

Presidential Communications Operations Office

News and Information Bureau

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE
WITH NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION OIC-CHAIRMAN RONALD GIAN
CARDEMA
AND NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS (NCCA)
COMMISSIONER FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE FR. HAROLD LL. RENTORIA
APRIL 19, 2018 (11:22 A.M – 12:09 P.M.)**

ROCKY IGNACIO/PTV4: Good morning Malacañang Press Corps, at siyempre sa ating mga guest. Good morning Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque.

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, good morning Philippines and good morning ladies and gentlemen of the Malacañang Press Corps.

Now today we have two guests: the first is the OIC-Chairman of the National Youth Commission who is Ronald Cardema. OIC-Chair Cardema is from UP-Los Baños, served as Head of the UP Vanguard Fraternity and has been a Political Affairs Officer in the House of Representatives for a very long time. He's here to appeal for the registration of the youth for the upcoming SK elections;

We also have as guest, the 2018 – because we are commemorating and celebrating the National Heritage Month – guest from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, specifically we have Commissioner for Cultural Heritage, Rev. Fr. Harold Rentoria.

So this is what we will do: I will first invite OIC-Chair Ronald Cardema to the podium, and you can ask him questions for about 10 to 15 minutes; then we will do our press briefing. And after our open forum, I will turn over the floor to our guest from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

So ladies and gentlemen of the press corps, please welcome OIC-Chair Ronald Cardema of the National Youth Commission.

OIC-CHAIR CARDEMA: Thank you, Secretary Roque. Good morning to the Malacañang Press Corps, and for accommodating me here today. First, I'd like to give you some updates on the National Youth Commission, then specifically on the Sangguniang Kabataan elections.

The National Youth Commission, under the Office of the President is the highest policy-making body for all youth programs, youth activities and youth organizations in the country; and as such,

we are currently supervising the return of the Sangguniang Kabataan with the DILG and COMELEC.

First update from the National Commission, the National Youth Commission has decided to stop its partnership with the Office of Senator Bam Aquino for his TAYO Youth Awards. Upon our first regular commissioners meeting this month, we found out that the NYC is allocating around 1.7 million pesos to the TAYO Youth Awards of Senator Bam Aquino. So we have decided that instead of contributing these government funds from the OP-NYC to the private youth awards of Senator Bam Aquino, we will just establish our own government youth awards to be called, “The President Rodrigo Roa Duterte Youth Leadership Awards” for outstanding youth leaders and youth organizations throughout the country, and even for organizations of young OFWs abroad.

Number two, the National Youth Commission will redirect its programs and activities towards the desired policies of President Duterte, and not anymore focus mainly on LGBT matters just like in the previous years. We are the National Youth Commission, not an LGBT commission. We are here to serve the tens of millions of Filipino youth, not only a specific sector within that big youthful population. The LGBT community is already our friend, and has already established its mark in our society. Even one of our transgender member of Congress – Congressman Geraldine Romana – has been accepted in the Armed Forces of the Philippines, so that says something about our society – we are an open society to LGBT. They are our friends. So the National Youth Commission will now focus on its mandate to enable the tens of millions of Filipino youth to fulfill their roles for nation-building.

Number three: we will look up to our neighbors like Singapore, South Korea, China and Japan because they are training their youth to become nation-builders; to become patriotic citizens and enjoining them to become military reservists so that when typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis and national emergencies besiege their society, they immediately deploy their youthful citizens to rescue their elderly and their families. Majority of them are prepared for disasters, emergencies and they are all active against criminality and terrorism. So looking up to what our neighbors are doing, we fully support the desired policy of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte for the return of the mandatory ROTC for college students, mandatory CAT for high school students, and also to make scouting – boy scouts and girl scouts mandatory for elementary student. With this desired policy of President Duterte to return these reformed mandatory ROTC and military reservist training for the Filipino youth, we will be able to spread and inculcate nationalism faster and prepare an entire youthful generation of this country towards nation-building.

Last, another reformed youth program that the Duterte administration is returning this year is the Sangguniang Kabataan or SK. With this national youth activity, we will be having around 350,000 elected youth leaders spread throughout the 42,000 barangays of the country. With the reformed SK: number one, SK candidates must not be relatives of incumbent elected national, regional, provincial, city, municipal and barangay officials; number two, SK officials must undergo the required SK mandatory training – if they will not undergo the training, they cannot assume the position.

