operasyon laban din sa NPA kagaya ng patuloy pa rin ang pag-atake nila sa ating mga kasundaluhan.

**CEDRIC CASTILLO/GMA7:** Sir, balikan ko lang po iyong posibleng support doon sa NPA fighters po. Hindi po ba pre-requisite iyong surrender para mabigyan sila ng suporta ng gobyerno?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I did not understand it to be as a pre-requisite, basta ang sabi nila, sabi ng Presidente, itigil muna iyang revolutionary tax na iyan at tingnan natin kung paano natin sila matutulungan. It was also open-ended, hindi rin binigyan ng kasiguraduhan kung ano ang mabibigay sa CPP-NPA habang nag-uusap ng kapayapaan.

**CEDRIC/GMA7:** Sir, hindi po kaya ma-perceive as the government giving in to extortion? Iyong “sige tigilan na iyong revolutionary tax in exchange for that ay bibigyan namin kayo ng suporta” sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi naman. I think it is more of a humanitarian assistance, dahil kung talagang magkakaroon na ng usaping kapayapaan muli, titingnan natin paanong matutulungan iyong kabuhayan noong mga CPP-NPA.

**ACE ROMERO/PHIL. STAR:** Secretary what would warrant a withdrawal of the petition on the terror tag?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Eh siguro po, kapag natuloy na muli ang pag-uusap, pupuwede namang mag-file ng manifestation ang gobyerno na iho-hold muna nila in abeyance iyong petisyon na nakahain sa hukuman, pending the outcome of the peacetalks.

**ACE/PHIL. STAR:** So, possible na puwedeng i-withdraw iyon kapag nag-resume iyong talks and then based on doon sa mga conditions na sinabi po ninyo na no revolutionary tax collection?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I think it will be withdrawn if there is a final peace agreements signed. But while the peacetalks are ongoing, ang pupuwedeng gawin is, diyan lang siya.

**ACE/PHIL. STAR:** So, it’s possible na while ongoing iyong negotiations, nandoon pa rin iyong petition sa Manila Court.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Oo. I would think that would be the recourse.

**Q:** Sir, good morning. In response to President Duterte's announcement yesterday, CPP Founder Joma Sison said there should be no pre-condition for the resumption of the peacetalks. So, how could this affect po iyong situation?

**SEC. ROQUE:** We are awaiting their response to the government position that we are willing to resume peacetalks, but subject to those conditions. So, if that is the official response of the CPP-NPA, so be it!

**VIC SOMINTAC/DZEC:** Just a clarification lang doon sa sinabi ninyo kanina na isa sa posibleng nagpabago sa isip ng Pangulo para bumalik sa usapang pangkapayapaan, iyong nakipag-usap siya sa ilang mga congressional representatives, may kinalaman ba iyon sa resolution ng 61 na mga congressmen na humihingi kay Presidente na ibalik sa usapang pangkapayapaan?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I don't think so. Pero kaya ko po sinabi iyon, kasi nga ang marching orders ni Presidente kay Speaker at saka kay Senate President ay magkaroon na ng final version na ma-certify as urgent, para mapabilis na iyong pagpasa ng BBL. I mentioned that, because that is evidence that the President is serious in his desire to achieve peace in Mindanao and he is very serious in achieving peace for the entire Philippines and that includes peace with the CPP-NPA, as he has been genuine in this desire from the very beginning of his term.

**VIC/DZEC:** Sir, last na lang. May pending petition ang Malacañang doon sa pag-tag sa CPP-NPA as terrorist.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Nasagot na po iyan kanina.

**VIC/DZEC:** Hindi, pero what if kung ang korte nag-decide na paboran nag petition na sila ay terrorist group. What will happen?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Alam n'yo po kasi may proseso iyan sa human security act, kinakailangan magdinig pa po, magtanggap ng ebidensiya, magpresenta ng ebidensiya ang gobyerno, hindi po iyan unilateral. There will have to be facts to be proven by the government, kaya hindi naman po iyan uusad at hindi magkakaroon ng deklarasyon na terorista sila habang hindi po natatapos ang presentation of evidence ng gobyerno.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** Sec., balikan ko lang iyong kay Secretary Aguirre. May mga binabanggit na report na meron talaga siyang resignation letter, pero ito ay shredded na ngayon, dahil hindi pumayag ang Pangulo?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I have no information on this and I do not know, where the information is coming from. But Secretary Aguirre was present as Secretary of Justice in yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

**DEXTER/DZMM:** Nagsalita po ba siya dahil may mga kumalat na kopya ng kanyang di umano'y resignation letter?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala pong nabanggit kahit ano si Secretary Vit Aguirre.

**DHAREL PLACIDO/ABS-CBN.NEWS:** Spox, good morning po. Na-interview po si Joma Sison and sabi po niya, if the peacetalks with—the rebels will gladly enter a ceasefire agreement, if the amnesty and the release of the political prisoners will be fulfilled daw po.

**SEC. ROQUE:** I do not know how to respond to that, because the President has said, he is willing to resume the peacetalks, but subject to those conditions.

**REYMUND/BOMBO RADYO:** Sir, doon lang sa—kasi before the Holy Week, the President made a promise or announcement that he get back to Manila, parang he will fire or dismiss a cabinet-rank official. So, will we expect for him to do this still kahit na parang medyo natabunan na iyong na isyu allegedly kay Secretary Aguirre?

**SEC. ROQUE:** If the President was quoted as having said that. I was not present when he said it, so I cannot say that I have personal knowledge that he in fact said it. But if he did, it's his prerogative. Everyone in the Cabinet serves at pleasure of the President.

**REYMUND/BOMBO RADYO:** So how was the Cabinet meeting yesterday, wala ba iyong parang environment na parang—was he still happy with everybody of you sa performance ninyo sa Cabinet?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, it's started at 4:30 and ended at 11:50. You can imagine we were all eager to go home at 11:50.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Sir, update lang doon sa meeting with the President with the congressional leaders, BTC and MILF?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala namang MILF doon, congressional leaders lang.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** May picture, sir, andoon sila ano ...

