PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE
December 7, 2020 (12:06 P.M. – 12:52 P.M.)

SEC. ROQUE: Magandang tanghali, Pilipinas.

Labing-walong tulog na lang at Pasko na, ngunit ang mga kritiko at detractors ng administrasyon ay patuloy sa pagkakalat ng pekeng balita para sirain ang Pasko ng mga Pilipino. Isang fake news ang kanilang pinakalat nitong weekend kung saan sinabi na magkakaroon daw ng nationwide lockdown ngayong Kapaskuhan – malayo po ito sa katotohanan.

Una, naglabas na po ng community quarantine classification ang pamahalaan para sa buong buwan ng Disyembre, at mismong si Presidente ang nag-anunsiyo nito noong Lunes sa kaniyang Talk to the People Address.

Ang susunod na quarantine classification ay ilalabas pa po sa susunod na buwan ng Enero. Naiintindihan natin ang agam-agam ng iba sa atin 'no. Nakita natin ang pagdagsa ng mga tao sa mga tiangge at ibang pamilihan, at kung hindi ito magbabago ay asahan ang pagdami ng bagong kaso ng COVID-19.

Alam naman natin na unti-unting binubuksan ang ating ekonomiya, at sa pagbubukas na ito, kinakailangang balansehin ang kaligtasan ng mamamayan at economic health ng bansa [AUDIO CUT] … ipatutupad ang isang granular or localized lockdown, iyan na po talaga ang polisiya ng IATF; ang magpapatupad nito ay ang local government units.

Ano ba ang ibig sabihin ng granular o localized lockdown? Iri-restrict ang isang specific area tulad ng isang household, isang compound o isang kalye kung saan ang mga residente ay na-expose o maaaring na-expose sa coronavirus.

Tulad nang madalas kong sabihin dito sa ating press briefing, kinakailangang matuto tayong mabuhay na naririyan pa ang virus sa pamamagitan ng pag-iingat buhay para sa hanapbuhay. At paano natin ito iingat? Mask, hugas, iwas.

At para hindi tayo ma-fake news, kinakailangang suriin natin ang ating nakukuhang impormasyon lalo na kung ito ay magdudulot ng alarma, pangamba, takot at stress. Uulitin ko po: Fake news iyong kumakalat na lockdown daw sa panahon ng Pasko.

Ngayong malapit na po ang bakuna, tulad ng sinabi ng ating Vaccine Czar, uunahin natin bibigyan ng COVID-19 vaccine ang mga lugar na maraming kaso ng COVID-19 tulad ng Metro Manila, Metro Cebu at Davao – ito po iyong geographical priorities.

Pero sa huling pagpupulong po, nilinaw po natin at binigyan ng depenisyon kung ano naman iyong tinatawag na 'sectoral priorities.' Sinu-sino ang nasa prayoridad na mabibigyan ng bakuna laban sa coronavirus? Ang una sa listahan po ay ating mga frontline health workers. Obviously po, kinakailangan bigyan na sila ng bakuna nang magawa nila iyong kanilang katungkulan na walang atubili. Sila ang nangunguna sa ating laban sa COVID-19, natural lamang na sila ang mabigyan natin ng proteksyon laban sa virus.

Kasama sa frontline health workers ang mga nasa public and private health facilities, public health workers at LGU contact tracers, barangay health workers at iba. Susundan ito ng indigent senior citizen; pangatlo ang natitirang senior citizens. So lahat ng senior citizens po, kasama sa prayoridad. Alam naman natin na ang ating mga lolo at lola ay kasama sa vulnerable group, sila ang madaling kapitan ng virus dahil sila ay mayroong mga comorbidities; at kapag kinapitan, alam din natin na sang-ayon sa datos, marami talagang namamatay sa ating mga seniors. Pang-apat, ang iba pang indigent population na ipinangako ng ating Presidente. At ang panlima, lahat po ng uniformed personnel.

Ang suma total po ng mga … or ang suma total ng numero na bibigyan ng prayoridad ay 24,668,126 'no. Ang ating oorderin po ay mga 30 million, good for—well, 30 million individuals or 60 million dosages.

Inaprubahan po ng inyong IATF noong Huwebes, December 3, ang rekumendasyon na ipapatupad ang safety seal certification program in addition to staysafe.ph. Bakit ba ho mahalaga ang staysafe.ph at safety seal certification program? Ito ay para mare-assure ang mga consumers na ligtas na lumabas at maha-highlight nito iyong mayroong certification. Ibig sabihin, kapag may certification, mayroon pong garantiya na sumusunod sa minimum health guidelines iyong mga establisyimento so iyong mga mamimili, feeling safe kumbaga kung pupunta doon sa mayroong certification.

Mahalaga ang papel ng local government unit dito 'no, sila ang magri-require sa mga establishments na mag-apply ng safety seal certification. Sila rin ang mag-eengganyo sa publiko na i-check ang safety seal certification bago pumasok sa isang establisyimento.

Tingnan natin ang infographic na nagpapaliwanag ng mahalagang papel ng LGU. Hindi ko po mabasa at masyadong maliit pero ang LGU po ang—well, anyway, nandiyan po sa screen ninyo [laughs] at mahirap pong mabasa. Inabot po ang laptop!