So I am in front of you today, because the National Youth Commission is reminding the Filipino youth to go out and participate in the Sangguniang Kabataan elections in your community. The

filing of your SK Certificate of Candidacies is until April 20 only. Meaning, you have until tomorrow – Friday – only, to file your candidacy. We have 1 SK-Chairman position and 7 SK Kagawad positions for you in your barangay. Go out now. Go to your local Comelec office and file your candidacy.

President Duterte is doing his reforms, securing and uplifting our country for our youthful generation, for us to have a better and stronger country. In his anti-drug campaign, anti-crime campaign and anti-terrorism campaign, he is always saying: “I am doing this for the youth of the land.” So we call on the Filipino youth now, our President needs our help. Become the youth leaders of your communities. File your SK COCs now.

As of the moment, we only have 79,000 filed COCs and the positions available are around 350,000. So we really need—with the help of media, we really need to inform the Filipino youth to go out and file your—to participate and file your COCs now.

As OIC-Chairman of the National Youth Commission, I humbly call on the Filipino youth who support our government and who support our President to file your Certificate of Candidacies; become the elected leaders of your community. Show to our countrymen and to our President’s critics that you proudly support our government and our President; that you are not trolls – but genuine, young, patriotic Filipinos who are supportive of our government and of our government troops.

Go now and file, as young patriotic custodians of your communities and as incoming advocates to eradicate drugs, criminality, corruption and terrorism in your barangay. Let the 350,000 incoming SK youth leaders in our country be the direct partners of President Rodrigo Duterte in changing your barangay, in securing your community and in uplifting our entire Philippine republic.

Let me leave you with the quote from our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal 127 years ago: “Where are the youth? Who will consecrate their golden hours? Their illusions and their enthusiasm for the betterment of our motherland, we await you oh youth. We await you.” And until today and until tomorrow, the last day of filing, we will await for you. Come, for we await you. Thank you very much.

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: Hi, good morning sir. Sir may pinapatanong lang po iyong taga-Daily Manila Shimbun. Paano raw po iyong maliliit na barangay na halos magkakamag-anak iyong mga tao; eh papaano iyong SK candidates kung kamag-anak ng incumbent barangay officials?

OIC-CHAIR CARDEMA: Ah hindi po talaga puwede. Kahit—siguro naman sa barangay nila, baka lampas 200 man lang sila. Mayroon man lang hindi kamag-anak doon. It is required by the law – by the SK reformed act – that hindi puwede iyong kamag-anak. We are trying to do the anti-political dynasty system here in the Philippines, and mahirap simulan sa taas. We’re starting it with the younger generation right now. So pasado ‘to, batas ‘to – bawal ang kamag-anak ng kahit sinong elected politician na tumakbo sa SK.

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: Okay, sir. Thank you. Sir, tanong ko po – sa akin naman kasi sa iba iyon eh. Ano po iyong role ng National Youth Commission sa drug war po ng administrasyon considering na ilan sa mga nasawi sa drug war ay mga menor de edad? Ano po iyong paninindigan ng NYC doon?

OIC CHAIR CARDEMA: Ang paninindigan po ng NYC diyan, ma'am, is the youth must participate talaga in eradicating drugs. Kumbaga, in other countries like Singapore, South Korea active ang kanilang kabataan in support of nation building projects, of government projects. So sana sa ating kabataan dito sa Pilipinas, alam natin—for example, sa barangay, kilala naman natin kung sino ang mga drug addicts diyan. So sa information drive ng gobyerno, sana tumutulong tayo ipahatid sa ating barangay, sa ating mga kapwa kabataan ang kasamaan ng droga.

So sana po, tulungan natin ang ating gobyerno, tulungan natin ang Pangulo, tulungan natin ang ating mga government enforcers dito sa kanilang anti-drug advocacy, anti-crime advocacy po. Kasi if we don't secure our barangay, mahihirapan pong i-secure iyong entire nation. The President needs the Filipino youth to lead your barangays, to lead their communities, para kapag nabago ninyo ang inyong barangay, ang inyong community, kaya nating baguhin lahat, ang ating bansa po.

AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHIL: Hi, sir. Sir, you mentioned earlier na 79,000 pa lang iyong nag-file and 300 key positions iyong kailangan. Why do you think lesser youth want to get involved in government? Jaded ba sila, you know, dahil corruption and everything that's going on?

