

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE**  
**News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE**  
**March 18, 2021 (12:09 P.M. – 1:18 P.M.)**

**SEC. ROQUE:** Magandang tanghali, Pilipinas. Broadcasting live from our isolation facility po dito sa San Juan, ito po ang inyong Thursday presidential briefing.

Nagpapasalamat po kami sa naging desisyon ng Korte Suprema na ibasura ang petisyon ‘no na nagkukuwestiyon sa naging aksiyon ng Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte na mag-unilaterally withdraw sa International Criminal Court. Itong ruling ng Kataas-taasang Hukuman na nakabase sa mootness ay isang pagkilala na ang Pangulo ng Pilipinas ang punong arkitekto or chief architect ng ating polisiyang panlabas or foreign policy. Dahil dito, nananawagan kami sa ICC na huwag nang magsayang ng panahon sa kanilang mga imbestigasyon dahil hindi kinikilala ng Pilipinas ang hurisdiksiyon ng ICC. Patunay rin ito na gumagana ang ating mga prosesong legal kaya’t tama lamang na tigilan na ang pakikialam ng ICC sa ating domestic affairs.

We ask the ICC to stop its investigation against the President because its investigation cannot prosper now that the Philippine Supreme Court has recognized the Philippine withdrawal from the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The Court’s decision is also proof that domestic legal remedies are working and therefore, because of the principal complementarity, the court should not exercise its jurisdiction.

Now, itong desisyon pong ito bagama’t ang dismissal ay dahil sa mootness ay patunay po talaga na wala pong nalabag sa kahit anong probisyon ng Saligang Batas o ‘di naman kaya ng mga batas natin ang Presidente noong siya po ay tumiwalag sa ICC. Nakasulat po doon sa press release na siyempre po ang Presidente, gaya ng lahat ng opisyaes ng ating bayan, ay dapat sumunod sa Saligang Batas at sa ating mga batas. Pero kung mayroon pong nalabag, hindi po dapat na-dismiss ang petition for mootness. Bakit po? Kasi ang exception to the mootness doctrine, kasama po diyan kung iyong matter na... iyong subject matter ng petisyon involves transcendental importance or ‘di naman kaya, it is capable of repetition and yet evasive of judicial review.

So kung mayroon po talagang nilabag sa Saligang Batas ang Presidente, hindi po dapat mootness ang naging desisyon ng ating hukuman. Pero antayin na rin po natin iyong teksto mismo ng desisyon ng Kataas-taasang Hukuman.

Samantala, ilan sa pag-uusapan po mamaya – magkakaroon po ng meeting mamaya ang IATF – ay ang priority group A4 ng National COVID-19 Vaccination Plan. Pag-uusapan din po ang paglalagay ng temporary travel ban sa lahat ng foreign nationals na nagri-request na pumasok

sa Pilipinas. Nauna na pong nilimitahan ng National Task Force to 1,500 ang pupuwedeng makapasok na mga pasahero sa Pilipinas, at limitado po ito sa mga OFWs at mga Pilipino.

Pag-uusapan din po ang mga isyu na may kinalaman sa StaySafe.ph. Kasama rin sa pag-uusapan ang obserbasyon ng Metro Manila Council ukol sa kinakailangan na COVID-19 ward allocations sa mga gobyernong ospital. Pag-uusapan din po ang hiling na bigyan-prayoridad ang mga OFWs na mapapadala sa high-risk countries na mabakunahan bago ang kanilang deployment.

Pagdating naman po sa usaping libreng mask, makikita sa inyong screen ang alokasyon ng surgical mask ng mga local government units sa Metro Manila ayon sa March 17, 2021 datos ng DOH. Halos tatlung porsiyento bawat siyudad ang inaasahang mabibigyan; kasama ito sa mga imbentaryo ng DOH at nagsimula na ang direktang pamamahagi sa mga lokal na pamahalaan.

Samantala, as of March 18, 2021, sa ilalim ng 'face mask distribution project' ay mayroon nang 11,088,649 pieces of cloth masks ang naipamahagi ng DSWD sa Metro Manila, sa Region III, Region IV-A, Region VI, Region VII and Region XI. Mayroon namang 1.5 million pieces na maituturnover sa Cavite sa susunod na linggo at one million pieces sa Rizal.

Usaping bakuna naman po tayo: As of March 16, 6 P.M., mayroon na tayong 240,297 na mga health workers na nabakunahan. Nasa 97% na po or 1,092,200 of available doses ang napamahagi na sa 956 vaccination sites sa labimpitong rehiyon sa Pilipinas.

Usaping bakuna pa rin: Lumabas kahapon sa balita ang tungkol sa isang healthcare worker na namatay pagkatapos mabakunahan. Nakikiramay po kami sa healthcare worker na ito. Pero namatay po iyong ating healthcare worker dahil po sa COVID-19. Makakasama po natin mamaya si Dr. Rommel Lobo ng Philippine Society of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology or PSAAI at miyembro ng National Adverse Event Following Immunization Committee para mas ipaliwanag ang nasabing insidente. Kasama rin po natin mamaya 'no si Dr. Salvaña para naman po sa usaping bakuna pa rin.