Okay, ang LGU po, ang mandate niya ay… siya po ang magma-mandate ng establishments and their employees to use the StaySafe app; require StaySafe QR Codes for safety seal certification; encourage consumers to look for safety seal certification. Pagkatapos po, iyong business establishments 'no, sila iyong mag-iisyu ng safety seal certification to establishments that comply with safety protocols and produce a stay safe business QR Code. Tapos iyong app database, iyong update staysafe.ph database each time an establishment receives a safety seal to build a directory of certified safe places. At iyong regular audit po 'no, perform regular

audit on establishments to maintain safety seal certification, update database when establishment loses safety seal certification.

Okay, safe dito ang ating magiging mensahe. Hintayin lang po natin ang paglalabas ng joint memorandum circular ng Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Tourism, at Department of Transportation para sa iba pang mga detalye.

Lumabas naman po ang November inflation rate. Nasa 3.3% ang ating inflation noong nakaraang buwan kumpara sa 2.5% noong Oktubre, medyo tumaas po. Pasok pa rin po ito sa two to four percent full year target ng Bangko Sentral.

Ang pagtaas ng inflation ay dahil sa mga nasira na sektor ng agrikultura na dulot ng mga nagdaang mga bagyo na nagpataas ng presyo ng ating mga pagkain. Tumaas din ang inflation dahil sa transport restrictions kung saan reduced ang passenger capacities na nagpataas ng transport services. Ito ang dahilan na pabor kami sa pagbubukas nang mas marami pang mode of public transport habang pinatutupad ang pitong utos sa ligtas na pampublikong transportasyon.

Ano ho itong pitong utos na ito?

1. Magsuot ng facemask at face shield.
2. Bawal ang pagsasalita, pakikipag-usap o pagsagot ng telepono.
3. Bawal kumain.
4. Kailangan may sapat na ventilation.
5. Kailangan may frequent disinfection.
6. Bawal magsakay ng symptomatic passenger.
7. At kinakailangan, sumunod sa appropriate physical distancing.

Naku, nakakatorete na po kami pero paulit-ulit po kami ‘no para sa inyong interes po ito dahil kapag hindi sumunod, baka magkasakit habang nakasakay po sa public transportation.

Punta po tayo sa COVID-189 updates natin. Ayon po sa global updates ng Johns Hopkins: Higit 67 million or 67,004,553 ang tinamaan ng COVID-19 sa buong mundo. Nasa 1,535,038 katao naman po ang binawian ng buhay dahil sa coronavirus.

Nangunguna pa rin po ang Estados Unidos na mayroong 14.7 million ng mga kaso at 282,231 deaths. Pangalawa ang India; pangatlo po ang Brazil; pang-apat ang Russia; at panlima po ang France.

Sa Pilipinas, mayroon po tayong 22,646 na active cases as of December 6 ayon sa DOH. Sa aktibong kasong ito, 90.4% naman po ay mild at asymptomatic; 6.1% ay kritikal; 3.1% ay severe.

Ito naman po ang mga bilang ng mga gumaling 'no: Mayroon na po tayong recoveries na 408,634 or 92.9% po ang mga gumaling. Ang ating mga namatay po ay 8,554 or 1.94% -- nakikiramay po kami.

Kumusta naman po ang ating mga ospital? Well, mabuti naman po 'no. Mayroon pa po tayong available na 59% para sa ating ICU beds; 62% ang available po sa isolation beds; 72% ang available sa ward beds; at 81% ang available na ventilators. Uulitin ko po, hindi naman ibig sabihin na palibhasa marami pa tayong mga kama para sa magkakasakit ng COVID ay tayo po ay magpapabaya na. Kinakailangan mask, hugas, iwas.

On other matters, mayroon naman pong mahigit na 802 million pesos na na cash subsidies ang naipamahagi sa mahigit 59,000 public utility vehicle operators sa ilalim ng direct cash subsidy program ng DOTr at LTFRB.

Bawat operator ay nakatanggap na po ng cash subsidy na 6,500 sa bawat PUV unit na nasa kanilang prangkisa. Kasama sa mga nakatanggap ang mga operator ng public utility bus or PUB, Point-to-Point bus or P2P, public utility jeepney or PUJ, minibus, UV Express at Filcab.

Okay. Dito na po tayo nagtatapos. Kasama po natin ngayon, dahil 18 tulog na lang ay Pasko na, ay walang iba kung hindi isa po doon sa mga naging Santa Claus ng Pilipinas, Mr. Lance Gokongwei. Sir Lance, magandang umaga po. Kabahagi po kayo doon sa programa ng pribadong sektor kung saan kayo po ang bumili, o bibili ng bakuna sa AstraZeneca. Ang tanong po namin ay bakit po sumapi ang inyong negosyo dito sa programang ito? Bakit ninyo po ginamit ang pera ninyo para bumili ng bakuna?