OIC CHAIR CARDEMA: Actually, I think it's not because of corruption because the President is trying to curb corruption. Sa tingin ko po because ngayon lang uli talaga binalik ang SK. So matagal na panahon nawala sa utak ng kabataan iyang SK, biglang binalik ngayon. Ang kalimitan naman sa mga Pilipino, alam ninyo naman, minsan late talaga mag-file. And minsan, mayroon pang factor na sa barangay ninyo ay nagpapakiramdaman kayo kung sino ang magpa-file for SK Chairman, SK Kagawad kasi ayaw ninyong mag-away kayo. So, minsan up to the last day, nagpapakiramdaman!

Alam ninyo, iba kasi iyong barangay SK sa ibang—municipal or national elections. Kasi doon, hindi mo naman talaga nakikita iyong kalaban mo lagi. Pero in the barangay, in the SK, mga kapitbahay mo lang iyong kalaban mo kapag nag-file kayo eh, magkakakilala kayo. So minsan ayaw ninyong magkalaban kayo, you're waiting until the last day kung nag-file ba iyong isa para ikaw ay mag-file naman.

Pero sana mag-file na kayo. Kumbaga, it's part of a healthy democracy naman talaga to join the elections. And we need elected youth leaders na talaga right now so that mabago natin ang inyong mga barangay po.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Hi, sir. Sir, what did you mean exactly when you said that the National Youth Commission is not the LGBT commission? Is this a criticism of the previous administration of the NYC?

OIC CHAIR CARDEMA: No naman, ma'am. My boss, former boss, Aiza, because bago pa si Aiza, parang mayroon culture kasi sa National Youth Commission na mag-focus sa LBGT. Parang previous pa, bago si Aiza, time of Aquino administration, kahit GMA administration, parang nagpu-focus iyong policies on LGBT matters, LGBT resolutions sa NYC. Sa tingin ko po ngayon, wala naman talaga tayong major problem with the LGBT community. They are our friends.

Katulad nga ng sinabi ko, boss ko sa Kongreso, transgender. Dati kong boss, si Congresswoman Roman. She was accepted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines as a military officer. With that kind of open society, wala tayong masyadong problema po dito sa bansa natin.

So right now, hindi naman natin tinatabi ang LGBT community. Pero the NYC, the National Youth Commission, the highest policy-making body for youth affairs in the country, must focus on all youth activities, youth programs because the tens of millions of Filipinos are not—hindi naman lahat ay LGBT. So we need to help them. Many of them need inspiration, need leadership. And under President Duterte, talagang maayos iyong leadership ni President Duterte. In the youth sector, we also need to lead the youth towards nation building.

Ang bini-view po natin parang Singapore, South Korea very nationalistic iyong mga kabataan nila, disciplined, prepared for disasters. Sana ganoon tayo! Singapore has eight million population; South Korea, 50 million; tayo 100 million population. So we have a big human resource, and we just need to lead them, lead the youth towards nation building po.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

OIC CHAIR CARDEMA: Thank you, ma'am.

MODERATOR: Thank you, NYC OIC Chair Ronald Cardema.

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, so let's proceed with the regular press briefing. Let me begin with good news. The International Monetary Fund, in its most recent World Economic Output reported that the Philippines, with the 2018 gross domestic product of 6.7%, is the fastest growing economy among the Association of Southeast Asian Nations; and the second fastest in the world after India.

The IMF projects the country's GDP growth to reach 6.8% in 2019. This is a testament to our country's strong macro-economic fundamentals. And that the passage of critical socio-economic and governance reforms would further strengthen our fiscal position and boost both public and private investment.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported that for February 2018, personal remittances from Overseas Filipinos reached US \$2.5 billion, 5.4% higher compared to the same month last year. This brings personal remittances in January, February 2018 to \$5.2 billion posting accumulative year on year growth of 8.1%

Similarly, cash remittances from OFWs coursed through banks also rose to \$2.3 billion on a year to year increase of 4.5%. From January to February 2018, cash remittances totaled 4.6 billion. 7. ½% higher than 4.3 billion level posted in the same period last year.

And, magandang balita po para sa mga magsasaka sa Negros Oriental. Pagkalipas nang mahigit na dalawang dekada, sila po ngayon ay ganap ng magmamay-ari ng lupang kanilang sinasaka. Certificates of land ownerships award were granted to 262 farmer beneficiaries in 15 barangays in the town of Mabinay, Negros Oriental.