**SEC. ROQUE:** Prior siguro 'no. Ang naabutan ko—

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** Oo. Pero anyway, sir, meeting with the—

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala lang, iyon lang ang nangyari. Ang nangyari po ay, the President asked them to finalize already their version of the BBL to consolidate all pending versions, and he will certify it as urgent nang mapabilis na ang passage ng BBL.

**VIRGIL LOPEZ/GMA NEWS ONLINE:** May 30 pa rin iyon or—

**SEC. ROQUE:** Opo, yes.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** Sir, did you get the chance to discuss the NFA issue, considering that there seem to be friction between the Council and the NFA itself?

**SEC. ROQUE:** It was not discussed. But as matters stand, I understand Secretary Evasco was here yesterday or the last press briefing, and that's the latest on the matter.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** Sir, but is it a cause for concern for the Palace that the NFA Council is accusing the NFA of creating an artificial shortage of rice?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I can only say that the President always stands by his Cabinet members. Even on the issue of Boracay, he followed the recommendation of his Cabinet members. So he will standby the recommendation of his Cabinet members.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** How about—does he standby NFA Administrator Aquino?

**SEC. ROQUE:** He is not a member of the Cabinet.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** So, sir, may calls from senators for Aquino to be replaced. Has the President said anything about this?

**SEC. ROQUE:** He hasn't said anything. But as is the policy of the President, he will standby his Cabinet members.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** Is he planning to do anything about Administrator Aquino, maybe review his performance?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I have no information on that.

**CELERINA MONTE/MANILA SHIMBUN:** Sir, regarding the Pasig rehabilitation. Is it true that Madam Honeylet would be part of that... if ever that body that will handle that rehabilitation?

**SEC. ROQUE:** It was not mentioned in the briefing given by Secretary Diokno yesterday.

**CELERINA MONTE/MANILA SHIMBUN:** So if ever—kasi there's this report nga, just in case she would express her interest to be part of that—kasi iyong mga previous first ladies parang iyon iyong ginagawa nila. So, would she be given any position?

**SEC. ROQUE:** No information on that yet. The only information that I have from yesterday's meeting was the Cabinet approved the revival of the ferry system.

**MODERATOR:** Okay, thank you, Celerina. Thank you, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

**SEC. ROQUE:** No, mayroon pa. Let us now start the questions first on what happened on the Boracay issue as far as the Cabinet is concerned. And then the details of what happened from now on, I will now invite our guests. And our guests include my suki, Usec. Leones, my suki even in the UP Laws Center and then—nasaan pa? Okay, and we are also joined by Asec. Alegre and Asec. Densing. Okay?

Now, as I said, the President approved the recommendation given by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Tourism, and DILG for temporary closure of Boracay for a maximum period of six months commencing April 26.

The President also said that the first thing that will be done will be a validation on which resort owners are in compliance with environmental rules and regulations. And that he will then decide after the validation what to do with the resort owners that will be found to be fully compliant with existing rules and regulations. Now, the closure is a maximum of six months, which means it could be for a shorter period of time.

Now, that's all that was discussed in the Cabinet meeting. Now the details, you can ask from anyone of our resource persons today.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** For Spox muna. Sir, kasi the DTI proposed that the closure be done in phases. Why was this idea rejected?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I believe DILG Secretary explained that it cannot be done in phases because it has to be a total approach to Boracay. He says that although infrastructure work may be done in phases, the entire rehabilitation though can't be done in phases.

Priority in the presentation of Secretary Cimatú was not just on the building of drainage; it was on the building of sewage lines. Because although there's an existing sewage line operated by Boracay Water, that clearly is insufficient as proven by the fact that they have—among tawag doon? Back flows. So there's an urgent need to build a new sewage system in addition to the existing ones. While the drainage system, the major drainage systems have been rehabilitated, there's a need for additional drainage system and—of course, the issue still is waste water system.

So that's why Secretary Año was insistent that it must be total closure.

**LEILA SALAVERRIA/PDI:** For any of the officials: The closure would begin April 26. Is this enough time for the businesses and the resort owners to prepare?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** In behalf of the inter-agency task force, it's been three months we've been working on Boracay. The mention of April 26 was done several times; we just needed confirmation. We're very thankful to the President for his trust and confidence. We know that this is 21 days. We know that they have been preparing, in fact, we're very pleased to know that even without the April 26 mention, they're already cleaning up.

It will take longer than six months to rehabilitate and sustain and save Boracay. But this is a good start because the major works that have to be done have to be done unhampered, without the presence of too many people on the island. Remember, we're not closing the island but we will not allow tourists – foreign and local tourists – to come during the time of the rehabilitation.

We're hoping that the 35,000 to 50,000 residents will also help us clean up and rehabilitate the island.

**AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHIL:** Hi, sir. Good morning. Sir, what specific steps will have to be done or what kind of preps will you be doing beginning now up to April 26?

**USEC. LEONES:** In behalf of the inter-agency, I will respond to that question. Actually, the activities for the Rehabilitation Boracay has not started... will not start only in April 26. In fact, even before Holy Week, we have been closely coordinating with the local government units and the stakeholders of Boracay, and we came up already with a plan on how we will be doing the rehabilitation works if in case the President will declare the closure of Boracay.

So, I think initial preparation has already been made with the stakeholders, and initial coordination with the two concessionaires were already made. And the local government units has given us their commitment to support with the rehabilitation of the Boracay island.

**AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHIL:** One follow up lang. Sir, what kind of attachments or facts were submitted or presented to the President para ma-convince siya for the total closure?

**ASEC. DENSING:** Well, based on the information that we've talked about since February, it's more really on the side of the pollution side 'no. First of all, one instance is the island generates around 90 to 115 tons of garbage a day, and we're only able to overhaul or bring out 30 tons. So what is left there is around 60 to 85 tons of garbage in the island.

And if you look at the island right now, the old MRF facility is now a dumpsite which is again against the environmental laws – that's number one.

Number two, with regard to the discharge of water in the drainage system in the Bulabog outfall, the standard water that should be discharging there should be around 400 MPN per 100 ml. As of the last evaluation of the DENR, it already has reached 40 times against the standard. It's around 18,000 MNM for every 100 ml.

So those are just the basic side of the issues. But more importantly, we're looking at the island in its totality, where Boracay Island is seen as a major world class tourist destination, yet in fact we're not able to address the major issue that it is not in terms of public safety, public order, road system, of course the issue on environmental degradation. So we're looking at the island in its totality.

