

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**SPEECH OF
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
DURING THE SIMULTANEOUS INAUGURATION OF SCHOOL BUILDINGS AT
THE CANUMAY EAST NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL (CENHS) AND LAWANG BATO
NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL (LBNHS) IN VALENZUELA CITY**

[Delivered in Lawang Bato in Valenzuela City | 04 March 2021]

Kindly sit down. Salamat po.

My partner Cielito “Honeylet” Avanceña, taga-Valenzuela, Bulacan po siya. [applause] Kaya when we were campaigning and I was asking what is the immediate need of the constituency here in Bulacan, Valenzuela, and they said, “more schools because of a growing population”. And it makes me happy to go back and see the fulfillment of that promise to the people of Valenzuela, Bulacan.

Education Secretary Leonor Briones; Chair of the Senate Committee on Basic Education, Arts and Culture Senator Sherwin Gatchalian; Valenzuela 2nd District Representative Eric Martinez, who is a very loyal supporter; Valenzuela Vice Mayor Lorena Natividad-Borja; Valenzuela School Division Office Curriculum Implementation Chief Filmore Caballero; Officer-in-Charge Office of the Assistant District Engineer Engr. Andres Macaulay; Canumay East National High School Principal Patricia De Vera; mga kasama ko sa gobyerno; mga kababayan ko.

Making quality education to all Filipinos is one of my administration’s top priorities in the development agenda.

Well as matter of fact, in the budget yearly, the highest --- the highest ang perang mapunta ang number one is education. Mas mababa ‘yang mga agriculture na ‘yan. It’s education. I don’t know the second. I can only remember the first because of the huge money allotted for the Education department.

When I ran in 2016, I promised our people that by the end of my term we would have built conducive, inclusive and resilient learning environments for our students.

Sa awa po ng Diyos mukhang natupad ko man. Medyo hindi naman lahat, baka one-fourth of the whole. Okay na ‘yan given the expenses that we have to fund and, of course, the --- ang tagal eh --- the time needed to construct. Ito kakatapos lang. I remember it was 2016, I was not yet the President.

However, this task was made more complex with the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic to our education systems, and as we transition our society under the new normal.

Sa totoo lang po, let me just explain, my mother is a retired school --- public school supervisor. She was a teacher all of her life.

Sa totoo lang, ang malapit sa akin sa puso ang mga maestra. Pero noong nag-increase ako ng salary, I already saw what was happening. Pati ngayon nakikita ko na how it would develop within the next five years. I see a host of problems that we need money all the time for everyone na hindi naman talaga magkasya.

Pero naka-target ho ako doon. We were doing fine. Our rating is “BBB” next to that is “A” ang credit ano natin. We could --- hanggang ngayon pinahiram tayo pero mababa na lang kasi wala tayong pambayad. But DBP and World Bank were --- maybe a good spirit in them allowed us to borrow money to buy COVID vaccines.

Nag-iipon na po ako sa totoo lang kasi sabi ko next ang teacher. Totoo ho iyan. Nandiyan si Secretary Briones. She’s maybe old but she is a brilliant... Well, she is a professor of UP. [Maybe summa ka ba, ma’am?] She was our national treasurer. So alam niya ang pera talaga gaano kahirap kunin.

Now, when COVID came, bagsak talaga ang ekonomiya. Sarado ang mga factories, manufacturing whatever kasi takot nga eh. There was a lockdown.

And between the economy and the health of the people with the pandemic whirling around, I thought it wise to cast my lot with the interest of the people in their health. Kaya ho nagkaganoon.

Pero after this --- I’ve been to the other site --- I have to fly to Villamor because the AstraZeneca about 478,000 darating.

Now, for those of you --- wala ito sa speech ko --- but for those of you who would opt to take that vaccine, it’s fine with me. Wala sa akin ‘yan. Others might prefer other brands. The doctors are very discriminating. They are waiting for the Pfizer.

Ang akin is Sinopharm, China. Hindi masyado ako maano diyan sa mga produkto ng puti. So ganoon. But I will be receiving another batch. And then another --- China would give us another 400,[000] making their donation to this country 1 million.

Itong dumating na AstraZeneca, donation rin ito ng WHO. It is the answer to their call that rich nation must also fund the poor nation because no one is safe until everybody is safe. So that’s how it is.

You don’t --- you limit it --- you cut travel and everything and all the commercial exchanges would grind to a halt.

So ganoon ho ang nangyari diyan. Buhay o... Eh ang sabi ng mga economic managers ko are pestering me and also the Education department gusto na talaga na....

Sabi ko ito lang ang tandaan ninyo, ‘pag ang isang Pilipino magpunta sa isang clinic, public health preferably, city health, city hospital o ‘yung mga ospital nag-volunteer na magbakuna, ‘pag ang every Filipino ganyan ang sitwasyon na magpabukana na lang sila, wala ng kulang, at wala nang maraming kotso-kotso, then I will open it immediately.

Hindi kailangan lahat. Basta makita ko lang ‘yan. That is the standard. Hindi naman lahat sabay-sabay ‘yan eh. But if I see most of the citizens can avail of the vaccine in any of the health centers, hospitals, at wala ng --- that is the standard, then I will reopen everything sa ating ekonomiya. For now, pigil ako sa mga --- lalo na mga bata.

You have my assurance that the government will be exerting all efforts to roll out the nationwide COVID-19 Vaccination Program to enable us to reopen our schools and slowly resume our face-to-face learning.

To our students, I hope that despite the challenges ahead, you will persevere and strive hard[er] to excel and reach your [full] potential.

Together, let us pursue our shared aspirations for a stronger, brighter future of the Filipino people.

Maraming salamat po. [applause]

[The President returns to the podium.]

Si Rex? Na-miss ko ba? Rex, ang mata ko, you have to... Hiningi ko kanina sa ano, sa aide ko. Iyon. Doon sa dulo. Hindi daw dala eh kaya hirap akong magbasa.

But anyway, good as any time to say that we have done our part. At kung mayroon pa akong maidagdag with the limited time that I have, it's almost ineffective President, half a year na lang ako.

The other half would be the lame months, lame duck na ako. And that is natural. It happens. It will happen. Pero ngayon, kung anong madagdag ko, sabihin lang po ninyo.

Education, you can always go to Ms. Leonor Briones. [applause]

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