According to the Department of Agrarian Reform, the CLOA has covered 35 private agricultural lands with the total area of 388.78 hectares.

Questions, please?

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: Hi, sir. Good morning. Sir, parang magkaiba po iyong sinabi ninyo kahapon ni President Duterte tungkol po doon sa isyu kay Sr. Patricia Fox – Ang sabi ninyo po ay parang nagkamali iyong Bureau of Immigration sa pag-aresto sa kaniya, habang si Presidente po ay inamin niya na siya po iyong nagpaimbita kay Sr. Fox – Ano po iyong paliwanag natin dito?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pong pagkakaiba. Sinabi ko po ang aking statement early in the morning on the basis of the cardinal statement na kaya pinalaya po si Sister, kasi hindi siya subject to summary deportation dahil hindi siya nahuli na in flagrante delicto.

Now, kaya iyon iyong konteksto na pinalaya siya. So in my mind, since ang proseso ngayon ay preliminary investigation to determine if she should be subjected to deportation proceedings, parang in my mind, talagang nagkamali! Kaya nga sabi ko, apologies may be in order. Pero kung sino ang magbibigay ng apology, hindi ko sinabi dahil hindi naman pupuwede ang Palasyo. Wala namang ginawa ang Palasyo, so I left it at that!

But the President was clear yesterday. Hindi naman niya in-order ang summary deportation, hindi niya in-order ang pag-aresto – I hope you heard that – he ordered the investigation. And of course, the President and I remain united in our common stand that foreigner should not be engaged in any political activity.

Now, ang maganda doon sa ginawa ni Presidente, sabihin na nating may nagkamali, eh ano, ‘I take the blame for everything.’ The buck stops with me. Ganiyan naman po ang ating Presidente, wala iyang turo-turo, hindi! I assume full responsibility kung mayroong mali, kung mayroong mga legal ramification, the buck stops with me. That’s why I like my boss.

Now, I also found out that Sr. Fox pala has previously been detained already by the Immigration authorities in 2013. Apparently, she joined a farmers’ protest in Hacienda Luisita. And she was also detained by CID and released later on without charges. So malinaw po ang ating batas: Those in the Philippines are here because of our consent for them to be here, but they are not allowed to engage in any political activity.

ROSE NOVENARIO/HATAW: So mag-e-expect tayo na magkakaroon ng crackdown, sir, sa mga sympathizers po ng mga left-leaning organizations na foreigners?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po iyan crackdown, talaga pong iyan ang batas. Sabi ko nga po, dura lex sed lex – the law may be harsh, but such is the law. At alam ninyo, napakadami naman pong mga dayuhan na na-deport na because of partisan activities. Noong panahon po ni Presidente Aquino, itong Dutch na aktibista – si Thomas Van Beersum in August of 2013 was caught in photos taunting a crying policeman during a protest against Benigno Aquino III’s State of the National Address last July 22, was arrested on August 6, 2013. Okay. Immigration agents in fact arrested Thomas Van Beersum, 30, just as he was about to take a flight to China.

Also during the time of President Aquino, 24-year old Canadian student was lining up on the Immigration area for a Cebu Pacific flight bound for Hong Kong when she was intercepted by BI officers. And again, she was apparently held because she participated in a political activity in violation of the condition for stay. Wala pong crackdown, iyan lang po talaga ang batas, and even Sister Fox

Now also... incidentally bukod po doon sa batas na Commonwealth Act pa, ay mayroon pang Operations Order No. SBM 2015-025, Prohibition on Foreign Tourist in Engaging in Political Activities in the Philippines, this was signed by Siegfred Mison and approved by then Secretary Leila M. De Lima. Malinaw po iyan, wala pong crackdown iyan, iyan lang po talaga ang batas.

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: Good morning, Secretary. Relatedly, the President said yesterday that he is the only one who decides on who gets in the country. How will he carry this out, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Well alam ninyo naman, talaga namang ang CID is under the Executive. Effectively, the CID operates under authority of the President.

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: Also Secretary, when you said that foreigners are not allowed to participate in political activities in the Philippines, are we not being selective, because last February, members of the Communist Party of China had a political engagement with PDP-Laban here in Manila?

SEC. ROQUE: They did not—that was not a political activity. It was a formal party-to-party contact. It was not a political protest.

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: Not necessarily political protest, but it was a political activity.

SEC. ROQUE: No, that’s not a political activity – that was a formal meeting. It was not a political activity. Ang ayaw natin iyong naghihimasok, pero iyong pumapasok sa kasunduan ang dalawang partido. Hindi po political activity iyon, I’m sorry.

