

Presidential Communications Operations Office

Presidential News Desk

**MEDIA INTERVIEW OF
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
FOLLOWING THE BRIEFING ON THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS -
ACUTE RESPIRATORY DISEASE**

[Malacañan Palace | 03 February 2020]

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Yes. If there is anything that you'd want to know, we also want to know from you. You are sure to be good at gathering developments of this fear now of the corona novel. I really don't know why it's called "novel" coronavirus. So let's start.

Henry Uri (DZRH): Magandang gabi po, Mr. President. Kamusta po ang kalagayan ng buong bansa dito po sa pinag-uusapan nating novel coronavirus at ano po ang mga hakbang, direktiba at kautusan ninyo sa inyong mga Cabinet secretaries tungkol dito?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Okay. Let's start with the narratives by saying that everything is well in the country. There is nothing really to be extra scared of that coronavirus thing although it has affected a lot of countries but in... You know one or two in any country is not really that fearsome.

And in the Philippines, we only have two cases --- two reported deaths and... But they were Chinese, it's imported. Hindi galing dito. It was not a native of the Philippines but rather it was an imported one and the person involved was a Chinese. Ano 'yung isa?

DOH SECRETARY FRANCISCO DUQUE III: Iyong parehong Chinese. Iyong isa HIV-AIDS, 'yung isa novel corona.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Ah okay.

SEC. DUQUE: Isa lang ho 'yung namatay sa novel corona virus.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Isa lang ang namatay sa corona virus. Iyong isa Chinese din HIV ang ikinamatay. So let us be clear on this. Dalawang patay but two different causes of death. One --- and imported naman hindi naman galing dito so he had it in himself when he came in. Iyong isa, namatay sa HIV.

So ito mag-umpisa tayo. The many things that you'd want to know. Apparently there is a lot of talks from the media and from the itong Facebook and even one saying that paalisin, pauwiin ang mga Chinese.

You know it is not only a case of bad taste but it is not good for us Filipinos to be saying that. Remember that there are now so many thousands of Filipinos in China. And they cannot go out because coming in or going out of China is prohibited. And that is precisely to contain the propagation of the virus. So walang nakalabas.

Now okay, dito ha. Dito... Let's talk of China and Filipino. Dito sa atin walang pupunta ng China and dito naman sa China, in and out, wala hindi sila pwede sa Pilipinas. Ngayon, if that is clear to you or if not then ask the question now because I have another topic for that. Meron kayong question?

Basta China, in and out, wala tayo diyan. And dito, we are not allowing them to go there, our countrymen, and no Chinese 'yung galing China pumapasok dito. We are not allowing entry. Okay?

But Chinese who are in foreign lands, onboard foreign airliners and they have the valid visa, they can come except I said 'yung eroplano ng ano.

Let's say Chinese who have been there or in any other place Canada --- most of the Chinese in North America are in Canada and in the United States. Ngayon, pagka umuwi sila tapos foreign airlines hindi naman galing China 'yung eroplano, they can come in. If the port of destination or the place where they want to go is Philippines. Nakuha ninyo 'yon?

Mr. Uri: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Okay. What's the next question?

Ina Andolong (CNN Philippines): Good evening, Mr. President. Sir, have you finalized or identified any quarantine facilities in the meeting earlier?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Hindi, hindi pa ngayon. Eh dalawa lang ang namatay eh. But if it comes to the fore requiring the quarantine of persons, either local or foreigners, I have directed Secretary Duque here to prepare a space, a ward in our hospitals or a separate room --- building, room --- where we can house them.

Wala pa namang --- hindi pa kailangan 'yan pero I said we will prepare. Now there is a certain area which was donated by a Chinese philanthropist hindi nagamit. I don't know why because that was really intended for the rehabilitation of addicts, 'yung addicted to shabu.

Ang problema kasi nito --- well tapos na eh, it's too late to be... Alam mo sabi nila malayo. So they opted to have this community-based rehabilitation. You know any expert about rehabilitation of addiction to anything, drugs, alcohol, you are removed away from your place of residence. Kaya nga that is to --- that is a part of the regimen so that --- to train you really and to make you --- you know feel the loss of family, friends, house, community if you are not sincere in being rehabilitated.

You have to work out these sentiments by yourself na gusto mong umuwi sa anak mo. Eh kung itong ano dito sa malayo --- ah dito sa malapit, eh kung community based tapos sa gabi wala rin mag-guwardiya, nothing doing.

That was my misgivings actually when that was started. Pero because of the hysteria ang nabasa ko noon... Well, I said I was a prosecutor. I was a trial prosecutor and early on, I was already reading materials about rehab and addiction. How it affects your physical being. Iyon ang nangyari.