MR. GOKONGWEI: Magandang umaga, Sec. Harry at salamat sa inyong pag-imbita sa amin dito. As part of the private sector po, we recognize na we are all part of an interlink society na in the way the private sector approaches this, dapat walang turuan, walang iwanan, walang kaniya-kaniya, na we can only recover as a nation if we all work together. And under the leadership of Sec. Charlie Galvez and Sec. Joey Concepcion, I think they organize the private sector together with AstraZeneca and the British Government and other government sectors using their credibility so that we all work together, na we work together and raise funds po to secure the doses of vaccine which hinahabol ng iba-ibang countries, so we have to step up para makuha ng Pilipinas ang kaniyang share.

SEC. ROQUE: Magkano po iyong sumatotal na gagastusin ng pribadong sektor at magkano po iyong ibibigay natin para sa ating mga mahihirap doon sa aangkatin nating bakuna?

MR. GOKONGWEI: I think as of this date, lampas three million doses na which is over mga $16 million na po, that's about P800 million ang contribution ng buong private sector and at least kalahati nito mapupunta sa DOH at ang DOH (technical difficulties) ang pinaka may kailangan ng bakuna and at this point we follow the guidelines of the government that we should prioritize iyong mga frontliners natin especially iyong mga medical frontliners natin.

SEC. ROQUE: Sir, huling katanungan ko po. Mayroon kasing isang bakuna na hindi natin maaangkat dahil mahal, $78 per dose daw pero ito po iyong kasabayan ng Sinovac galing po sa Tsina na Sinopharm. May posibilidad ba ho na dahil hindi mabibili ng gobyerno ito dahil mahal ay ang private sector ay pupuwedeng mag-ipon-ipon din ng salapi para mabili po natin ito nang magamit po ng ating mga kababayan?

MR. GOKONGWEI: I think part ng contribution namin is to help the government in whatever way we can. I think part of this is to pursue a multi-platform approach sa bakuna. Lahat po ng bakuna, I mean from all countries, China, Russia, Europe at saka America, kailangan natin pag-aralan and then working with the DOH and the FDA, I think we'll come out with the most suitable program, and I think the priority again has to support PRRD's concern for pinaka-vulnerable parts of society, so we'll go from there, ano.
At ang private sector naman aside from supporting the government in its growth, we also want to prioritize our own employees to assure our employees and their families na their health is our concern, so I'm sure we will also examine all these new vaccines coming out.

SEC. ROQUE: Now, dahil mayroon pong pagpupulong or meeting na previously scheduled si Mr. Gokongwei, iimbitahan ko na po iyong ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps na itanong na iyong mga tanong nila para kay Mr. Lance Gokongwei.

Una po si Mr. Melo Acuña.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Harry. For Mr. Gokongwei, good afternoon and nice to see you. Can you please update us data on the status of Cebu Pacific and your projections when Cebu Pacific would fly again and help tourism recover its lost grounds?

MR. GOKONGWEI: Yeah, that's a very good question. I think this whole crisis, Cebu Pacific and the entire aviation and tourism sector has of course can very severely affected. But this whole time we never forgot our responsibility as a public utility even during the worst part of the crisis, maski walang pasahero nag-o-operate po kami ng mga cargo flight at mga flight na nagbabalik ng mga OFWs 'no. Today the economy is slowly opening up, we now have a requirement na most—na flying is now allowed to many LGUs although we have to respect each LGU's own guidelines 'no.

So we are now looking to work with each of the LGUs so that—in the future our hope is that with each LGU, we assure them na lahat ng pumupunta sa kanilang LGU are safe, secure, tested particularly with the… we now have a pilot with the GenSan government where we provide free antibody testing for all passengers going into GenSan and we're working on such programs with different LGUs.

So slowly I think we're beginning to see an opening up of domestic traveling in the Philippines as it has already been opened up in our other neighbors such as Vietnam, Thailand, etcetera.

So I think slowly babalik iyan as we do recognize na tourism is a vital part of the economy and a lot of our countrymen depend on tourism. But we just have to assure the different LGUs, different governments na this tourism is safe, secure and does not promote COVID 'no.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: Has COVID-19 affected your operational costs because you're introducing free testing for your passengers going into areas like GenSan? How will it be factor in your viability?

MR. GOKONGWEI: Ah, I mean the airline sector is really under severe stress 'no. This year we will lose an almost 25 billion pesos 'no, so it's really—but I think that's part of our—that's the part of doing business. The main priority really is to operate the airline in a very safe and secure manner for both our passengers and employees and then we are a volume business 'no, people have to gain confidence back in flying and that's the only way our business will recover. So we have to work with the government and the LGUs in that respect.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: Thank you very much, Mr. Gokongwei. We wish you the best.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Melo. Punta tayo kay Pia Rañada who has a question for Mr. Gokongwei.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Hello! Good afternoon, Mr. Gokongwei. Sir, there's been talk—since we are having a vaccine very soon and released to the general public soon, there's been talk in the airline industry of requiring a COVID passport. And I'm wondering, has Cebu Pacific also been involved in these talks and what are your thoughts on it like an app that will basically require passengers of your airline to show that they've been vaccinated against COVID-19 and tested negative? What do you think of those—?