And just to clarify, as mentioned by Asec. Ricky, we are not letting the tourist come into the island at least for 6 months, at most 6 months. The reason behind as not closing the institutions or the establishments because first of all, government and its agencies are cannot arbitrarily close institutions without due process. And since the major issue of pollutants, come from the market which are the tourists coming into the island, it's really best that we don't let them in temporarily. So that while we are doing the whole rehabilitation work, there will be no additional pollutants can come into the island in the meantime. So it's an issue of the state exercising its valid exercise of its police power in this case.

**CELERINA MONTE/MANILA SHIMBUN:** Good morning, do you have any estimate as to how much would be spent by the government to rehabilitate the island, like including the livelihood assistance and all those infrastructure projects?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** It's an ongoing computation, the problem really we have is that every day we find out something new which is the reason also why we are going to conduct a working conference on Tuesday in the island of Boracay. This will be hosted by the interagency Task Force.

We hope to be able to get the clearer picture before Tuesday. But as it is, we are still discovering pipes that have been hidden from us all these years. As to the cost: DENR, DILG and DOT are now looking; and government will spend the President mentioned to the interagency heads, that there will be funds to help and assist those displaced workers. We are also going to compute the lost revenue in the tourism receipts, because you know it brought in 56 billion last years.

Also in the number of tourist that will arrive. But let's be clear about this: this is being done to sustain and save Boracay; this is the first of many tourist destinations that we are going to look into; and the whole message it's still more fun in the Philippines; and more importantly, we are environmentally compliant. That's the message that we want to get out. And we want everybody to buy-in to the work that we are going to do in Boracay and with the working conference on Tuesday we hope that we can get more people to help us clean and rehabilitate Boracay.

**CELERINA/MANILA SHIMBUN:** Sir, I believe the initial proposal was supposedly one year to close Boracay. What happened bakit na-shorten?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** It was mentioned by Secretary Cimatu: maximum of one year. Let me tell you what happened, we are very happy that Governor Miraflores came out and came to the interagency meeting unannounced and he presented a short term, mid and long term plan which is consistent with what the interagency has been saying. He is now working with the LGU. We told him if he can do this, it can shorten the time period of shut down. And as we speak, we know he's doing it. We are hoping that the stakeholders will come in as well and the private sector can help reduce the time that we need to clean up and rehabilitate Boracay.

**CELERINA/MANILA SHIMBUN:** Last, to DILG representative. Sir, are you now preparing any administrative or criminal charges against any local officials or individuals there sa Boracay?

**ASEC. DENSING:** We will finish now our evidence gathering. We are finishing our case build up activity. Right now our lawyers are grafting a potential administrative case, most probably the best way is just to wait until we file. The target date is on or before April 14 which is the election ban.

**CELERINA/MANILA SHIMBUN:** Pero around how many officials would be included in—

**ASEC. DENSING:** Well standard, is we have to investigate all local officials who are managing the island such as Boracay. So most probably, in detail, we'll just make the necessary announcement when we file on or before April 14.

**MARICEL HALILI/TV5:** Hi sir, good morning. Sir, I understand you mentioned before that if ever na mag-decide si Presidente for a total closure of Boracay, most likely hindi ito itatapat ng peak season but it seems na natapat siya ng April 26? Why is it sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well I guess I made a mistake but I based it and of course I have clippings of all the declarations that I quote here. I based it on an earlier interview of Secretary Teo. And I have it on record that there was a mention that it may not happen during the peak season and as is my habit here, I always give credence to all the public declarations of the members of the Cabinet.

Obviously the recommendation of the interagency was not to wait for the peak season and was adopted by the interagency and the recommendation in turn, of the interagency was adopted by the Cabinet and the President.

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Quickly in reference to what Secretary Harry Roque said. It's true that there was a suggestion to do it in the low season of June but when we re-presented the data by the DENR and DILG and the pollution levels that we are now seeing daily, the recommendation is to move the date earlier.

Remember also, we didn't want to talk about LaBoracay but it was the governor himself and the LGU who decided to cancel LaBoracay. The April 26 really was to avoid the influx of 30,000 people for five days, four nights because it will just add to the already problematic sewerage and waste that is collected and now that they have canceled it, it gives us more reason to be able to work on it earlier and faster so that we can bring back the operations of the island earlier.

**MARICEL/TV5:** And sir, it was mentioned earlier that 6 months may not be enough to fully rehabilitate Boracay. So what do we expect or at least what's our target to accomplish within that period of time?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Well the big ticket items are really the drainage and sewerage/sewage lines, that we have now commitments from the concessi0nare, from the governor, from the LGU to fix this. We are not just going to watch them fix it. In fact DPWH is come in. And they have sent equipment to help us.

Second is the problem with the 190 or so that have violated the 25 plus 5 easement rule. In fact over the weekend we got a report that the white beach is now such a pleasure to walk because there are a lot of establishments that have self-demolished. But we are waiting for the others to do it. And of course the demolition now of the structures built over wetland and forest land and that will happen. It's not going to take—6 months is really not enough but at least there's a big ticket items that can be done within the first 6 months.

**MARICEL/TV5:** Sir, just more specific details lang po because nabanggit nga po ni Sec. Roque kanina na ang first step is to validate kung sinu-sino doon sa mga resort owner iyong probably may violation. And then what will be the next steps po after niyan?

**ASEC. DENISING:** Well based on the draft timelines that we have made. There will be a drainage audit and rehabilitation. The audit of this is because there's a lot of sewage—the illegal connections on the drainage, and this is the reason why there are a lot of wastewater discharge in the drainage when in fact it supposed to be clean water.

So number one, it will—we are actually starting right now through TIEZA, starting this April and we hope to end the whole rehabilitation process by November of this year.

With regard to the validation, that was the latest recommendation we did only just yesterday. Because we found out that these establishments were saying “we are compliant” ends up to be non-compliant at all.

For instance one hotel, I think, Crown Regency Prince said that they are complaint vis-à-vis their STPs. Then we found out they don't even have a sanitary permit nor a functional STP that's why they have—the hotel had to be close. So what we are going to do based on the recommendation that we have made only just yesterday were—during the period of closure from May until August of this year, we are going to validate and do an environmental compliance audit for each establishment whether you say you are compliant or not.