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: But the event of PDP-Laban was I guess a party... congress or something to that effect. And similarly—

SEC. ROQUE: Kasunduan po na nilagdaan iyon. Ang mga sinasalihan po nito, mga protesta! So malinaw naman po ang distinction!

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: But nonetheless, a political activity.

SEC. ROQUE: Oo, malinaw naman po ang distinction diyan. I'm sorry, if you think there is no distinction, hindi po tayo talaga magkakasundo [laughs]. Thank you.

CEDRIC CASTILLO/GMA7: Sir, good morning sir. Sir, do you know of any particular incident or event that the President was describing yesterday with respect to Sister Patricia Fox, because he seems to know something, perhaps from the intelligence community or intelligence resources niya, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Apparently talagang gawain naman ni Sister na makisama sa mga protesta ng mga magsasaka, mga katutubo. So mukhang public knowledge naman po, at saka napakatagal na palang madre iyan dito, talagang activities na niya talaga iyon, na sumali sa mga protesta ng mga magsasaka at mga Lumads.

CEDRIC CASTILLO/GMA7: Kasi may sinabi si Pangulo na—his own words, ‘walanghiya’ iyong bibig noong madre na iyan. Baka mayroon siyang dini-describe na particular events sir na [overlapping voices] alam—monitor ni Pangulo?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po alam iyan. I have no knowledge on that.

AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHILS.: Sir, just a follow up. I just would like to clarify kung ano iyong specific position ng Palace sir when it comes to, iyong foreigners here nga.

SEC. ROQUE: It's not a position of the Palace. It's the law.

AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHILS.: I mean, yeah. But for example if mayroong foreigner na nag-join ng rallies na supportive of the government. Will it still be applied to that?

SEC. ROQUE: That will still be applied, because it does not distinguish. When the law does not distinguish, enforcement agents should not—and I said, it might seem harsh but such is the law, dura lex sed lex!

AC NICHOLLS/CNN PHILS.: So it's not just for foreigners who are critical of the government?

SEC. ROQUE: No. You know Sister Fox is an instance where there appears to be by-partisan supporter [laughs] in the sense that she was also apprehended in the past administration. So we cross party lines on the issue of foreigners taking part in political activities.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Hi sir, good morning. Sir just for the record, when the President said in his speech the other day, that he fired government official last week. Who was he referring to?

SEC. ROQUE: I'm not sure if—because he did not fire. There was a resignation. And you know to be candid, if Usec. Say did not resign, he would have been fired.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Why is that, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Corruption that the President knows about. Corruption relating to activities of labor recruiters, apparently, and the Department of Labor and Employment! But I'm not sure if that was what he was referring to; I just have personal knowledge that if the resignation was not submitted, he would have been fired.

I was told already that he's the next on the chopping block. But I was awaiting orders on when to announce it. I did not have to announce it, because he resigned. But it was important still to say it, because in his resignation letter he said it was a matter of difference over 'endo'. Well, I was just awaiting instruction to make that announcement on Usec. Say.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Sir aside from Usec. Say, mayroon pa po bang nakalinya?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pa namang nababanggit sa akin ang Presidente. Iyon lang po ang binanggit sa akin.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER: Sir you said Usec. Say would have been fired for corruption, so is the government going to pursue cases against him?

SEC. ROQUE: It's the job of the Ombudsman now. I'm sure the matter will be relayed also to the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission, but in the scheme of things, the Ombudsman must act on it.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER: Sir, could you detail to us what this alleged corruption involved?

SEC. ROQUE: Unfortunately, I don't know myself. I was just told that the next one would be Usec. Say – by the President himself.

JOPEL PELENIO/DWIZ: Sir, one question lang po. May nabanggit po kayo yata kahapon, na may sinibak na sa puwesto and posible itong ma-reappoint. May mare-reappoint daw na sinibak sa puwesto?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala po. Ang sabi ko lang is: may narinig ako na baka may isang na-reappoint. Hindi naman nare-reappoint pa hanggang ngayon, so wala!

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL. STAR: Sir any statement on the claim of the singer – Freddie Aguilar –that he will join you in the administration senatorial lineup for 2019?

SEC. ROQUE: Well I don't know if I'm running, but I wish him well because he has publicly said his intention to run for public office.