COVID-19 updates naman po tayo: Mayroong nai-report kahapon na 4,387 na mga bagong kaso ayon sa March 17 case bulletin ng DOH. Nananatiling napakataas naman po ang bilang ng mga gumagaling – nasa 561,099 na po ang gumaling; samantalang 12,866 ang mga namatay na po. Mas bumaba po ang ating case fatality rate at ngayon po, ito ay 2.02%. Nakikiramay po kami.

Tingnan naman po natin ang ating mga ospital, sapat pa ba ho ang ating mga ospital ngayong dumadami po ang kaso ng COVID-19? Well, mukha naman pong sapat pa sa ngayon 'no. Mayroon pa po tayong 53% available na mga ICU beds; mayroon pa po tayong 60% available na mga isolation beds; mayroon pa tayong 67% available na mga ward beds; at mayroon pa po tayong 72% available na mga ventilators.

Dito po tayo nagtatapos ng ating presentasyon. Unahin po muna natin si Dr. Rommel Lobo. Sir, Dr. Lobo—kasama rin po pala natin maya-maya lang si Dr. Leopoldo Vega, DOH Usec. para pag-usapan iyong ating healthcare utilization rate at kasama rin po natin si NTF Deputy Chief Implementer Vince Dizon.

Now, sir, Dr. Lobo, kayo po bilang miyembro ng Adverse Effect of Vaccination, ano po ang official report dito sa healthcare worker natin na nasawi po 'no? Ano po ang dahilan ng kaniyang pagkasawi. Dr. Lobo, the floor is yours.

**DR. LOBO:** Iyon pong dahilan ng pagkakasawi po niya ay dahil sa impeksiyon ng coronavirus. Siya po ay nagkaroon ng infection, nag-full blown po siya, nagkaroon po ng—naapektuhan po ang kaniyang baga, nagkaroon po siya ng pneumonia kaya po nagtuluy-tuloy at nag-deteriorate po iyong kaniyang kundisyon.

Totally, alam po natin na—lahat po kasi ng mga binabakunahan ay nagkakaroon po ng health declaration. Iyon pong health declaration na iyon ay ginagawa po natin para mapangalagaan ang kalusugan po ng mga each and every one na magpapabakuna. At that health declaration form, nakita po natin ang declaration lang niya ay mayroon siyang comorbidities – may diabetes, mayroon po siyang hypertension na controlled, at the same time, mayroon po siyang bronchial asthma na controlled din po, naka-maintenance siya.

Tinatanong din po doon kung mayroon po kayong sintomas ng COVID o kayo po ay nagkaroon ng COVID within last three months po. Kasi po, para mapangalagaan nga po natin ang kanilang kalusugan, lahat po doon sa pagtatanong na iyon, wala pong mga bagay na magsasabi po o signal, na safety signal po na sasabihin na hindi po siya dapat bakunahan kaya po siya ay nabakunahan. Kaya lang po, after a day, nagkaroon po siya ng non-productive cough na in-attribute po niya parang allergy, tapos nagka-lagnat siya, nagkaroon din po ng rashes the following day. Tapos bigla po siyang—grumabe po iyong sintomas niya, nag-consult sa emergency room. Ina-advise kong magpa-admit, hindi pa rin po siya nagpa-admit, sabi niya magho-home quarantine. Kasi iyong sintomas po niya ay nagpu-point na sa COVID eh. Kaya lang po noong after three days na ina-advise siya na umuwi po siya, bumalik siya, nagpa-admit na, medyo mas lumala po nang konti iyong sintomas. Tapos nagpa-swab, doon po natin nalaman na mayroon po siyang RT-PCR na COVID-19 positive po siya.

Tapos trineat [treated] po siya accordingly, kaya lang po, siyempre hindi na po nahabol iyong situation. Iyon po iyong mga imbestigasyon na nakita namin. At nandudoon din po iyong totoo po, nabakunahan siya pero hindi naman po iyon...wala po iyong kinalaman sa kaniyang pagkakasawi o paglala ng kaniyang kundisyon.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Masasabi ho ba natin na iyong bakuna niya came too late kasi apparently nabakunahan siya, mayroon na siyang COVID-19?

**DR. LOBO:** Ngayon po kasi mayroon tayong upsurge ng incidence ng COVID-19 'no. Hindi po natin kasi masasabi kung sino iyong makakahawa sa atin. Hindi rin po naman natin masasabi

na it came too late kasi po kapag po binakunahan tayo usually it will take po mga three weeks before we develop primary immune response para po magkakaroon tayo ng proteksiyon. Pero hindi pa po sapat iyon kaya nga po tayo ay nagkakaroon ng second dose para mag-boost po noong una, iyon pong proteksiyon.

Pagkatapos po noon habang tumatagal tumataas po iyong ating proteksiyon. Siyempre po magwi-wane iyon pero mayroon po tayong nagagawang parang memory doon sa binakuna sa atin para on second exposure para doon sa true virus mas maganda po iyong ating proteksiyon, mayroon tayong mas magandang panlaban.

Ngayon, hindi ko po masasabi kung it was too late baka po kasi at that time na wala siyang sintomas nag-i-incubate na rin po siya dahil siyempre po alam ninyo po health worker ito, na-i-expose po kayo sa ospital. Hindi ninyo rin po alam kung sino po iyong mga mayroon o wala na nakakahalubilo ninyo.