But that building I think the first building is vacant, not used. Problem is I think si governor ayaw niya. Nandiyan sa Fort Magsaysay. That building is inside a national government reservation. Maluwang 'yan.

So marami akong ilagay diyan kung ang contagion actually... It's epidemic if it is just regional or local or national. It is pandemic if it is worldwide. So iyon ang ano ko...

Or I can... Well, I will expropriate. Kunin ko 'yung building mo whether you like it or not. In times of emergency, I can... I can always... It is confiscatory in nature. You can --- you confiscate. Then you make it a hospital. Bring in the equipment and you stay there inside the building where the egress and ingress is controlled.

And lahat `yung --- remember may SARS. Every regional office in the country was ordered to provide a space and there was a vehicle provided by the government which was --- well, washed over with disinfectant para to minimize contamination.

Now here is a problem. Sabi ng mga experts it could be transmitted from person to person, person to animal, animal to animal. So but --- says Tugade, Secretary Tugade of the --- sa Transportation asked if it can be also contaminated in inanimate things.

Ang sabi nila `yung door knob merong traces sila nakita. That's according to the WHO. It is not confirmed as really a valid reason to avoid it but there are indications that it can be transmitted also by inanimate things.

Meaning to say `yung hinawakan niya, hawakan mo rin. `Yon. Iyon na ang problema. So `yung incoming, ang tao lang binabantayan mo. Hindi mo binabantayan `yung cargo. But if the cargo itself can pass it on to human beings or to animals, that is really a problem.

It is not confirmed as valid but indications earlier, studies show that it can be possibly... This --- a very... Is it possible? The question would really be like this: Would it be possible that these things can be passed on from one person to another by touching inanimate things? `Yung walang buhay. Iyon. So `yun ang isa.

Ngayon kung anong klaseng airline may mga --- may mga Chinese and sabihin... Kung magtanong kayo kung I will bar the Chinese from entering, the answer of course is no. That is an utter disrespect to a human being.

At kung meron man, if there are Chinese found positive and we do not want them to travel to further aggravate the situation, we can assure the Chinese government that we too will help.

And this kind of mentioning the Chinese and blaming them, it's like a Sinophobia. You hate anything that is Chinese. It is not good because we have, I said, so many...

And not only that. One is that we have many Filipinos in China. Second is even if there are none, you know, we are a community of nations. We cooperate. China has been kind to us. We can only also show the same favor to them.

Stop this Sinophobia thing about... Kasi ang gusto kong masabi nila na 'yung la --- ito ngayon they are blaming the Chinese na galing sa China. It can always... How would you call this? Incubate in some other places.

It happened in China on --- at least the first, 'yun lang. But that is not the fault of anybody. Not of the Chinese, not of the Filipinos, not of anyone.

It is really the world has passed on many kind of problem to the generations earlier. The --- we had the flu that killed so many millions in Europe and some other contagion of a lesser scale.

But it would... Kagaya ng SARS, I assure you even without the vaccines it will just die a natural death. Apparently, itong mga ganito, mga virus, ano 'to HIV, wala --- nawala na. Meron, kokonti na lang.

Ang HIV five or 10 years ago was a dreaded disease and everybody was afraid of it to the extent that it cut the pleasures of the world. Takot lahat ma-HIV kasi baka... So ayaw na lang. So almost everybody became a celibate overnight.

May mga ganun but it will die a natural death. Ito matatapos rin ito. But would it worsen in the meantime? Maybe. But you know the progress of medical science now is far too different from --- of the yesteryears.

Noon hindi pa masyado. But we have powerful medicines now that --- even cancer is treatable now. You cannot die of...

Karamihan naman hindi ka naman talaga mamatay. HIV, you don't die of HIV. You die because your body is weakened by the virus and then the bacteria will take over and that is pneumonia.

Ganito rin 'yan. By itself --- hindi 'yan. Hindi nga natin alam 'yung --- ano 'yang vir --- coronavirus na 'yan. But lahat namatay is pneumonia.

So it would just indicate that there is a virus that weakens your body and would really destroy your white corpuscles, your antibodies. And when those are depleted, bacteria enters the picture and usually you die of pneumonia.