MR. GOKONGWEI: I think—we do think that's essential 'no especially as we open up international travel na ang dami-daming different vaccines and each—I think we have to work on a global COVID passport 'no so that each country respects the passport and recognizes that if you do have this COVID passport, that you have already been vaccinated by a credible vaccination source 'no. So I think this has to be led at the G-to-G basis but definitely I think it's essential for—if the tourism and travel industry is to recover, this is an absolute necessity 'no.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Sir, do you think it will put a damper on international travel because people might not have access right away to vaccines especially the very expensive ones? Do you think this might even damage further the international travel industry?

MR. GOKONGWEI: Unless we resolve the confidence issue and the safety issue which can only happen with herd immunity and vaccine that there's nothing to be spoken about. So that has to be the number one priority is to get vaccines as much of the population, the global population as possible and then connecting this to a COVID passport so that everybody, each country trusts that when we say a passenger has had the vaccine, that he indeed has already

achieved that levels of antibodies 'no so that he will not be infectious to anybody else. So I think, that's job number one.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: All right. Thank you, sir.

SEC. ROQUE: Maraming salamat, Mr. Lance Gokongwei. On behalf of the President and on behalf of a grateful nation, we would like to thank Mr. Lance Gokongwei, JG Summit and the rest of the private sector for their beautiful Christmas gift to the Philippines – free vaccines from AstraZeneca. Maraming salamat po, Mr. Gokongwei.

Ang bakuna ay naririyan na po kaya sasalubungin natin ang Kapaskuhan nang may bagong pag-asa 'no at may question muna po tayo kay Usec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Good afternoon, Secretary Roque. From Leila Salaverria of Inquirer: There had been suggestions saying top officials such as DOH Secretary Francisco Duque III and Vaccine Czar Galvez should be the first to get the COVID-19 vaccine to allay the public's fear and to encourage them to get themselves inoculated. DOH Secretary Duque has agreed. What will the administration's policy on this if any? Will the government require officials to get the vaccine first to serve as an example or will this have to be their personal decision?

SEC. ROQUE: Alam ninyo po personal na desisyon iyan ng ating mga namumuno 'no pero kapag nangyari po iyan, babatuhin na naman ang gobyerno na inuuna ng bakuna ang mga VIPs gaya ng nangyari doon sa PCR test 'no. So either way talagang mayroon pong mga kritiko na mambabato 'no pero ang importante po is to develop what Dr. Lulu Bravo said last week 'no, iyong confidence na dumaan po sa tamang proseso itong mga bakuna at ito po ay napag-aralan na unang-una ligtas at pangalawa po epektibo laban sa COVID-19.

So kung mayroon pong ilang mga matataas na opisyales na nais na magpaturok para magsilbing halimbawa na wala naman pong masamang epekto sa kanila ang bakuna, we welcome that. Pero gaya ng aking sinabi po, tandaan ninyo 'pag nangyari iyan, iyong oposisyon sasabihin na naman mayroong VIP treatment. Next question, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: And second question po niya: What will be the policy for the President?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, ang Presidente po ay naku, ang Presidente hindi na makaantay. Gusto niyang talagang turukan na siya nang mapakita nga po sa buong bayan na ligtas at epektibo, ito po'y dumaan sa expert panel group nang pinakadalubhasang Pilipino at iyan po ay comes with their highest endorsement na ligtas at epektibo.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Back to Melo Acuña, may isa ka pang question. Melo…

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: Actually dalawa po ito, Secretary. *[laughs]*

SEC. ROQUE: O sige na nga, Christmas naman eh.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: How do you look at holiday economic because businessmen, small and medium businessmen look towards Christmas or holidays as a saving grace for their businesses? Do you see an upsurge in spending because when you go the malls, halos wala pa ring tao? Is it because of confidence or is it because walang pera ang tao? Ano ang priorities kaya?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, alam mo, on the contrary 'no, iyong mga balita sa Divisoria, sa mga tianggian, sobra-sobra iyong mga tao. Iyong sa Baguio po 'no, isang araw nga lang iyong night market, dinagsa po talaga ng tao. So I think Christmas economics will happen. Ang ginagawa nga po ng gobyerno ay nagpapaalala na bagama't talagang isang beses lang ito isang taon, patuloy pa rin nating pangalagaan ang ating kalusugan para tayo'y makapaghanapbuhay.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: Yeah. Can you please update us on the cold chain storage facilities?

SEC. ROQUE: Everything is in place po 'no. Dito sa ating press briefing, dalawa na ang na-feature natin – iyong ORCA at saka iyong asosasyon ng cold storage facilities. I understand nakapagpirmahan na po sa ilang mga kumpanya ang DOH para magbigay ng cold storage capacity kasi nga po iyong mga gamot na galing sa western countries will require -70. So everything is in place, napaghandaan naman po iyan, we will not be taken by surprise at ginagamit nga din po natin itong press briefing na ito para masiguro na ang DOH, ang IATF ay magiging handa 'pag nandiyan na po ang bakuna.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA DAILY PACIFIC: Thank you very much, Secretary. Wish you the best. Thank you.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Melo. Back to USec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, question from Jam Punzalan ng ABS-CBN Online: Sinabi po ni Vice President Leni Robredo, parang normalize na ang patayan. This is after another mayor in the President's narcolist was killed. What is your reaction to this and how will the government prevent rampant killing?