Kaya po tayo, ini-encourage natin kahit na nga po nabakunahan tayo we have to practice all iyon pong hand hygiene, wearing of the face mask, the face shield, and socially distance po. It is always prudent to do that even if we be vaccinated fully po.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, maraming salamat, Dr. Lobo. Please join us po sa open forum dahil I'm sure maraming tanong iyong ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps.

Kasama rin po natin si Usec. Dr. Vega. Sir, ang aking nai-report ngayon ay mayroon pang 53% available na ICU wards, 60% na available na mga ward beds para sa COVID. Pero kumusta po ang ating sitwasyon sa Metro Manila dahil ang aking mga datos po ay national 'no. Ano na po ang lagay ng ating health care utilization rate dito sa Metro Manila at ano po ang mga hakbang na ginagawa ng One Hospital Command Center? The floor is yours, Dr. Vega.

**DOH USEC. VEGA:** Good afternoon, Sec. Roque. Good afternoon ho sa lahat.

And alam ninyo for the past several weeks tinitingnan ho namin ang uptick and increasing trends sa number of positive cases natin dito sa buong bansa at saka sa Metro Manila. Pero nakakabahala na ho sa Metro Manila because 47% of the new cases that we have is in the Metro Manila. Ito iyong napapansin din namin na nag-i-increase ang utilization rate ng COVID isolation beds at saka COVID wards pati na rin iyong ICU.

Ang latest po namin sa One Hospital Command, iyong data ho ng COVID beds and isolation, umaabot na ho sa 54% ang usage ho nito sa buong Metro Manila. Pero iyong intensive care units kasi kakaunti naman ang number of intensive care units natin, siguro ang total nito is mga 679 eh nasa ano po siya ngayon close to 64%, so in other words iyong mga 30% na lang ang available.

But sa mga certain areas ho like Manila, Makati and Taguig, iyong mga level three hospitals, iyong mga malalaking hospitals both public and private, ito iyong nagkaka-experience ng nasa high risk category, between moderate and high risk. Some are even in high risk, ibig sabihin mga 80% or 83% na po ang occupied. Ito iyong binabantayan po namin kasi ito iyong puwede ho kaming makatulong in terms of coordinated care and referral sa mga hospitals naman na may allocation pa for beds, especially for moderate and severe.

So, ito iyong data right now na na-e-experience namin dito sa Metro Manila, and we hope na whatever good practices we had last year, kasi alam naman natin last year the peak of the cases was up by July and August of last year and that was the time that we really had to improve in terms of the response of the government hospitals. Kaya nga tinupad ng ibang government hospitals po at saka private na mag-allocate ng certain number of beds. In fact, last year, 11% lang ho ang private hospitals na nag-allocate for COVID beds at saka government ho nasa 25% lang.

But now it is safe to say na nag-increase na ho ang capacity ng hospitals lalo na iyong private kasi nasa 20% allocation na po sila at saka iyong government-retain hospitals po natin ay nasa mga 32%. So, nag-improve na po iyong capacity at nagkaroon na rin ng experience, good experience itong mga health care workers natin on how to treat itong COVID patients in both categories – the moderate and severe, kasi alam naman natin na mayroon na pong guidelines sa treatment of COVID na iyong better ang kanilang outcomes. So, ganoon ang situation ngayon, Secretary Harry Roque.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay! Thank you, Usec. Vega. I hope you join us also for the open forum. We also have on board Testing Czar Vince Dizon. Sec. Vince, are you in the house o wala na? Okay, mukhang wala pa po si Sec. Vince Dizon or mukhang talagang hindi siya sasama.

Anyway, pumunta na po tayo sa ating open forum. First question from Usec. Rocky, please.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Roque at sa atin pong mga bisita.

From Rose Novenario of Hataw: Dahil patuloy ang pagtaas ng bilang ng kaso ng COVID-19 sa bansa, may balak ba ang Palasyo na kanselahin muna ang mga presidential event at itigil muna rin pansamantala ng ilang government officials ang mga dinadaluhang pagtitipon lalo na't ilang miyembro ng media na ang nagpositibo sa COVID-19 sa pagtupad sa tungkulin na sundan sila para makapaghatid ng balita sa publiko?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Rose, si Presidente naman mayroon siyang lakad today and tomorrow, itutuloy po iyan kasi iyong lakad naman niya ay sa area na mababa po ang COVID 'no, mga MGCQ areas. As far as iyong mga ibang opisyal po, wala po akong alam because I can only speak for the President 'no.

Now, nais ko lang hong paalalahanan na ang PhilHealth po, mayroon po tayong package sa lahat ng mga magiging biktima ng COVID-19. Mayroon po tayong package for mild, mayroon

tayong package for moderate cases and mayroon tayong package for severe cases. So sa mga nagiging biktima po eh makipag-ugnayan po kayo sa PhilHealth para sa package na pupuwede ninyong ma-recover.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Ang second question niya: Ano po ang benepisyo o ayudang ibinibigay ng gobyerno sa mga kawani ng pamahalaan na tinamaan ng COVID-19 at nahawahan pa ang kanilang pamilya dahil hindi sila inilagay sa quarantine facility ng kanilang ahensiya?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi lang po sa kawani ng gobyerno binibigay iyong ating mga PhilHealth packages ‘no.