So part of these are for them to show all documents that they properly established or built their resorts or hotels. And then we look at all the facilities if they are within the environmental standards that have been set.

**TUESDAY NIU/DZBB:** Hi sir, to Asec. Ricky Alegre sir. Sir, mula noong lumabas itong balita sa Boracay na ipasasara, I'm sure naapektuhan iyong tourism. How is it now sir? Malaking porsiyento ba iyong apektado sa tourism industry natin?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Nakakagulat na mula Enero hanggang Marso, umakyat pa. In fact iyong data po namin up to March 31, for the month of March is 3% increase compared to 2017. Kung mayroon po talagang apektado dito, iyong tourism industry! Binanggit po ni Secretary Wanda Tulfo Teo na nakahanda ang DOT na tanggapin itong pagbagsak ng pagdating para lang ma-sustain at ma-save iyon g Boracay.

Alam natin ito na binanggit na po ni Secretary Teo is one step backward, two steps forward. We have to swallow the bitter pill if we wish to sustain and protect the island of Boracay. We wanna bring it back to its paradise feel that we saw in the '80s. It may not be achieved, but we know that in doing this cleanup and rehab as ordered by the President, more people will come to Boracay – we assure you about that. And it's just something that we have to do; it's a temporary setback but we will recover the glory days of Boracay.

**TUESDAY NIU/DZBB:** Do you have figures sir kung ilang percent ba ang bumagsak sa tourism if you have, sir?

**ASEC. DENSING:** Looking at it in the perspective of an investment banker, the estimate if we will go through the full 6 months, it could reach around 18 to 20 billion potential loss in gross receipts. That's why it is not to the interest of everybody to go the full 6 months. We have to fast track everything. And the only way to be able to do this is to ask everybody, all the stakeholders to be part of the whole rehabilitation process. We've been receiving volunteers outside of Boracay that they want to go into the island and help in the whole rehab process. So if everybody comes into the picture, we can cut the process by at least 2 months.

In fact, I did some pencil pushing Asec., because some of the items that we've done in the plan is being done right now by the stakeholders in the provincial government, specifically the dismantling side and the drainage audit. We may be able to cut—we may be able to have a soft opening in 3 to 4 months if—it's possible, it's possible.

**TUESDAY NIU/DZBB:** Last na, sir. Sir bago mag-April 26, nagkaroon na po ng some sort of auditing or inventory doon sa mga resort kung mayroon pa silang mga naka-book na tourists na maapektuhan noong pagsasara; and ilang porsiyento po ito?

**ASEC. ALEGE:** Ginagawa ho 'yan ng aming Regional Director, si Director Catalbas in coordination with the hotel and resort owners. In fact noong nagsara ang DILG ng isang resort recently, we were the ones who actually moved the 16 guests to another hotel. Makakaasa po kayo na sa sitwasyon na ganito, kami po ang mag-a-assist sa mga turista na maaapektuhan dito, kasama na rin po ang tulong ng DOT para ma-rebook at madala sila sa ibang destinations sa tulong pa rin po ng hotels and resorts and the airlines who have expressed a 100% support for this effort.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** To our guests, aside from iyong mga audit ng drainage and environmental compliance, what exactly will happen during the six-month closure?

**USEC. LEONES:** Nasabi nga kanina noong ating dalawang kasama sa DILG saka DOT, hindi lang—ang effort natin doon will not only include iyong upgrading ng sewer lines and then restoration ng drainage system, but we're looking at illegal structures allocated in forestlands and wetlands. And we are looking also at the improvement of, iyong transport system nila in coordination with DPWH.

At nakita rin natin doon sa DENR, sa assessment ng DENR din, may mga protected areas tayo na dapat nating i-rehabilitate doon; like for example iyong Poca Beach where talagang nandoon iyong mga Poca shells. So noong makita nga ni Secretary Cimatú iyon, talagang pinatanggal niya iyong mga stalls doon. So, these are just the... mga target nating magawa at itutuloy natin. At we are hopeful that at the end of 6 months, we will be able to undertake these efforts.

**ASEC. DENSING:** Sandali lang, very important kasi ito. Si Secretary Cimatú through the DENR has already started the directive of—already making a study on the current carrying capacity of the island. So once it's done within 90 days yata Usec. ano, once it's done, we now have a basis for regulating entry moving forward of people going to the island including the infrastructure that will still be put up in the island moving—in the future. So at least mayroon na

tayong baseline, that's the most critical part in the whole process that we're undertaking. The carrying capacity is critical looking at the island as a major tourist destination moving forward.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Iyong 6-months po nabanggit ninyo – maximum – pero ano po iyong parang iniisip ninyong best case scenario na hanggang kailan siya closed? Iyong pinakamaikling possible time na close siya.

**ASEC. DENSING:** Doon sa computation ko kasi doon sa ginawa naming timeline, mayroon nang ginagawa ngayon – iyong sa drainage audit saka pagdi-dismantle ng illegal structures – ang tingin namin, in 3 or 4 months puwede nang mag-soft opening. Kasi by that time, substantial na iyong pag-aayos ng drainage—maayos na iyong drainage, natanggal na iyong illegal structures. In fact iyong sinasabi ni Usec. Jonas na pagtatanggal ng mga illegal structures in the forestland, we're only looking at dismantling half of it in 6 months time, up to November of this year, kasi 948 iyon eh. So ang target namin is to dismantle half of it by the end of November. So may mga timelines tayo.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Isa na lang po sa akin. Secretary Roque, nabanggit kahapon baka mag-tap ng calamity funds to assist the...

**SEC. ROQUE:** There will be a declaration of a state of calamity, but the President was insistent that the funds that will be spent will go only to the workers who will be displaced. He will not let any resort owner benefit from any sort of a calamity fund that may be—

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Mayroon na po bang amount kung magkano iyong planong i-disburse for...

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well there was a figure mentioned by the Secretary of Finance, and the amount mentioned was 2 billion 'no.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Two billion pesos?