Bella Cariaso (Bandera): Good evening, Mr. President. Sir, meron lang allegation na sa China, kinonceal (conceal) 'yung totoong number of affected Chinese ng nCoV. And dito sa atin, meron ba tayong assurance na meron tayong transparency at hindi sina-sanitize 'yung mga data? Kasi nagulat 'yung marami nung nag-announce kayo bigla na may namatay na Chinese since ang sinasabi niyo ay under observation pa lang 'yung Chinese na 'yon before and hindi naman siya 'yung talagang main carrier nung ano --- nung virus.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: No, he was already --- 'yung earlier surveillance and his history. But wala namang ano na sinabi na... 'Yung kagaya niyang homegrown coronavirus, nalaman lang nila lang 'yan kung namatay na 'yon.

Wala naman --- wala namang itinago doon. We will not... This I can assure you, this government will never hide anything. If it says that you are going to die tomorrow because of this --- it's a contagion all over, we will tell you that.

If it would cost your life, lives, we will not hide that. Why should we? It's a reality. Whether you admit it or not, you have to bury the dead. So what is there to hide? It's not a treasure. It is not something of value to us. It does not contribute to the national wealth. Why should we hide?

Why should we hide it from the press? When we are supposed to tell the press, you --- that go to the world and announce that there is this thing that's happening and this is what we should be doing.

Ms. Cariaso: And then sir follow up. Sir, 'yung --- 'yung DOH nag-a-advise sa public na magsuot ng face mask pero ang reality wala talagang mabili sa market. So meron ba kayong plan to at least mag-emergency procurement para magkaroon ng supply?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Yes. We are procuring and we have supplies coming in. The supply is depleted because there is an emergency and there's a need for it. So everybody is buying.

That's the reason why there is a scarce supply in the market. Without the virus, the --- the masks are not being sold by the thousands. Eh may virus eh kaya 'yung virus ang nagpamahal niyan.

But if you are asking is government doing something to buy more to protect more? Yes, we are doing it. We are not just sitting down here. That's why we called for this conference and we have resources coming in.

We do not want to give you the expectations because that's something which cannot be delivered almost all on time. And you know, sometimes when we announce it, it is taken differently in a different light.

Ms. Cariaso: Sir, last na lang po. Sir, napag-usapan niyo po ba 'yung worst-case scenario ng nCoV dito sa ating bansa and meron na po bang preparations about this?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Again, ma'am?

Ms. Cariaso: 'Yung worst ca --- worst-case scenario, sir, kung sakaling magkaroon ng local transmission dito sa ating bansa. Napag-usapan ba during the emergency meeting?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Yes. This one? Yes. We have a very hardworking Secretary of Health. And he's very sincere in his job. This is not the second time that he has entered government.

In another president, he also was a Secretary of Health. I got him because he is just really good. That is why.

Ms. Cariaso: Thank you, sir.

PCOO SECRETARY MARTIN ANDANAR: Thank you, Mr. President, unless you still want to take questions...

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Yes, it's nine... 9:35. Is your time correct?

SEC. ANDANAR: Yes, Mr. President. We can end the presscon already.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: We can have the whole night. *[laughter]* Dinner will be served at...

SEC. ANDANAR: Malacañang Press Corps is already okay with the press conference, Mr. President. They don't have questions anymore.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Sige lang kasi marami kasing... You know, this coronavirus is scaring people all over the country. It's a... Ano 'yan eh.

The response of the people from the initial reports of coronavirus was almost hysterical when there was really no need for it actually. And if there is really a virus going around, why do you have to be hysterical?

Why don't you just go to the hospital and have yourself treated? Or if you want quarantined, if you suspect that you have acquired... Kaya wala akong nakita nag-ubo. Ehem-ehem. *[laughter]*

Bakit? Pinipigilan ninyo? Kaya namumula 'yung mukha ninyo eh. *[laughter]* You are suffocating yourself. Feel free. We do not... Eh ako magkati 'yung... *[coughs]* *[laughter]*

Alexis Romero (The Philippine Star): Mayor, aside from China, there are also other countries that have been affected by the nCoV? Are there any plans to expand the travel ban to include travelers from other countries aside from China?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: You know, it is --- it's always good to go by the WHO. They have all the information and they have the headquarters. I think somewhere in Hague? Is it?

SEC. DUQUE: Geneva, sir.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: In Geneva, oo, kaya nga sa Geneva. They have the headquarters there. They have all the computers. They have all the inputs and they would know what to do. We go by the regulations that will be given out by the WHO.

We cannot act on our own. This is something which would require the discipline for everybody and to follow the governing entity which is the WHO.

Mr. Romero: So the temporary ban will just be limited to China and Special Administrative Regions for now?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Romero: Okay.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Administrative Regions and --- the Administrative Regions are Macau and Hong Kong.