Dr. Vega, hindi ko po memoryado iyong mga PhilHealth packages na iyon. Ang alam ko lang po ang severe case ay P700,000 plus ‘no. Pero magkano po ngayon iyong ating mga PhilHealth packages—at ito po ay para sa lahat ng Pilipino, hindi lang po para sa mga kawani ng gobyerno. Sir, naalala ninyo ba kung ano iyong packages for mild and moderate cases of COVID?

**DOH USEC. VEGA:** Alam mo, Secretary Harry, may P750,000 for moderate ano. Tapos ang ano naman, iyong PhilHealth package naman sa mild ho lalung-lalo na ‘pag nasa isolation centers ka lang eh nasa P5,000. Hindi ko masyadong ma—iyong severe ano ho iyon, that’s more than P750,000 po. Hindi ko makuha iyong exact amount right now.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Ako pala ho makaka-recover ako ng P5,000 ‘no ‘cause I’m in an isolation center.

**DOH USEC. VEGA:** Oo, siguro.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Thank you very much po. Next question, please.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, inform lang natin— kasama rin po natin sa Zoom ngayon si Dr. Salvaña.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hi, Dr. Salvaña! Ay pasensiya na po kayo, nasa script kasi, nabago iyong script. Dr. Salvaña yes, please Doc. Ang tanong po, marami pa ring mga nagkakaroon ng alinlangan ngayon dahil bukod po dito sa kaso ng isang health worker natin na mayroon pong—well namatay po siya dahil sa COVID, eh marami rin pong nag-alinlangan dahil doon sa report na nagkakaroon daw ng blood clotting ang AstraZeneca vaccine ‘no. Pakilinaw po, ano ba ho talaga ang estado ng mga bakuna na available ngayon sa atin sa Pilipinas? Dr. Salvaña, the floor is yours.

**DR. SALVAÑA:** Thank you, Spox. Thank you to everyone for inviting me here. Iyong ano po natin, iyong nangyari po doon sa Europe doon sa Astra may na-report po na nagkaroon ng blood clot at may isa pong namatay. Bagama’t sa ngayon iyong European Medicines Agency

after their investigation sabi naman mukhang hindi naman po talaga related. Bagama't iyong mga countries na naka-receive noong same batch noong Astra vaccine na iyon nag-pause rin po sila para ma-review lang po nila.

Pero ang WHO po ay nagsasabi na patuloy po iyong pagbakuna dahil delikado po talaga kung magkaroon ng COVID ang mga tao. So for now, wala namang abiso na mag-stop po tayo dito sa Pilipinas, tuluy-tuloy pa rin iyong paggamit po natin ng Astra dito.

Iyong doon naman sa isang namatay na healthcare worker, pinaliwanag na nga po ni Dr. Lobo and actually this underlines that doctors and healthcare workers are really in clear and present danger habang tuluy-tuloy po itong ating COVID-19. And so, the sooner we can get the protection, sabi nga ni Dr. Lobo 2 to 3 weeks pa lang bago magsimula itong ating protection, the sooner we give it to them the more healthcare workers will be protected. Mga 240,000 na po 'ata iyong nabigyan natin ng first dose and hopefully we can give them their second dose once it's appropriate. And those people will have a miniscule, almost non-existent risk of death once fully protected na po against severe disease.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Thank you, Dr. Salvaña, and my apologies ha. Namali po iyong script 'ata, oo.

**DR. SALVAÑA:** No problem.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay. Next question, please.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes. Secretary, tanong mula kay Leila Salaverria ng Inquirer: You've mentioned daw po that judges should be accorded presumption of irregularity in their issuance. What does the Palace make of the fact that a judge has been red tagged for ordering the release of a journalist and a labor organizer after a poster displayed in public purportedly from communist rebels thanked a Mandaluyong judge for the release?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, unang-una po, nagku-conclude tayo na na-red tag si Judge Ignacio pero iyong 'di umanong red tagging niya ay nakabase lamang sa isang tarpaulin. Eh kahit sino po pupuwedeng gumawa niyang tarpaulin na iyan. So let us not conclude po na na-red tag na si Judge Ignacio and our authorities are investigating already this incident.

Iyong mga nagsabit po niyang tarpaulin na 'yan, mahuhuli po kayo dahil may CCTV po sa area so malalaman talaga natin kung sino iyang mga nagsabit ng tarpaulin na iyan.

Pero sa ngayon po, I refuse to conclude na red tagged na po si Judge Ignacio. Imbestigahan po natin iyan dahil pupuwedeng mga kalaban din ng gobyerno ang gumawa niyan para ibintang sa gobyerno. Hindi ko po sinasabi na iyan ang katotohanan pero 'antayin po natin ang imbestigasyon, tingnan natin iyong mga CCTV footages.