**SEC. ROQUE:** For the displaced workers. Pero hindi naman lahat ng workers madi-displace. Bakit! Eh ang daming trabahong kailangang gawin doon sa Boracay, so hindi naman sila kinakailangan umalis lahat eh. So siguro maiiba ang trabaho nila, pero magkakaroon pa rin sila ng trabaho sa dami ng dapat gawin sa Boracay. So you can imagine na, although there are 35,000 workers in Boracay, not all of them will be jobless. They will just have to change jobs for the time being.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Iyong 2 billion, ilan pong workers iyong affected and where will we source—

**SEC. ROQUE:** Iyon na nga po – 35,000 po.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** Where will we source the funds? Sa...?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, mayroon naman pong calamity funds available. Mayroon niyang calamity funds ng national government, may calamity funds din iyan ng local government.

**ACE ROMERO/PHILIPPINE STAR:** So both po?

**SEC. ROQUE:** At mayroon ding DSWD, at mayroon din po sa DOLE – iyong TUPAD [Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers Program] na tinatawag ‘no.

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Maidagdag ko lang, we wanted to thank Secretary Bello. Nagpahayag na siya ng work for 5,000 initially; displaced workers who will be paid minimum wage to do other work than what they’re used to doing. And this is welcome, at ginagawa na ng Regional Director namin iyong listahan at hinihingi na rin sa mga local stakeholders kung sino iyong unang maapektuhan during the time of shutdown.

**SEC. ROQUE:** That’s the TUPAD program of the DOLE.

**USEC. LEONES:** Sir, dagdagan ko lang iyong sinabi ni Asec. Alegre saka ni Secretary Roque. Iyong calamity fund na isusuporta natin doon sa mga na-displace na workers will only pertain doon sa mga legitimate hoteliers and businesses there. If you will note, that there are several hotels na located doon sa mga hindi naman dapat kalagyan – like for example forestlands. So in the first place, they should not be there. So kung may ma-displace mang workers, it should be handled by the hotel themselves, not the government.

**REYMUND TINAZA/BOMBO RADYO:** Good noon, gentlemen. Sir, Asec. Ricky mentioned a while ago na there are more problems being discovered now, and some are blatant violations of our environmental laws. Sir, hindi ba ito—will it warrant closure of the establishment na napatunayan/nakita natin ngayon na talagang lantaran iyong pagbahura sa kalikasan?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Alam mo ang kagandahan nito, si Governor ang nakakadiskubre together with the interagency task force. At automatically they have to shut down operations, lalo na iyong mga tinago under the—iyong sand ‘no. At sabi nga namin eh, akala namin compliant iyon pala hindi. So this will give us really enough time to probe in. Remember Boracay Water has said, only 47% of the 1,900 are connected to the sewerage treatment plant. Saan po naka-connect iyong 53% which is about a thousand? Saan po sila nagdi-discharge?

Ang suspetsa namin, iyon iyong mga nag-tap doon sa storm drainage, ti-*nap*, instead of water lang dapat doon, nag-tap po ng sewerage line nila – iyon ang nagiging problema. At tama ka, everyday is a new day. But hopefully makita natin iyong entire picture in the next few weeks.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Susugan ko lang iyon ‘no. Si Governor Miraflores said nga na ang unang ginawa is, iyong rehabilitation ng drainage lines, which originally was only supposed to carry rainwater. Pero ang ginagawa nung hindi nakakabit sa sewage line doon sila nakakabit ‘no. So, now ang sabi niya, ang una ang ginawa na and they did not have to wait for the closure ‘no, was for rehabilitation of the three existing lines. Pero kinakailangan pa rin magtayo ng water treatment facility, para... bagama’t nandiyan na iyang drainage system na iyan at dapat rain

water na rin iyan kung lalagyan mo iyan ng iba, other than rain water, dapat iyan bago lumabas ng system ay magkaroon ng water treatment system.

So iyan po iyong mga major works talagang gagawin. It's not just the conveyance, ang tawag po diyan iyong conveyance iyong mga pipes 'no; pero ano ang gagawin? Hindi naman pupuwedeng ipalabas lang iyan. So ang option talaga ngayon is for individual resorts to prove that they have their STPs or if they tapped into the existing rehabilitated drainage system, then there must be a company that will build a water treatment system, na Boracay 2B has said that they are willing. Kaya lang may PPP pa iyan na kinakailangang aprubahan ng gobyerno, kasi it's a private sector lead initiative na magkaroon ng water treatment facility bago lumabas iyong discharge doon sa mga drainage systems.

**REYMUND/BOMBO RADYO:** Kay Asec. Alegre ulit. Sir, meron na kayong advise doon sa ating mga tourism attachés kasi para iyong mga may foreign tourist makapag-add sila ng new package at makapunta sa ibang paradise, kasi hindi lang naman Boracay iyong paradise, meron din kaming Pagudpud sa Norte.

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Opo, in fact iyan po ang naging mensahe since two months ago in Secretary Teo. We sent an advisory to all our tourism attachés all over the world and told them that business as usual, kailangan lang ho lumipat muna during the time of the rehabilitation. Receptive po at tama ka Pagudpud is one. Bohol is a ideal alternative destination, so as the province of Cebu and Siargao is there, especially Palawan and all the way from Bataan, Zambales, Pangasinan, all the way to Pagudpud in Ilocos Norte is an ideal alternative destination.

I think we have said this many times: Remind people, remind all the tourists who want to come to the booming tourism industry of the Philippines that we have the advantage of many alternative destinations. We just need the work and help of the airlines and the hotels to achieve this.

**ROSE/HATAW:** Sir, DILG po. Sir, ano iyong mga kasong puwedeng isampa ng gobyerno laban po doon sa mga kapitalistang may mga paglabag na ginawa? Parang hindi po tama yata na closure lang, kasi may mga ginawa silang violation. Ano iyong mga kasong puwedeng isampa ng gobyerno laban sa kanila?

**ASEC. DENSING:** Doon sa mga pribado—kasama sa investigating team iyong CIDG 'no. Ang CIDG will have to look on the private sector side and most probably itong mga pribadong institusyon na nag-violate ng mga batas natin sa solid waste, sa clean water, iyon po ang titingnan, kasi mayroong mga criminal aspect iyan. Iyong pangatlo, kung meron tayong malinaw na ebidensiya, sila ay nakakuha ng mga permit na hindi dumaan sa tamang proseso at mapapalabas na sila ay naglagay sa mga taong-gobyerno para makakuha lamang, iyon po ay isasama rin natin sa potential na kaso na ibibigay sa mga pribadong sector.