TINA MENDEZ/PHIL. STAR: Did the President really give him blessings to run?

SEC. ROQUE: I have no information on that. But, I wish him well.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER: Sir, good morning. Sir what is the government going to do about reports that China has landed a military transport plane on Panganiban Reef?

SEC. ROQUE: Well SFA, Secretary of Foreign Affairs has said that we are preparing and exploring the possibility of a diplomatic protest. We'll leave it at that.

LEILA SALAVERRIA/INQUIRER: Sir, I think Special Security Adviser Esperon also described this as a concern. Kasi sir, you said earlier that we're holding on to China's promise not to reclaim any more areas. But what's our position on islands that they already occupied? Do we not consider it bad faith if they are—ramp up activities in these areas?

SEC. ROQUE: I think I've answered you by mirroring what the Secretary of Foreign Affairs has said: They're exploring the idea—possibility of a diplomatic protest. Obviously if we consider a diplomatic protest, then you consider the other state to be in breach of an international obligation... somehow.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Hi, sir. Sir any update on the EO on contractualization?

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. Since my last statement on this, I've had the occasion to find out, number one, that the position of Secretary Bello now is it is better to leave the matter of endo to Congress. And I've also been informed by the Department of Trade and Industry that actually the President has already complied with his election promise – to do away with 5-5-5 endo.

Ano ba kasing ibig sabihin noong 555 endo? Iyon iyong you work for five months sisante kana para hindi ka umabot ng six months, para hindi ka ma-regular. Now, the DOLE has beefed up the number of its labor inspectors from 200 to 500 and that's why they have effectively cracked down on those resorting to prohibited endo.

There is a distinction however between service contractors who recognize their employees as regular employees albeit they perform work for another company. And that is the position of the DTI 'no.

Now as far as DTI is concerned, this is not endo. It is contractual work given to a service company but the employees of the service company are regular employees of the service company. So as far as the employees and the service company are concerned, they are regular employees and therefore they do not form or they do not fall under 555 endo.

But as a former member of Congress I was one of the primary authors of the bill redefining endo and providing in fact criminal penalties for endo. We've passed that legislation in the House. The position of Secretary Bello now, which I think is the position of Malacañang as well—which is the position of Malacañang is let's see what kind of legislation Congress will finally be approve

noting that the matter is now pending in the Senate alone, because the House already passed its version.

ARJAY/BUSINESS WORLD: Sir, will the President certify as urgent the pending bill at the Senate which is the end of endo bill?

SEC. ROQUE: I will find out, because that seems to be the solution to it all ‘no.

ARJAY/BUSINESS WORLD: That was mentioned by Secretary Bello yesterday.

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, yes, yes. That would be the solution by which so that the Senate can fast track the passage of the endo bill.

ARJAY/BUSINESS WORLD: Okay sir. Thank you. Ah sir, wait—

SEC. ROQUE: You know kasi, although we are looking forward to the EO, an EO can only do so much. As you know in our system of government, the executive through an executive order can only implement the law. So if there has to be revision in the law, especially on the definition of what endo is, it has to be Congress.

ARJAY/BUSINESS WORLD: Sir, whose version of the EO did the President receive the other day?

SEC. ROQUE: I believe he received both already. He received both versions ‘no. And I believe that the contentious provision was Section 2 which in one version says that they must be recognized as regular employees of the hiring company; and the other one says they should be recognized as regular employees of the service contractor. In any cases what’s important is, this is not the endo—well, this is not the endo that the President promised to end, because iyong 555 is not provided in the EO. 555 is not legitimized by the EO. It remains prohibited by law. Okay?

TED TUVERA/DAILY TRIBUNE: Secretary, when you said that we are leaving it—that you are leaving it up to Congress. We do not expect an Executive Order on this anymore?

SEC. ROQUE: Well as I said ‘no, since our last—my last statement in this press briefing, Secretary Bello has since spoken up. And I—yes, it’s now left to Congress although let’s see if the certification as urgent will come out ‘no very soon.

TED/DAILY TRIBUNE: No EO anymore?

SEC. ROQUE: I believe so, that is the position of Secretary Bello now.

TED/DAILY TRIBUNE: But what about the Palace? The President?

SEC. ROQUE: We go by the—alam mo naman ang position ni President ‘no. He leaves the management of the line departments to the Secretaries.

TED/DAILY TRIBUNE: Thank you.