Gayun pa man, kung totoong na-red tag po si Judge Ignacio, ang Presidente po mismo magbibigay ng proteksiyon kay Judge Ignacio kung kinakailangan. Iyan po ang assurance ng Presidente pero sa ngayon po, let us not make hasty conclusions dahil kahit sino pa po eh pupuwedeng nagsabit ng tarpaulin na ‘yan.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Ang second question po ni Leila Salaverria: Does the Palace consider this an indication daw po of continuing attacks on members of the legal profession? How can justice prevail in such an environment?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi po kasi nga po that’s already a conclusion which has not been established yet ‘no. Huwag po muna po tayo masyadong mabilis mag-conclude. Pero ganoon pa man, ang sinabi ko nga po, kung talagang mapatunayan na nari-red tag ang ating mga mahistrado, obligasyon pa rin po ng Ehekutibo kung hindi po sapat ang resources ng Executive na bigyan ng proteksiyon ang mga huwes natin.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Ang third question po niya: How does the Palace view the rejection of the law to divide Palawan into three provinces?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala po dahil iyan po ay desisyon ng mga taga-Palawan ‘no and we respect the sovereign decision made by the people of Palawan.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Ang susunod po via Zoom, ang nakalagay po dito si Joseph Morong ng GMA-7.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, Joseph.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Hello sir, good morning. Good morning sa mga guest po ninyo. Dr. Vega, how are you doing? Sir, can I go first to Dr. Lobo just a little bit on the incident? How are you, sir? Good morning. Sir, iyon pong sa incident. So noong time na nagpabakuna iyong tao, when was this? Kailan po ito?

**DR. LOBO:** March 4 po siya nagpabakuna.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Ah, March 4. And he or she is a healthcare worker ‘no?

**DR. LOBO:** She is a healthcare worker po – 47-year-old, female.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** And hindi po parang standard natin na dapat may test or may PCR test or antigen test to know the status of the person?

**DR. LOBO:** Ah, hindi po iyon ano—iyon pong doing a screening for antigen test is not a prerequisite to vaccination. Kaya nga po tayo mayroon tayong health standard—mayroon po tayong health assessment form na you have to be honest in answering it and they also will ask



you whether you are manifesting any symptoms of COVID within the last 2 weeks or 3 weeks and even if you were diagnosed to have COVID in the last 3 months po, iyon po ‘yung...

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir from a layman’s point of view ‘no and of course this is in the context of vaccine confidence na parang ang daling idikit noong mga tao na parang eh binakunahan nga tapos namatay. So how do we parang ihihiwalay, sir, if it’s all possible na hindi vaccine ang naging cause noong kaniyang death and in fact it was COVID? Papaano po natin naihiwalay iyong ganoong findings?

**DR. LOBO:** Usually po, iyon pong committee namin iyong National Adverse Event Following Immunization, iyon pong national and then iyong regional, iyong RAEFIC, they usually investigate any adverse event following immunization, and we would like the causality assessment. When you do causality assessment, it is a systematic review which aims to determine the likelihood of a causal association between the event and the vaccine. Kumbaga po kapag nagbakuna, tinitingnan po namin kung ito ay mayroon pong puwede nating ma-associate doon.

Tapos, it will take some time to prepare the causality assessment. Tapos tinitingnan po natin lahat, we conduct other investigation. Iyon pong mga sinabmit na papers, ini-evaluate namin. Niri-review din po namin iyong mga clinical records, tapos kino-compile po namin iyong mga information. And finally, the results of causality assessment will be released po, depending on the decision of all the experts. Usually, it’s a unanimous decision. And from what we have gathered, the patient could have been incubating at that time. Noon pong binakunahan siya, wala pa pong symptoms eh parang na-expose po siya, nagkakaroon na po siya ng manifestation noong after a day or two pa po eh, hindi po doon mismo; well po siya doon sa day na nabakunahan siya.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sorry, I hope you can indulge on it. In other words, sir, iyon pong ikinamatay niya ay hindi po iyon kasama sa mga established na side effects ng bakuna?

**DR. LOBO:** Iyon pong bakuna, hindi po makakapag-cause ng infection, definite po iyon. So, hindi po iyon makakapag-contribute doon sa ikinamatay po niya. Remember, iyon pong bakuna na ibinibigay natin ay safe, tapos inactivated po siya, wala din pong pagkakataon na mag-multiply iyong mikrobyo na nandoon kasi patay na po iyong mikrobyo. Ang gagawin lang po noon, mag-stimulate po ng ating immune system to produce an anti-body and at the same time, memory cells po para second exposure will have an adequate immune or re-boost immune response, iyon po siya.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Spox Roque, can I go to Dr. Vega, please?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, please.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Dr. Vega, good afternoon, sir. Sir, sa NCR data, you mentioned some data in passing, but I don’t know if you have it with you. Pero can you give us statistics

po, sir, of the available number of ICU beds, isolation beds and ward beds in terms of number and then percentage of occupancy?

**DR. VEGA:** In terms of numbers for the NCR, generally, we have for the COVID isolation beds and the ward beds that we have dito sa mga hospitals, that would total roughly about 7,000, and 52% of that is occupied – this is both public and private. For the Intensive Care Units, we have almost close to 679 ICU beds. So when we say that 64% of this is being utilized, it means that the balance now is still free. But there's a qualification here because that's the general NCR data that we have for the Hospital Care Utilization rate because this is really a matrix for looking at the capacity of the health system.

But mayroon din, Joseph, areas especially in Quezon City, Makati and Taguig wherein the Hospital Utilization rate is already bordering are on the high risk that is about 80%, summed up. So iyon iyong binabantayan po namin, kasi mataas talaga lalo na sa both public and the private. Pero in a general percentage, it's still on the moderate risk level for the ICU at 64%.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, sorry, ICU beds you said 64% is being utilized and therefore 30% na lang ang available?