So, ang tinitingnan talaga natin dito, bukod sa mga lokal na opisyal, may pribado at tinitingnan na rin ho natin, baka meron ding mga kasama sa DENR na kasama sa buong sindikato. Pag

nakita po natin iyan along the way, ipapasa namin sa DENR for them to their own investigation, kung mga tao po nila iyon.

**USEC. LEONES:** Dagdagan ko lang iyong sinabi ni Asec. Epi 'no.

So in looking at the possible liabilities of the private sectors, iyon doon naman sa mga batas ng environmental laws, nandoon din naman iyong mga karampatang parusa doon. Like for example sa clean water, the government can issue cease and desist order, even closure. Kaya lang we have to follow iyong certain procedural requirement, so medyo kailangan i-fast track natin iyon. Kaya nga sinasabi lagi natin dito, it's not only a cleansing of the Boracay Island eh; it's also a cleansing of our ranks in the government, perhaps may mga pagkukulang o may mga gaps na dapat din nating i-address. So ito iyong gagawin natin.

**DHAREL/ABS-CBN.NEWS:** Hi good afternoon, Asec. Densing. Sir, you mentioned kanina iyong regulation of the entry of tourist. So will this be implemented after the clean up? Kasi sabi n'yo po 90-days lang po iyong study.

**ASEC. DENSING:** Ah hindi po, on or before April 26, na-implement na natin iyong pagsasara, meron na hong ginawang guidelines, draft guidelines ang ating kapulisan at iyong ating mga kasundaluhan doon sa RPOC, Regional Peace and Order Council. We are just reviewing it, then we will issue a form of a memorandum circular na ito ang guidelines na susundin kung papano ang hindi pagpapapasok ng turista doon pa lang sa port mismo. Magkakaroon tayo ng identification system para naman doon sa mga residents ng Boracay Island, para may laya silang pumasok at lumabas sa isla, dahil doon naman sila talaga nakatira.

So, there will be a guideline that we will issue soon. What will happen is that, this will be implemented by the Philippine National Police and if the President will declare a state of calamity, we may also get as a complimentary support from the Armed Forces.

**DAHREL/ABS CBN.NEWS:** So, sir ultimately, meron tayong parang limit, na maglalabas kayo ng number na ito lang po iyong ano.

**ASEC. DENSING:** Hindi po, talagang pag na-identify silang mga turista, whether foreign or local, hindi talaga sila papapasukin muna sa isla. Ang papasukin lang natin iyong mga residente ng Boracay Island.

**DAHREL/ABS CBN.NEWS:** Last na lang po, to DOT. Sir, you mentioned po kanina iyong government wanted to prevent the influx of people arriving for Boracay. So, iyong April 26 po ba, did you have the Boracay in mind in setting April 26 as the start of the shutdown?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Actually, yes. But when the governor came forward to say he is cancelling it and then we saw the reports from DENR, we figured that the sooner it shutdown the better, because we don't want to put people in harm's way. We don't want people to be exposed to the pollution. Remember, it's in the eastern portion of the island, where the—and that's for the... iyong kite surfers take off from, mostly foreigners, and that is where the problem of the pollution is. We can no longer ignore that and we don't want to put people in danger.

In fact, we have received reports that some who have cuts in their legs and they dip their water in that portion of Bulabog Beach, they encounter problems and we don't want it to escalate, that is why we also bringing in the Department of Health to help us and monitor this for us, because that's really a take off point for the kite surfers din. Sports activities there is also—there's a lot of people in that area.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Announcement 'no, we are doing a press briefing, our Tuesday Press Briefing in Boracay in time for the working conference that they will be having in the island. So make your own arrangements please if you want to join the press briefing on Tuesday.

**JONNEL/UNTV:** To Asec. Densing regarding doon sa—kaunting scenario lang po during the closure. You said merong AFP and mga additional na PNP na ide-deploy from national to—

**ASEC. DENISING:** The other way around, PNP then hopefully kasama po iyong AFP.

**JONNEL/UNTV:** Meron po bang total closure ng mga building doon sa resort mismo or ano iyong magiging scenario.

**ASEC. DENISING:** Iyon ang issue. While as I have mentioned starting May, we will have a team to move around the whole island para isa-isahin iyong mga establishment, whether they claim to be compliant or not, isa-isahin namin lahat iyan. Then as we go along kapag nakita ho natin na merong mga non-compliant in terms of documents, in terms of their facilities, in terms of their STPs, magpapalabas na tayo ng mga notices of violation and notices to explain, iyon na po iyong proseso ng pagsasara ng bawat establishment. So, we are undertaking a process to give due process to all institutions or businesses inside the island.

**JONNEL/UNTV:** Sir, may estimation na po ba tayo, kung ilang mga buildings or establishment ang magigiba po dito?

**ASEC. DENISING:** Well, on the forest land, we are talking about as I mentioned 948. So for purposes of the forest land, we have to validate also, they might have lease agreement. So we are targeting half on the forest land.

For the buildings and resorts, we're only looking at 102 or 109 that has violated the 30 meter easement rule. So with that if they do not self-demolish, then government comes in to the picture to demolish them so that they can be compliant and they will be charged eventually for violating certain laws.

**SEC. ROQUE:** I take back the announcement; we will be in China on Tuesday. I should have looked at my calendar first. I was too excited to go to Boracay before the rehabilitation. I take it back. I guess many of you will also be in China, ano. Okay.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** Bago ang aking tanong, kay Asec. Alegre. Huwag mong kalimutan, sir, na isama din iyong aming white sand beach sa Sarangani Province, SOCCSKSARGEN area.

**ASEC. ALEGRE: AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHIL:** Approve.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** Sir, sa DENR. Marami ang nagkukuwestiyon na mga negosyante, ano raw iyong mapa na ginamit? Ito ba iyong mapping na isinagawa after ng proclamation ni President Gloria Arroyo na isinagawa or may bagong mapping ang DENR para doon sa pag-indentify doon sa mga forest land, mga wet lands and other mappings doon sa Boracay Island?