SEC. ROQUE: Unang-una po, ang obligasyon ng estado ng Pilipinas ay para imbestigahan, litisin ang mga pumapatay at bigyan ng remedyo sang-ayon sa ating batas ang mga nagiging biktima ng paglabag ng karapatang mabuhay. Iyan po ay ginagawa ngayon ng ating bayan, dahil ipinag-utos na po ni Secretary Año ang pag-iimbestiga dito sa pagpatay kay Los Baños Mayor. So, ang ating mensahe po kay Vice Presidente Leni Robredo, hintayin naman po natin ang imbestigasyon, dahil hindi naman po instant iyan, mayroon po talagang mga hakbang na ginagawa ang kapulisan para ma-identify kung sino ang pumatay bago tayo magkaroon

ng conclusion. At dahil pare-pareho naman po kaming abogado, kung may ebidensiya siya na talagang ang gobyerno ang pumatay, isampa po ang kaso.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question po ni Jam Punzalan: The Joint Task Force against COVID-19 last week said, law enforcer in Metro Manila would carry yantok to measure social distancing and hit violators. DFA Secretary Locsin has opposed this. How would the government ensure that this will not be abused and made to unnecessary use of force?

SEC. ROQUE: Tingin ko po tama is Secretary Locsin dito, hindi po pupuwedeng gamitin iyan na pang-hit or pamalo dahil hindi naman po iyan pinapayagan sa ating batas at sa regulasyon ng PNP. Pupuwede pa po siguro to measure social distancing, to make sure one meter, pero hindi po iyan para pampalo ng mga taumbayan.

TRICIAH TERRADA/CNN PHILS: Good afternoon, Secretary. Sir, follow up lang po doon sa pagkamatay po ni Los Baños Mayor Cesar Perez. Nandiyan pong nali-link siya doon sa drugs list. But sir, my question is, ano po iyong pagkakaalam ng Palasyo o ng government sa involvement niya sa illegal drugs and iyong pagkaka-include po niya doon sa drug watch list? Vetted information po ba iyon?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, alam ninyo noong kongresista pa ako ay talagang itinatanong ko iyan saan nanggaling iyong drug list. At ang pagkakaintindi ko naman po, mayroon talagang mga impormasyon diyan, bagama't hindi pa po siguro sapat para tumayo na kaso sa ating mga hukuman. So, hindi naman po iyan out of thin air, mayroon naman pong basehan iyan, pero at the same time, ang pagkakaalam ko po ay hindi pa po nakasuhan, dahil nagki-case build up pa po.

TRICIAH TERRADA/CNN PHILS: Sir, ito pong nangyari kay Mayor Caesar Perez, at least the circumstances on how it happened, nangyari po ito kagabi and within *[unclear]* grounds of the municipal hall. Tapos the following day sir, mayroon ding parang NBI tipster na in-attack during daylight. Iyong mga ganitong insidente sir, it is already a cause of alarm for peace and security for the Palace? May cause of, kumbaga, alarming itong mga mangyayari, parang walang takot ngayon iyong mga gumagawa nito?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, hindi naman po siguro, dahil ginagampanan naman po ng estado ang kaniyang obligasyon, iniimbestigahan at bibigyan po natin ng remedyo sang-ayon sa lokal na batas natin ang mga mahal sa buhay ni Mayor.

TRICIAH TERRADA/CNN PHILS: Sir, si President Duterte kahapon nga, expressed his willingness to get vaccinated with the vaccine from China or Russia. Sir, given the developments po ngayon, is the President keen of participating in any upcoming clinical trials. Will he be getting the vaccine soon to have iyong, rebuild sir, ng confidence ng Filipinos kasi 'di ba sinasabi ng IATF naging effective iyong si Pangulo as a tool to encourage itong 'Mask, Hugas, Iwas'? Do you think, it will be effective to also na gamitin siya sa communication to build the vaccine confidence and trust?

SEC. ROQUE: Definitely, as Spokesperson, I think the President is the best communication tool. So kung papayagan na po ng FDA, I think po mangunguna ang Presidente at nag-volunteer naman po siya, in fact gustong-gusto na niya.

TRICIAH TERRADA/CNN PHILS: Sir, during clinical trials or after the clinical trials?

SEC. ROQUE: Alam po ninyo may distinction iyan eh, kasi you can use it under the Emergency Use Authorization, maski wala pang clinical trials sa Philippines. Kasi ang ibig sabihin noon natapos na ang clinical trials abroad. So let's always make the distinction, hindi ibig sabihin na hindi pa tapos ang third clinical trial sa Pilipinas ay hindi dumaan sa third clinical trial abroad. Wala pong naaaprubahan under the Emergency Use Authorization kung hindi pa po iyan dumadaan sa third clinical trial in some foreign jurisdiction.

TRICIAH TERRADA/CNN PHILS: So, sir, if ever po na magkaroon na ng bakuna na maaprubahan po dito, by a EUA, even if hindi siya matapos sa third clinical trials in the Philippines or bale fourth phase na po iyon, puwede na pong magkuha ng bakuna ang Pangulo just to build confidence?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, that is the impact of the executive order on EUA. Pero I think this week, mayroon pong kauna-unahang bakuna that will be given general approval.

TRICIAH TERRADA/CNN PHILS: Sir, may IATF meeting po ba and address later si Pangulo?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, there will be.