**DR. VEGA:** Yeah, 30% na lang ang available for the 79.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Yes, sir, so how would you describe po the current surge that we are experiencing? How will you characterize it?

**DR. VEGA:** Well, compared last year wherein wala talaga tayong experience in tackling and responding initially, we are in a better-off situation right now. Because, first of all, alam na ng mga health care workers on how they should behave and also the institutions in terms of bed allocation, kasi alam nila na there is now a mandate coming from the Department of Health that 20% of this must be allocated in private and also 30% [for government]. So in other words, we have improved capacity compared with last year.

Second, nagkaroon na rin kami ng set up talaga with the One Hospital Command, wherein we were able to do coordinated care and proper referral and even triaging and providing medical direction to all patients calling for assistance.

Pangatlo, nagkaroon din tayo ng partnership together with the DPWH na nag-i-increase tayo ng beds through modular hospitals. In fact, the Lung Center, nakagawa po kami, together with the DPWH, ng modular hospital capable of handling moderate and severe. So, about 25 beds. And mayroon kaming i-operationalize by two weeks from now, iyong nagawa sa QI, that is a hundred and 10 beds capable of handling moderate and severe.

So nakita talaga namin ang pangangailangan since last year sa number of beds dito, especially with the ICU dito sa Metro Manila. So we have also improved on several hospitals through the Bayanihan. Alam mo sa Bayanihan to Recover Act as One, nabigyan tayo ng mga resources

and na-allocate namin ito sa mga government hospitals like Lung Center or Jose Rodriguez Memorial Center na mag-increase ang kanilang capacity for ICU. So ito iyong ginawa naming improved capacity compared with last year.

So kung tanungin mo kami, I think we are better prepared for this situation right now compared with last year. We know what's effective in terms of public health standards and prevention, localized lockdowns by the local government unit, and we know that mayroon nang experience ang mga health care workers on how to go about it. We have PPEs already. health care workers are getting vaccinated. So compared with last year, we are better-off, we are better prepared and we can keep on improving and adjusting to the changing times.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, right now, iyong OCTA is saying there is 15.9% attack rate in NCR and some cities have more than 20% attack rate. My question, sir, is: Is it possible to plot na given all these attack rates in the cities, would you be able to determine kung kailan mauubos iyong ating mga hospitals?

**DR. VEGA:** Actually, if you take at the mathematical computation, assumptions by OCTA, matatakot ka talaga. Can you imagine if you have 11,000 and 6,000 and you just have a number of beds dito sa NCR? So the way I look at it, these are alarm bells, sound bells talaga. And if you don't do nothing, talagang mahuhulog tayo sa ganoon, and the assumption is only based on mathematical projections. But more important is how we are going to respond to the increasing crisis right now.

And if you are able to do that, if we are able to make sure that the public adheres to minimum health standards—ayaw ko na ngang sabihing minimum eh. You have to enhance it eh, if there is a double masking, you have to double mask, you have to do all of the things that the minimum health standard requires plus the executive power of the local government units to provide iyong tinatawag nilang granular lockdowns or zonal containment because this is very effective, and we have seen this last year. Paano natin napababa iyong August to September, October, November? It was just because of the strong enforcement of the local government units in terms of making sure that they are able to contain and mitigate the transmission of the virus in their communities. Very active po ang mayors natin, and I can attest to that and they can do it. This is just by executive functions. If we don't do anything, then the projection will be on track.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Thank you, sir. Secretary Harry, just two short questions for you.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay, go ahead.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, in relation to the discussion with Dr. Vega, what happens in April assuming that there are no interventions? And do you think na darating tayo sa point na mauubos iyong mga hospitals or you don't think that will happen? And second just a little comment on iyong mayroong ni-launch yata, sir, na coalition iyong isang bayan? So Palace perspective, so on those two things, last na lang.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, unang-una po 'no, gumagawa nga po tayo ng hakbang para huwag magkatotoo iyong mga projections 'no. And I think the local government units already know what to do, so I'm confident na mapapabagal po natin. In fact, nakikita na natin na bumagal na 'no; hindi na po siya 5,000 plus, nasa 4,000 na. And I think we can further slow it down 'no, gradually, to 3,000 and then, 2000 up to the 1,000 level.

Pero if that doesn't happen within April, fixed po ang ating mga formulas on quarantines. So kung talagang magiging kritikal po ang ating healthcare utilization rate, then that may justify changing our quarantine status, but hopefully not po 'no because I think the people and local government units and everyone now is contributing para mapabagal nga iyong pagkalat ng sakit.