**USEC. LEONES:** Mayroon kaming ano... mayroon kaming agency na tinatawag nating NAMRIA. So we have files of maps in 2007, 2008 and up to the present. So what we did was, we just get iyong... ang aming data, and then we overlay iyong aming existing na nakita natin sa satellite. Nakita natin doon, like for example, in the wetlands, normally sa old map natin mayroon tayong nine wetlands. But noong in-overlay namin iyong existing na mapa natin, tatlo na lang ang nakikita natin doon. So may mga iba na-reclaim na, iyong mga iba ay natabunan na ng mga ibang buildings. So ito iyong tinututukan natin na kasama doon sa mga six months na duration natin na ia-address natin.

Dahil very important iyong paglilinis din ng wetlands because these are the temporary catchment or storage of rain water and storm water that maybe that's the reason why Boracay is experiencing flooding nowadays because wala nang daanan kasi, daluyan iyong mga tubig na dapat pumunta muna dito sa mga storage ng Boracay storage before they're finally discharged doon sa water body.

**DEXTER GANIBE/DZMM:** Kasi 'di ba may desisyon ang Korte Suprema dati na bawal talaga magpatitulo ng lupa doon sa Boracay, at ito ay i-implement ngayon sa—

**USEC. LEONES:** Sa ngayon, ang utos ng ating Kalihim, Secretary Cimat, wala muna kaming iisyung permit unless we have already finished or completed our rehabilitation in the island.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Mayroon nga pa lang nabanggit si Presidente kahapon 'no na matapos ang rehabilitation, pupuwede namang pag-aralan iyong pag-isyu na ng titulo doon sa mga valid claimants. Pero ang sinabi lang niya, this will have to be the valid claimants, not necessarily the resort owners, iyong magpapakita na under existing laws, they have rights to claim titles. So parang iyan naman iyong kapalit na sinasabi ni Presidente, after rehabilitation, pag-aralan din natin kung paano natin mabibigyan ng titulo iyong karamihan ng mga taga-Boracay, hindi lang iyong mga ilang pamilya. Dahil parang tatlong pamilya lang ang may titulo diyan sa may Boracay 'no. So, iyon naman ang naging pangako din ni Presidente.

**ARJAY BALINBIN/BUSINESS WORLD:** Sir, you mentioned already the calamity funds and livelihood. Sir, lahat-lahat ba nang mawawalan ng hanapbuhay, kapag sinabing lahat-lahat including na iyong mga vendors, mga kumikita ng arawan, makakaasa ba sila ng tulong?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I think we responded to that earlier 'no. The President said that he will declare a state of calamity to enable the spending of calamity funds for these types of individuals, the small individuals.

**ARJAY BALINBIN/BUSINESS WORLD:** So lahat nang mawawalan ng hanapbuhay?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Idadagdag ko lang, including the indigenous people. In fact, DILG together with DENR, we're talking to them. There's a group of religious nuns that are taking care of them, and we're going to bring them in.

Inutos na rin po sa amin na pati iyan ay asikasuhin namin kasi sila naman ang nawalan diyan sa development ng Boracay, and we want them to enjoy the island the way it should be. And they will be included in the efforts to help them during this time of rehabilitation.

**BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR:** Sir, itatanong ko lang po kung ilan po iyong mawawalan ng trabaho doon sa 35,000 po? 'Di ba 35,000 workers po iyong mayroon sa Boracay, so ilan po iyong estimate po natin doon?

**ASEC. DENSING:** Gumawa kami ng estimate ano. Out of the 17,000 who are direct hire, we estimate half of them ay mawawalan ng ... pakakawalan ng mga establisyimento para huwag na magtrabaho. We have to identify also that there are also employees who are regular employees so they cannot just be kicked out, otherwise they have to pay separation pay which is higher than the regular so baka i-maintain iyan.

So we're looking at kung 17,000 ay 8,500. Then we're looking at another ten to twelve thousand doon sa indirect, iyong mga nagta-tricycle, nagtitinda. So kapag na-identify na ho natin sila na mababawasan o mawawalan ng kita, sila po ang bibigyan ng unang ... take the initial crack or be given the bridge work that government will be giving the island.

**BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR:** Bridge work po, as in iyong sa construction—

**ASEC. DENSING:** Tulay, tulay lang. Hindi, tulay lang siya. Ibig sabihin bridge kasi temporary lang kasi, so bridge ... halimbawa, bridge work, bridge loan because it's just temporary.

**BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR:** Okay, sir. Kay Asec. Alegre po. Ano po iyong mga tourist spots po na you're looking into po after nitong Boracay?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** Okay. We'd like to announce that the inter-agency task force announced yesterday during the lunch meeting that we will visit Puerto Galera soon. We want to also inspect, if you're referring to the effort to clean up, Puerto Galera is going to be visited next by the inter-agency task force. We have received reports of the conditions there, and we want again to help rehabilitate.

We're also looking at... and DILG and DENR has already started looking into El Nido and Coron. Coron Bay has reporting of some pollution as well.

We've also been asked to look at the problem in Siargao. It's such a hot destination now, and we wish to help them with their sewerage treatment plant and their garbage disposal system. And of course, Bohol, which Governor Chato has already moved, and we're going to also visit these areas.

Remember, Boracay is just a start. The President has already given the inter-agency task force the orders to take a look at all because we want, as I said, the Philippines not only to be a fun place to be in but also environmentally compliant.

**BERNADETTE NICOLAS/BUSINESS MIRROR:** Last na, ma'am. Last na po. Doon po sa casino, sir, ano pong plano po? Kasi may decision na for closure so ano po ang mangyayari doon sa casino po?

**ASEC ALEGRE:** Okay. Officially, the Department of Tourism under Secretary Wanda Tulfo Teo has said, we have not received to date an application for accreditation. So there is nothing for us to comment. In our initial communications with the people of PAGCOR, they say it will take years before anything can be started.

I think DENR also has an official statement mentioned, Usec?

**USEC. LEONES:** As similar to what Asec. Alegre has mentioned a while ago, the DENR has not received any application for ECC or any discharge permit. And that, perhaps, if they will be submitting to us the necessary documentary requirements or ECC, maybe that's the time we will be evaluating it and we will determine whether to accept or deny it based on scientific parameters.