Mr. Romero: Ah okay. Thank you, Mayor.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Salamat rin. Now is the time to ask so that you will not be --- you do not play into the hands of this rabble-rouser about painting a bleak world for us. Of course, there would be this kind of things that will happen in one generation or another.

Francis Wakefield (Daily Tribune): Sir, good evening po. Sir, tanong lang namin po considering 'yung health niyo po, sir 'di ba, na 74 na kayo. Will you limit your engagement --- public engagements po considering na 'yung threat nga po ng virus sa country?

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Me? Personally? You are asking me personally? Well of course I'll tell you what...

Mr. Wakefield: Yes, sir.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: I just said a little while ago. I don't know if you heard it. When my time comes, it will come. When your time comes, we will know because you will be absent. *[laughter]* And we will not see you anymore.

How sure are you that you will die? Or how sure are you that I will die of --- or maybe even to speculate that I shake hands and get the virus? Of course, I shake hands. We just saw each other at the Change of Command, and I have to shake hands with people.

You know, alam mo Presidente ako. Eh hindi naman ako pwedeng sabihin na "ba-bye" ganun. *[laughter]* Hi. How are you? Good. And --- and if somebody would extend his hand to --- in a gesture of handshake ano. `Wag na lang muna `yan kay...

You know, when my time comes, you will know. Because I will go out of Malacañan in a funeral car. Panahon-panahon itong buhay. `Di maniwala niyang ...

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you, Malacañang Press Corps. Thank you. Mr. President, that ends our press conference. *[applause]*

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Ina, wala ka ng pahabol? *[laughter]* Nandoon pa naman sa labas si kuwan.

You know I said keep faith with the --- keep faith with humanity. And you know, since then I said --- eh noon ang cancer was a death warrant. Now, ang cancer wala na. You can still live --- although you will not be --- you don't have a quality life because you're always in pain or maybe you're taking medications. But if you are asking or if you know about death, hindi na masyadong ano.

And I'm sure I said that every nation who has the resources would or already are at work to find out a solution or a way out. Malay mo `yung atin --- the Filipinos are also doing it. They are conducting... Who knows that tayo ang maka-una makita.

But there is always a solution to the problem. `Yung mga ganito you can be sure, there will be a solution. Do not be afraid of a pandemic style na... This is not the year --- this is not I said the yesteryears when `yung flu... Spanish flu but German flu? Spa --- Spanish flu.

The best way is na... Mabuti walang spa--- walang Filipino flu. T*** i**. Tayo ang ano --- tayo ang the most resilient. Palagay ko hindi aabot dito `yan. Kagaya ng SARS. SARS midway just disappeared. It came suddenly and disappeared suddenly. Ganun `yang mga contagion `yan eh.

It has a lifespan and it loses steam because people over time also acquire immunity. `Yung ano --- `yung doon sa China na doon sa mga exotic na

animals, wala mang namatay doon. Paano hinigop nila lahat `yung... Totoo. May nabalitaan kayo?

Ang namatay doon hindi `yung nakita mo na doon sa --- sa pelikula na aso, pusa, lahat na. Pati `yung hita na tinatadtad doon mukhang tao `yon. No, not really. I'm not --- I'm not saying --- I apologize in advance to the Chinese people.

I'm just being funny but you know that's exotic foods maybe. Wala mang namatay doon sa mga g***. *[laughter]* Iyong mga inosente man. Totoo. Because over time they have acquired the --- dahan-dahan. Kagaya ng ano, sa Davao nagtanong ako. I mean no offense intended to my fellowmen ha.

Nagtanong ako sa Davao ilan ang namatay diyan sa Boulevard na `yang --- `yang tabing-dagat talaga ang bahay, hindi `yung facing the road. "Ilang namatay diyan Kap, sa inyo --- dengue?" Sabi niya, "wala".

"O ikaw, barangay captain." "Wala. Okay lahat." Marunong sila kumain, robust. Kinakain sila ng lamok pagka gabi, `pag di --- robust pa rin.

In other words, life is --- there is always a compensating thing. And marunong ang Diyos eh.

Lalo na `yung mga --- mga press na bakakon, ah mauna `yan. Alam ninyo kung anong bakakon? Liar. *[laughter]* Hindi. Joke lang `yon. *[laughter]* Joke lang `yon.

Pero marami talaga diyan mga bakakon. Bakakon is Vi --- is a --- a Visayan --- is lying --- `yang sinungaling. Bakakon.

Wala na? Karami ninyo, `yun lang ang walang question? *[applause]*

SEC. ANDANAR: Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, members of the press. Good night.

PRESIDENT DUTERTE: Actually... *[laughter]* Hindi.

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