Hindi ko po alam kung ano iyong One Nation na sinasabi ninyo; hindi ko pa siya nabasa anywhere.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sila Justice Carpio, Ombudsman Morales and si Secretary Del Rosario have launched parang a coalition [unclear] sa opposition parang to provide maybe an alternative to [unclear] coming elections.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, napakaaga po para mag-usap ng eleksiyon at pulitika. Iyan naman po ang aming sinasabi palagi, isantabi muna po ang pulitika habang nandito po sa pandemya. Kami po sa administrasyon, gawa muna, pandemya muna bago pulitika.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Thank you for your time, sir. Dr. Vega, thank you. Thank you, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you, Joseph. Next question, Usec. Rocky.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes, Secretary, from Llanesca Panti of GMA News Online: Is the Palace supportive of Vaccine Czar Galvez's suggestion of administering Sinovac on senior citizens even if this suggestion goes against the recommendation of FDA which said Sinovac is only for clinically healthy people aged 18 to 59 years old?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Very supportive po dahil alam natin na napakadaming bansa na sa daigdig ang gumagamit ng Sinovac para sa senior citizens. And I think steps will be taken to ask the local representative of Sinovac to present additional data sa FDA para mabago po iyong EUA na inisyu ng FDA. Ang kailangan lang naman po ng FDA ay additional data.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Second question po niya: Former Health Secretary Esperanza Cabral said the country is now ten steps back from square one with over 61,000 active COVID-19 cases which is the same level as July 2020 in which government and private sector not in the position to spend for subsidies again just like ECQ last year. Do you agree with her observations?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I love Dra. Cabral, but I will let one of her students respond to her, Dr. Edsel Salvaña.

**DR. SALVAÑA:** Yes, thank you, Spox. I think that—well, I also love Secretary Cabral and she is very close to me po. In this case, we probably have a professional difference in this manner because as I have already mentioned in many of my posts, we know much better how to take care of COVID-19 po.

I haven't had the death since January among my patients, and I have had very sick patients, including doctors, in the ICU. So I think that from a completely medical standpoint, we are in a better position, mas marami po tayong gamot – we have dexamethasone; we have Remdesivir; we have tocilizumab as well. We also have right now, like with Usec. Vega, we have this One Hospital Command which is really coordinating. Kasi iyong problema talaga natin right now is we need to make sure that patients who need to be in the hospital do have hospital beds. The truth is, if these are all mild cases, it's not going to ano—hindi naman tataas iyong death rates natin eh. Ang problem is, about 50% of the mild cases are also admitted in the hospitals which pushes out some of the beds that can be used for severe.

And so, iyong pag-utilize po natin ng ating mga TTMFs for the mild cases, dapat mas gawin natin iyon para we can reserve the hospital beds for the severe cases. Because the severe cases, iyon iyong mamamatay if we don't have hospital beds for them. And like I said, we already know how to take care of severe COVID.

So two-pronged po iyong approach: We really need to decrease the number of cases that we have right now; and we already know what works – we have face mask, we have face shield, we have enhanced contact tracing. And the second thing is, we need to make sure that for those who do develop severe disease that we continue to have hospital beds open for them because we can take good care of them and mas mababa na po iyong mortality compared to last year na left and right po talaga ang namamatay because we didn't really know what we're doing po.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, siguro based on personal experience, dito sa aking isolation facility, mayroon pong mga doktor at mga nurses na dalawang beses sa isang araw sila nagra-rounds – isang 9 in the morning, isang 4 in the afternoon. So kung kayo po ay mild ang sintomas or asymptomatic—ako nga po asymptomatic eh dapat siguro ibigay ko na iyong espasyo ko dito sa iba 'no at maghanda na lang ako ng sariling kuwarto ko sa bahay ko na hiwalay sa aking misis 'no. Pero hindi po ibig sabihin na palibhasa isolation facility kayo pupunta, wala pong doktor. Mayroon pong mga doktor, may mga nurses po dito sa hotel where I'm staying right now. Dalawang beses po ang rounds nila at dalawang beses kayong kinukuhanan din ng vital statistics kasama na po iyong oximeter to measure your oxygen level.

So alam ko po, nakakagulat kapag kayo ay nag-test positive at lalo na kapag mayroon na kayong mga mild symptoms 'no, pero hindi po dapat takbo kaagad sa ospital. Kung talagang nakakahinga naman kayo at kayo po ay parang mayroon lamang sipon, dito na po kayo sa mga

isolation centers pumunta dahil mayroon din pong mga doktor dito na mag-aalaga sa inyo. Okay?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Ang third question niya, Secretary, ano na raw po iyong update sa StaySafe.ph contact tracing app? Is it fully operational by now? And by how much do you see this reducing COVID-19 transmission?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi ko po alam kung fully operational na kasi noong huling binalita ko po iyan, they were given ten days para asikasuhin lahat ng mga dapat gawin para maging fully implemented na siya. I don't think it has been ten days yet. Pero importante po talaga ang StaySafe ngayon dahil we need to use technology para dito sa napakaimportanteng contact tracing laban po sa COVID-19.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Thank you, Secretary. Si Melo Acuña po ang susunod na magtatanong.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Go ahead, Melo.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Good afternoon. I hope you feel better, Secretary.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I'm completely asymptomatic po.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Good. I have some questions for—

**SEC. ROQUE:** [Unclear] about your relative who was also positive 'no.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Yeah, I hope he's on his way to recovery. And thank you, thank you for the prayers. Let me ask Usec. Vega. Usec. Vega, good afternoon.

**USEC. VEGA:** Good afternoon, Mr. Melo.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Thank you for the endorsement. Have you considered tapping hospitals outside Metro Manila should this surge continue in the rise in COVID-19 cases, Usec?