**ASEC. DENSING:** The side of DILG, we are issuing this caveat or warning to all local officials of Malay and Aklan that they are not—they should not be issuing any local permits until and unless the DENR has given the necessary environmental clearances to any applicants especially this casino in the island to put upon institution—establishment in the islands. So warning po: kapag kayo ay nag-issue makakasuhan din kayo ulit.

**CELERINA MONTE/MANILA SHIMBUN:** Follow up lang sir doon sa question na iyon kasi you have mentioned na currently there's this study by the DENR on the current capacity na pupuwede lang i-hold iyong island. So right now kasi hindi ba nagkakaroon na nga tayo ng problema due to overcrowding—magkakaroon ba ng moratorium sa pagpu-put up ng additional establishment doon sa area and paki-say din, paki-promote din, sa Anilao, Mabini, Batangas two to three hours away from Metro Manila?

**USEC. LEONES:** Actually iyong carrying capacity natin we are—as said by the resource persons. The DENR is doing and conducting now the—updating of the carrying capacity. We had one study of carrying capacity but it was in 2007 pa. So medyo pasado pa iyong mga parameters doon. But then and only even without the carrying capacity, looking at the—what is happening now in Boracay wherein illegal structure are already encroaching easements and wetlands and forestlands and then the garbage problem has been a tremendous so parang ito iyong nagiging parameters na mataas na rin. Pero what is the usefulness of the carrying capacity will be after rehabilitation.

Kasi ang mga carrying capacity now will determine the sustainability of the rehabilitation we will be doing in Boracay kasi kapag hindi natin ginawa iyong carrying capacity na requirements, baka naman baka after nitong 6 months bumalik na naman iyong dating sitwasyon. So iyong

carrying capacity na iyon will now serve as guide kung how many tourist should be absorbed by the island, how many developments should be allowed in the island. So ang critical dito kasi rehabilitation muna and then the carrying capacity will set the threshold and limit on what development should be allowed in the Boracay Island.

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** If I may add lang to that. Remember this is not something new, the Subterranean River in Palawan. We have a 2,000 cap daily. You can no longer go there and go in, you have to register online. Mount Apo has been slowly reopened and again only a certain numbers are allowed to enter and trek. So this is not new, something new and the interagency task force will do the same thing for Boracay when we resume operations. We are going to have to control the number of people entering the island.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Hi sir sa DOT po. Sir, what assistance will the DOT give to those who are looking to refund their bookings sa hotel and sa airline tickets especially those iyong nag-book ng promo fares which is essentially non-refundable.

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** The airlines have already expressed support in fact we are very pleased with what the two major airlines here have said that they will not charge rebooking and cancellation fees and they will refund. You can come to us for help if it doesn't happen. In terms of the hotels and resorts: Secretary Teo has been meeting with the airlines; the resorts; tour operators so that we can work with them and figure a way to immediately get their refund or help them rebook to a later date.

Remember this is something also not new. Last year when martial law was declared in Marawi, we encountered the same problem but we survived it with the help of all the tourism stakeholders. A lot of the people that were planning but did not go or able to redirect their flights to another area or book it for some other later date. So this is something not new to us and we just have to work triple time to make sure that all those affected will be attended to.

**PIA/ABS-CBN:** Last na lang sir. Will the interagency task force recommend an extension of the 6 month period if we discover na iyong mga problems sa Boracay is bigger than what we initially discovered?

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** We follow the President's orders: maximum 6 months. So we have to get—we have to hit the ground running to make sure that we keep it within the maximum of 6 months.

**CHONA YU/RADIO INQUIRER:** Sir base po sa records, 2 million iyong tourist arrival sa 2016 and each tourist po ay nagbabayad ng 75 pesos so kung ito-total 150 million. Pero base po sa declaration ng local government officials, 90 million lamang iyong kanilang kinita. So ito ba inimbestigahan ng Interagency Task Force and kung isasama ba ito sa charges that you are going to file against local executives?

**ASEC. DENSING:** I think nabanggit ko nga iyan in one of my interviews. In 2017 they collected 91 million, tapos nakalagay doon kung paano ginamit. When in fact kung 2 million ang dumating dapat, that should be around 150 million so may nawawala. I will not pass judgment at the moment. We are in the process of asking an audit team to do that, just to justify then, kung

may nakita tayong anomalya that's the only time we will come in and give and make the necessary – the administrative or even criminal charges – if that happen. So no judgment at the moment!

**ROCKY IGNACIO/PTV4:** Okay thank you, thank you Malacañang Press Corps. Thank you—

**SEC. ROQUE:** I guess by way of concluding remarks, alam ninyo po talaga iyong Boracay na iyan kilala natin iyan bilang paraiso dito sa ating bayan. At itong panandaliang pagsara po ng Boracay ay para masiguro na makikilala ng mga susunod na henerasyon bilang paraiso rin iyang Boracay na iyan. So sandali lang po iyan, but Boracay will be relaunched. Boracay will always be there and the closure is necessarily to ensure that Boracay will be there for the next generation. I'd like to thank our guests and yes—

**ASEC. ALEGRE:** I was just informed by Undersecretary Kat De Castro—Assistant Secretary. We are calling for a massive clean-up before April 26. We'd like to use this opportunity to course it through the Malacañang Press Corps. In Bali they had 20,000 people that came for one day. We intend to pass the 20,000 mark. We will soon announce when. Before April 26, this will happen and we encourage as we have been getting from all private sector groups that they will come and help. Do a major clean-up and re-exceed the 20,000 mark. We are confident that we will make it over 20,000 and await the complete details of this major clean-up day before the 26.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maybe we will have our press briefing in time for the clean-up.

**ROCKY:** Okay, thank you, Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

**SEC. ROQUE:** And of course, please in all our subsequent press briefing, the three of you don't have to be here but at least one of you, if you can join us because I'm sure there will be other questions on the closure of Boracay. Just to make sure that there is someone who is really on top of the Boracay rehab. So thank you very much to our guest, thank you and to the members of the Malacañang Press Corps, to the entire Philippines, maraming salamat po. Hanggang sa susunod po nating press briefing. Magandang hapon po!

**ROCKY:** Okay, thank you Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque, thank you Malacañang Press Corps and to our guests. Back to our main studio sa Radyo Pilipinas and People's Television Network.

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