USEC. IGNACIO: Question, Secretary, from MJ Blancaflor of Daily Tribune: Aldus Perez, the youngest son of the late Mayor Perez, has pleaded with President Duterte to help his family attain justice for his father's murder last week. Nakarating na po ba sa Pangulo at ano daw po response niya regarding this?

SEC. ROQUE: Kagaya ng aking sinabi, responsibilidad po iyan ng estado at gagawin po iyan, sisiguraduhin po iyan ng Presidente dahil ang Presidente ang pangunahing executioner ng batas, tagapagpatupad po ng batas.

USEC. IGNACIO: Ang second question po niya: Aldus believes that his father's murder may have something to do with the so-called narco-list of the President. How will the Palace respond to this?

SEC. ROQUE: It's a live criminal investigation, hayaan na po muna natin matapos ang criminal investigation.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So, si PRRD willing to get vaccinated even under EUA 'no?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Is he willing to do this live?

SEC. ROQUE: Ewan ko naman, ikaw naman, ginawa mo namang spectacle iyong Presidente. Huwag naman siguro, hindi kinakailangan ng live iyan.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Siguro he will show us.
SEC. ROQUE: But you know, it all depends on the President. Pero the point is, hindi naman kinakailangan na ipakitang live iyan. But in any case, it's the President's decision; I will not second guess the President.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, iyon pong cases natin, on the topic of COVID muna. Paunti nang paunti iyong nagpa-positive. How do you explain this? Is this because there are less people getting test from COVID that is why we are seeing less results or we have the same number of testing numbers and talagang bumaba iyong positivity rate? What do you know about it?

SEC. ROQUE: I think bumababa po talaga ang positivity rate kasi ang tao alam na kung paano iwasan. Siguro naman after March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November, December – after nine months – alam na natin ang gagawin para maiwasan ang COVID – Mask, Hugas, Iwas.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay, doon muna ako sa BTA. I was talking to somebody from—

SEC. ROQUE: Ano iyong BTA?

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Bangsamoro Transitional Authority. Okay, so I was talking to some people who are involved in that issue and I understand that, I don't know if you can affirm that, but the President is agreeable to an extension of the term of the BTA. But it does require an amendment of the BOL – Bangsamoro Organic Law. Now the question is, will the President encourage, if not push for a filing of a bill that will amend the BOL to allow the extension of the BOL?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, nasabi ko na po iyan. The President is supportive, sympathetic. But it is beyond his jurisdiction kasi kongreso po ang magdidesisyon kung aamyendahan iyong batas. Kung susuportahan ni Presidente ang pag-aamyenda, siyempre po dahil kagustuhan niya iyan, gusto niyang matulungan iyong mga nasa transition council na iyon. Pero as to whether or not congress will do it, nasa wisdom na po iyan at desisyon ng ating kongreso.

Ang payo po ni Presidente ay kinakailangan makipag-ugnayan doon sa mga mambabatas. I specifically know that he singled-out the senators from Mindanao na dapat kausapin ang mga taga-Bangsamoro. And siyempre iyong mga Congressmen from the area at mga Muslim should spearhead also the initiative in the lower house.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: So this is really for the legislators, but he will support any measure that will extend the BTA?

SEC. ROQUE: Of course! Full support po, but it's all up to Congress.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, kay Justice Leonen, kaninong project ito, iyong impeachment niya?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po alam kung kaninong project iyan. Sa House po iyan ano.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Okay, of course it's the House. But does have the imprimatur of the President?

SEC. ROQUE: Absolutely not!

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Like in the case of, can you elaborate?

SEC. ROQUE: Absolutely none! Wala pong kinalaman diyan. We don't even know who the proponents are.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, one quick question. You mentioned a case build up against the Los Baños Mayor, by whom and how do you know this?

SEC. ROQUE: The police are investigating and, normally, the results of investigation should be used in a case build up and charge individuals in court kasi iyon iyong mga katungkulan at obligasyon ng estado kapag mayroong napatay.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Question from Dano Tingcungco of GMA 7: Comment po sa panawagan ng Senior Citizen's partylist na i-consider iyong mental and emotional health of seniors and dapat i-consider din po to free seniors 70 to below from isolation in MGCQ areas?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, again, that would be the discretion of the LGUs. Hayaan po nating magdesisyon ang mga LGUs kasi ang IATF naman po ay gumawa na ng guidelines, and the LGUs were empowered to implement them. May mga LGUs na nagdideklara na one day of the week ay puwedeng lumabas ang mga seniors 'no. So iyang ganiyan pong mga practices ang puwedeng i-adopt ng mga iba't ibang mga LGUs.

USEC. IGNACIO: Question from Einjhel Ronquillo ng DZXL/RMN: Willing po si Vice President Leni Robredo na maging Guinea Pig pagdating sa bakuna kontra COVID-19?

SEC. ROQUE: Again, nauna na po si Presidenteng magsabi na willing siya. Let's hope she can be a Guinea Pig. *[Laughter]* Sino naman iyong nagtatawa diyan ha? Bakit kayo nagtatawa diyan ha?