ANNE CLAIRE NICHOLLS/CNN PHILS.: So just to be clear lang sir. As far as the President is concerned, iyong campaign promise niya na-comply na?

SEC. ROQUE: Complied naman po iyon, dahil talagang ipinagbabawal ang 555 endo. Ang pinag-aawayan na lang ngayon is iyong contractual ba iyong mga empleyado na regular employees ng service providers, so iyon ang debate. Pero malinaw naman iyan regular employee sila. So hindi sila contractual employees.

ANNE CLAIRE/CNN PHILS.: Kasi noong Monday—earlier this week lang sir you were saying nga na he’s restive on the EO and he is looking forward to delivering the promise—

SEC. ROQUE: Well as you know it was scheduled for signing and it did not push through ‘no. Pero I think it was also explained to me kung ano iyong situation. So I myself realized, oo nga naman ‘no, what was really promised was an end to 555 endo, iyong mga cabo. Kasi iyong mga cabo iyan iyong walang kapital haosiao para lang huwag magkaroon ng employer- employee relationship. Pero basta mayroong employer-employee relationship iyong manggagawa sa isang service contractor na may sapat na kapital, protektado siya kasi iyong minimum conditions of employment provided by law must be complied with by the service provider.

ANNE CLAIRE/CNN PHILS.: So he will not be meeting with the labor leaders anytime soon? Wala na pong—

SEC. ROQUE: I do not know if he will not. I do not know because it’s early on. It’s still—you know, life in the Palace is on daily basis, [laughs] ...as you know being in the Malacañang Press Corps. But I do not know but that seems to be the correct picture now after our last conversation on this matter.

CHONA YU/RADIO INQUIRER: Sir, any update doon sa deployment ban ng Kuwait and also the President has directed kasi before the Department of Foreign Affairs and ano iyon... DOLE to check doon sa kaso ni Joana Demafelis. Any update on that?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pa po akong update na nakukuha other than... Iyon nga po the President has signified na pupunta siya roon para sabihin, ‘kailangan talaga pumayag kayo sa kasunduan na kinikilala iyong mga karapatan ng aking mga kababayan.’ Otherwise hindi talaga siya papayag na mag-deploy muli ng mga workers.

CHONA/RADIO INQUIRER: So when is the President—

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pa pong petsa.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: So sir at this point, ano pa po ang i-e-expect ng mga labor leaders from the President, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Well I'll have to ask 'no. Kasi I don't know what package the Department Labor is preparing for them. But it's not our last press briefing before May 1. So I will inquire from them.

PIA/ABS-CBN: Pero as far as the President po mayroon po bang aksiyon na i-e-expect ang mga labor leader sir?

SEC. ROQUE: He goes by the decision of his Cabinet members, you know that 'no. That was very clear on the Boracay issue. He promised he will implement the recommendation of his Cabinet members and he did so.

PIA/ABS-CBN: What about, sir, an assistance man lang or to help them with the passage of an anti-labor contractualization bill in Congress?

SEC. ROQUE: Ma'am as I said, hindi ko po alam. I'm not saying wala, I'm not saying mayroon pero let me consult with the DOLE officials.

PIA/ABS-CBN: Thank you sir.

Q: Sir, update lang po doon sa protest natin sa fact checkers sa FB?

SEC. ROQUE: I do not know if I'm at liberty but there are meetings arranged. And I'm schedule to attend two of such meetings 'no. It is unacceptable that the fact checkers contracted by Facebook are so anti-administration. That would mean anything pro-administration would suspect as fake news. Hindi naman tama iyon. Although I reiterate mas mabuti itong ganitong proseso kaysa legislation.

Q: So kailan iyong meeting?

SEC. ROQUE: I have a meeting... It's not just me. It's a number of us meeting with them. I know after the meeting I'm going to Balayan so I think that is... I think that is... I think that is... I think it within next week. I think it will be next week.

Q: And with whom sir?

SEC. ROQUE: With Facebook.

Q: Thank you sir.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. So now, may I introduce to you our guest from, as I said, the National Historical Commission, we are celebrating National Heritage Month. And I am calling again Father Harold Rentoria, who is the Commissioner for Cultural Heritage.

FR. RENTORIA: Thank you too, our Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque. Joining me also is the Chairman of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, Dr. Rene Escalante,

and the Director of the National Museum of the Philippines, Dr. Jeremy Barns. So to the Malacañang Press Corps, good noon!