USEC. IGNACIO: From Sam Medenilla po: Nakarating na po kaya ang 2021 national budget sa Office of the President? If no—

SEC. ROQUE: Ay, hindi pa po. Wala pa po.

USEC. IGNACIO: Okay, kasi ang second po niya: If no, nagbigay na po kaya ng commitment ang both Houses of Congress kung kailan nila isa-submit ito kay President Duterte?

SEC. ROQUE: Realistically, they have to do it this week dahil pag-aaralan pa rin po ng Presidente iyan kung mayroong mga individual line vetoes na gagawin.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, Usec. Back to Pia Rañada, please.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Sir, first question: Sir, on the COVID-19 vaccine reservation payments. Sir, if you recall in September, the President expressed unwillingness to give advance payments for western COVID-19 vaccines but eventually 'di ba he relented. But, sir, did this unwillingness lead to a delay in our reservation vaccines?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi naman po 'no dahil wala pa naman talagang nakakakuha ng vaccine dahil iyan po ay dependent not really on the payment of reservation but on the issuance of emergency use authorization by the FDAs worldwide.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: But, sir, 'di ba iyong reservation fee, that's what is necessary to reserve a certain amount? And, sir, I remember the President even saying that he doesn't even think it's allowed to give an advance payment in our procurement laws. But it turns out that he was wrong because it eventually naman he gave the approval. So, sir, I mean, how did this affect our timeline for reservation? Kasi if he did not … if he knew ahead of time, at that time already, September, that puwede namang magbigay ng reservation fee could we not have made reservations earlier and secured a supply earlier?
SEC. ROQUE: I don't think it would have affected the timeline because unang-una, as I said, ngayon lang po nagkakaroon ng emergency use authorization worldwide. As far as I know, there's only been two countries that have given EUAs and that is China and the United Kingdom. So hindi po tayo nahuhuli.

Pangalawa po, the advance payment po, I don't think will really affect when we will actually get it kasi lahat naman po tayo subject first to scientific scrutiny. So what determines kung kailan tayo magkakaroon is a scientific scrutiny.

And number three, hindi naman po tayo nag-insist na hindi pupuwede ito under our procurement law.

Unang-una, ingenious nga po ang ginawa natin in inviting the private sector to go ahead and pay just in case the procurement law prohibits it; but eventually po, I was one of those that voiced opinion that there is no bar kasi nga po, number one, there is an exception under the RA 9184 that procurement pursuant to international agreements shall not be covered; and number two, there is expressed authorization vested on the President under Bayanihan I and II 'no to resort to extraordinary procurement in relation to COVID. So wala pong kinalaman iyon.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: So, sir, who convinced the President finally na hindi naman siya against the law to issue a reservation fee?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I think ang nangyari was, the President was first told about the private sector initiative. And when the President was told, he was appreciative and said, let's do everything that we can now to get the vaccines. Pero wala pong kinalaman iyong kaniyang insistence before on when we will actually get it. We will get it at the same time as everyone else because it is still based on science.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Sir, just a—last question would be a clarification. Sir, earlier you mentioned that I think this week there will be a vaccine to be given general approval. Are you talking about, sir, local approval of the FDA, iyong EUA na po?

SEC. ROQUE: Not the Philippines. Some jurisdiction, pero they will be one.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: How about, sir, for the Philippines, will there be any EUA?

SEC. ROQUE: Ah, wala pa. In fact, I was trying to contact the pharmas on when they will file EUAs here in the Philippines – wala namang makasagot. I called Pfizer, and the Pfizer's response was, I will read it … okay, and the response is: that they cannot officially comment on items that are confidential in nature. Only when the headquarter gives the go signal can they comment, and then they suggested that we reach out to our embassies 'no. So that was the official response of Pfizer. Because I was curious since they filed for emergency use authorization in England and they have also said that they have filed also in India, when they intend to file in the Philippines.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Kasi, sir, iyong Sinovac, they've just delivered the supply to Indonesia, and I remember you saying that Sinovac is one of the advanced vaccines already in the Philippine evaluation process. So, sir, no news pa, sir, on Sinovac getting EUA?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi pa nga po sila nag—yesterday, I also verified, hindi pa rin sila nagpa-file sa Philippines. And in the case of Indonesia, that is still subject to their regulatory approval also pursuant to an EUA purchase. Okay?

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: All right. Thank you, sir.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you, ma'am. Usec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, question from Rose Novenario of Hataw: Sa isang kilos-protesta ay nanawagan ang Alliance of Health Workers sa mismong Department of Health na ibigay pantay-pantay ang COVID-19 special risk allowance at active hazard duty pay under Bayanihan Law II sa lahat ng manggagawang pangkalusugan sa pampubliko at pribadong ospital maging sa mga LGUs at iba pang health facilities dahil ang virus ay walang pinipiling dapuan. Lahat ng health workers sa loob ng ospital ay exposed at prone sa virus. Ano po ang reaksiyon ng Palasyo?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po alam kung bakit sila nananawagan, eh talaga naman po ang batas … mayroong probisyon sa Saligang Batas na equal protection it should be applied to all similarly situated. So hindi na po kinakailangan magpanawagan, it will be applied to all similarly situated.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Secretary, tanong ni Maricel Halili, although nasagot ninyo na baka lang po may dagdag kayo: May we have a Palace statement about Vice President Robredo's fear on alleged normalization of impunity in the Philippines after string of killings. She said, "Mas natatakot ako sa impunity as a whole na parang napaka-normal na lang na mabalitaan natin na may mayor na pinatay, may judge na pinatay, may abogadong pinatay, may media man na pinatay. Alam mo iyon, bakit ganoon."

SEC. ROQUE: Sa lahat po ng administrasyon mayroong mga ganiyang pinapatay. Ang isyu, ginagampanan ba ng estado ang katungkulan na mag-imbestiga, maglitis, magparusa at bigyan ng remedyo sang-ayon sa lokal na batas.

USEC. IGNACIO: Tanong po ni Vanz Fernandez – ito na po iyong last question, Secretary: From recent news that inflation rate ay tumaas po up to 3.3% from 1.3% in November, what does the government plan to do to deal with inflation? And what messages of reassurances from the government would you like to give it sa business sector of the country?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, pasok pa naman po sa target natin na between 2 to 4 percent ang inflation rate na 3.3%. At ito nga po ay nakakalungkot pero ito po ay resulta ng mga bagay-bagay na hindi natin maku-control gaya ng sunud-sunod na mga bagyo na nagsalanta ng ating mga pananim na dahilan kaya um-increase po ang presyo ng ating mga bilihin lalo na sa pagkain at transportasyon.

Pero huwag po kayong mag-alala, kung kinakailangang mag-angkat para pababain ang presyo ng pagkain, gagawin po natin iyan pero siyempre binabalanse po iyan dahil hindi naman pupuwedeng masyadong mababa dahil kawawa naman ang ating mga magsasaka kung masyadong mababa ang presyo ng ating mga agrikulturang mga produkto.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay for round two daw. Joseph Morong?

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Yes, sir. Sir, okay ganito, iyong sa matagal nang tanong natin, iyong sa mga love is not… ano ba iyon, tourism. Sir, finally, can we outline talaga kung ano iyong puwedeng mangyari para naman hindi na sila umaasa? So right now, ang gusto nilang mangyari is i-exempt sila from the tourist visa require … kasi ang parang ang ina-allow natin is mga foreigners and tourist—ang bina-ban natin is iyong mga foreigners and tourist, hindi pa puwede iyon. But is the government willing to provide an exemption to at least those who are engaged or have fiancé status and also that includes, you know, all kinds of couples.

SEC. ROQUE: Well, tapatan po para walang umaasa: Hanggang banned pa po ang tourist visas, I don't think there can be a way for them to come in. Ang pag-asa na lang po natin, may bakuna na. So kapag may bakuna na, eh baka pupuwede na po tayong magbukas ng ating teritoryo muli sa mga turista. Antay na lang po tayo. Sandali na lang po iyan dahil narito na po ang bakuna.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: Sir, spouses are allowed but these are just straight couples. May natatanggap lang ako and have communicated that, kapag same sex hindi puwede, sir 'no?

SEC. ROQUE: I would like to believe na basta mayroon silang marriage contract, they should be allowed in.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: But our embassies daw, sir, say that we have no counterpart parang law that acknowledges and recognizes the same sex so parang hindi valid iyong effect in the Philippines?

SEC. ROQUE: May professional view is you apply conflicts of law, if it is valid, the marriage was valid in a jurisdiction were it was solemnized, then it should be recognized as valid here. Kasi hindi naman dito ginawa iyong kasal, doon sa hurisdiksyon na allowed siya.

JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7: All right, sir. Thank you for your time po.

SEC. ROQUE: May isa pa si Usec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes, Secretary, pahabol ni Hannah Sancho ng SMNI: Nananawagan po ng tulong ang Catanduanes para mapaayos agad ang mga nasirang tahanan. Madalas po kasing mga relief ang natatanggap. Sana naman daw po ay hindi makalimutan iyong ayuda para sa kanilang tahanan.

SEC. ROQUE: Ang alam ko po, iyong pinadala po ng Malacañang, mayroon pong 18 million at ang bulk nito ay para pambili po ng yero at iba pang mga kinakailangan para maitayong muli po ang mga tahanan ng mga taga-Catanduanes. Huwag po kayong mag-alala, malapit po nating kaibigan si Governor Joseph Cua, at palagi po nating sinusuportahan ang mga hinihiling ng mga Catanduanes at naibibigay naman po ng Malacañang.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. Kung wala na po tayong tanong, well, gaya po ng aking sinabi: Ang bakuna ay naririyan na kaya sasalubungin natin ang Kapaskuhan ng may bagong pag-asa. At nagbibigay ng magandang pangitain ang langit, mantakin ninyo po, masasaksihan ng buong mundo sa Disyembre 21 ang tinatawag na Christmas Star na huling nakita may walondaang taon na ang nakalipas. Jupiter and Saturn will align creating what is referred to as the Christmas Star or the Star of Bethlehem. Payapang daigdig; Merry Christmas to one and all!

Ito po ang inyong Spox, sa ngalan po ng ating Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte, maraming salamat Panginoon sa iyong Christmas gift na bakuna. Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

##

--
News and Information Bureau-Data Processing Center