So the National Heritage Month celebration, it has a presidential proclamation 2013, signed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, Proclamation No. 439, declaring the month of May every year as National Heritage Month. So the purpose of this is for us to celebrate and preserve our heritage, our Filipino heritage.

The objectives of the National Heritage Month celebration is to create in the people: a consciousness, respect and love for legacies of Filipino history; to raise material support for the protection of tangible and intangible heritage; to strengthen the people's awareness of cultural heritage sites, structures and landscapes; and encourage their participation in the preservation of their cultural legacies through various activities such as performing arts at these sites and/or visual art and fashion exhibits, thematic culinary events, as well as popular food fairs, designed retrospectives and competitions, media and literary events, and homage to living traditions and intangible heritage; and to protect and promote and celebrate the people's multi-cultural traditions and our indigenous peoples' culture.

The theme for 2016 was about the role of the Filipino family as the basic unit of the society in the protection, transmission and preservation of our heritage.

Last year, 2017, we heeded the President's call for 'Malasakit in Society' as a prerequisite for building a high trust society.

This year, we enjoin the public to unite for heritage. Our heritage binds us together as a nation, and the same kind of unities asked from us to help preserve this heritage for the enjoyment of future generation.

What are the activities for the month of May for 2018? First, the opening ceremony will be held in Davao City that will be on May 2, 2018 at 5:30 P.M. And we invited Mayor Sara Duterte as one of the guests of honor and of course, our NCCA Chairman and National Artist for Literature, Virgilio Almario. Joining us also in the opening of the National Heritage Month will be members of the Board of Commissioners of the NCCA.

On that same day, we are going to have the stamp launch to be done by PhilPostal Corporation. This is about the Philippine colonial churches declared as national cultural treasure. And it will be presented by PhilPost Master General Joel Otarra.

Other activities, the NPDC (National Parks Development Authority), they organized an open air concert in Rizal Park and Paco Park. Then also, our private partner, the Filipino Heritage Festival, Inc., they organized a theatrical production entitled, "Journeys on a Galleon" by acclaimed playwright and theater director Floy Quintos that will be held at the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

Of course, we prepared also lectures and workshops on the different parts of the country, organized by the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, the National Archives of the Philippines.

NCCA also organized a youth peace camp that will be held in Cebu. This will be participated by Catholics, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists. So the purpose/objectives of the youth camp is to elevate the understanding of the youth in the community surrounding them, to appreciate the diversity of cultures and religions in their community, and to teach them to respect other cultures and religions as a way of preventing conflicts.

Then, we also organized heritage tours. The National Historical Commission of the Philippines organized a heritage tour in Loay in Bohol that will be on May 13.

Then also, the National Museum of the Philippines is set to inaugurate the National Museum of Natural History on May 18, showcasing the country's rich biodiversity. So admission to the said museum, the National Museum's branch in the region will be free.

Then also, the National Library of the Philippines will open an exhibit of books and photos on Filipino culture and history entitled, "A Book to Remember," on May 2 which will run until May 31.

And other government agencies, like the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office, they also organized activities in celebration of the National Heritage Month.

The Commission on Higher Education is joining us in the celebration of the National Heritage Month.

And NCCA, in particular, will be opening an exhibit to the public entitled, "If Trees Could Talk." This will be in Intramuros.

Then on April 23, we're going to have a press briefing in Davao City also because that's the venue for the opening of the National Heritage Month.

Other promotional activities: the National Telecommunication Commission has issued a memo requesting the CMTS operators to undertake a nationwide text blast, informing the public of the celebration of the National Heritage Month;

And of course, all government agencies and LGUs are encourage to include National Heritage Month 2018 announcement in their respective flag raising ceremonies on April 30, 2018 which is the Monday before the start of the National Heritage Month.

The objective of these activities: To enjoin agencies, LGU officials and employees to join the national celebration. Government agencies were also requested to install streamers in their offices for the whole month of May.

To ensure the compliance of the government agencies, the Civil Service Commission, Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Department of Foreign Affairs, and the National Library of the Philippines were requested to issue circulars.

So thank you. And I hope you are going to help us disseminate the information so that Filipinos, all of us, will celebrate our pamana, and we will be united in preserving and protecting the Filipino heritage. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Okay, thank you, Fr. Rentoria. MPC, do you have any question for Father? Okay, thank you, Father. Presidential Spokesperson Harry Roque?

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. Thank you. That concludes our regular press briefing. See you again next Monday. Thank you very much. Good day.

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