**USEC. VEGA:** Yeah, tama ka, Sir Melo. Actually, ang experience namin last year through the One Hospital Command, nakita po namin na may mga open or allocated beds pa rin iyong Region III and Region IV. So iyong mga pasyente po, lalo na iyong mga private patients na who would need private care, inaano ho namin, kinu-coordinate namin iyong kanilang transfer to Region III and Region IV. So mayroon ho kaming ... nag-set up na rin kami ng One Hospital regional areas para ho mag-communicate sa different private hospitals doon para sa transfers. So we did that.

And if it will happen na talagang magkakaroon ng sapat na kakulangan dito sa Metro Manila in terms of beds, then we can easily parang transfer or coordinate their care through the

Region III or Region IV. Kasi doon sa Region IV ho, sa Batangas Medical Center, ina-anticipate na ho namin eh kasi last year ay nagpatayo rin kami ng modular hospital doon sa Batangas Medical Center to make sure na mayroon ding coverage ang area na iyon at saka mayroon kaming area na to refer. So ito iyong tinitingnan talaga namin, Sir Melo. And we hope na it won't happen again for this time.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Yeah, I spent some time at East Avenue Medical Center last night and I saw that sunud-sunod iyong ambulansiya na may dalang COVID-19 cases. For me it's very alarming, even though I work for the media, pero it's alarming na halos sunud-sunod iyong mga ambulansiya. Now, may question is: Have you considered getting more personnel because I heard a nurse collapsed last night while donning the PPE due to exhaustion? Siguro baka puwedeng magdagdag kayo ng mga tauhan sa mga ospital considering all [garbled]

**USEC. VEGA:** Yes, tama ka, Melo. That was one of the things requested by both public and private hospitals last year – augmentation of the human resource. Kasi alam mo, hindi lang COVID actually ang magiging ano eh, providing services; pati iyong mga non-COVID emergency, hindi po namin tinatanggihan iyan.

Ang tinatanggihan lang ngayon ng mga hospital which we are trying to say to them na iyong mga elective cases muna. Huwag muna ang mga elective cases para magkaroon po ng space po iyong COVID. Pero itong mga non-COVID emergency talagang tuluy-tuloy iyan. And then sometimes ito iyong kapag makikita ninyo maraming ambulansiya kasi karamihan din diyan mga non-COVID emergencies, although mayroon talagang COVID emergencies.

Pero sa katanungan ninyo po sa HR, nag-augment na ho ang Department of Health sa both public and private hospitals since last year, tapos kino-continue ho namin ito ngayon and that is dahil sa Bayanihan to Recover and Heal as One. And tinatanong nga namin sa ibang hospitals na kung kailangan ho nila ng human resource, open ho kami. We are open for augmenting lalung-lalo na iyong mga areas na nagki-cater talaga for COVID.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** How does the government take care of its personnel, especially the frontliners – mga doktor, mga nurses, med-techs and the like? Pero I heard sa East Avenue Medical Center pati iyong aircon technician eh naka-quarantine din dahil sa COVID. So, malawak itong problema natin ngayon.

**USEC. VEGA:** Alam mo, Sir Melo, talagang nakakaiba ang COVID. It changed the paradigm in terms of health services, kasi dito mo makikita na iyong mga ibang nurses ho they would have to go on duty for the next two weeks and pagkatapos po niyan mayroon silang dormitory or quarters to stay.

So, ang component ngayon sa hospital, like East Avenue as you were saying, iyong basketball court ho nila sa new building kasi actually iyong bagong COVID referral center natin na in-inaugurate last year para magkaroon ng sapat na number of beds, nasa East Avenue. Iyong

last floor ho nila noon is actually an activity area where puwede kang mag-basketball, puwede ka mag-gym, so ginawa ho namin kinonvert iyan into parang dormitory and quarantine for the health care workers.

So, ang lahat ho ng hospitals ho ngayon mayroon talagang arrangement with hotels and even motels where they can quarantine their health care workers. So, iba talaga kasi you have to provide accommodation, food and even iyong pag-stay nila doon sa mga hotels na ito.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** I can only wish them the best. Thank you very much.

**USEC. VEGA:** Thank you, Sir Melo.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Thank you, Secretary Harry.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you, Melo. Next question, Usec. Rocky?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, tanong mula po kay Rosalie Coz ng UNTV: Paki-clear lang po ang regulations sa pagbabakasyon kasama ang mga menor de edad. Nagkaroon po kasi ng laban-bawi kahapon sa NTF. Ang unang anunsiyo ay hindi isasama sa pagbabakasyon then later on binawi na. So, ano po ang policy ng IATF about sa mga menor de edad, are they allowed to travel po with their families? How about ang mga minor sa Metro Manila, allowed ba silang magbakasyon kasama ang pamilya?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Allowed pong magbiyahe point-to-point ang mga kabataan basta kasama po ang kanilang mga pamilya.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Secretary, hindi ko lang po alam kung nandito na si Pia Gutierrez ng ABS-CBN, ang susunod pong magtatanong sana.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Hi, sir! Good afternoon.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Good afternoon, Pia. Go ahead.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Hi, sir! Sir, my first question is for Usec. Vega. Doc, if the current trend of the increase of cases continues particularly here in Metro Manila, how much time do we have before Metro Manila facilities become overwhelmed with COVID-19 cases?

**USEC. VEGA:** It depends on the number of projections that you're looking at. But if you're looking at the OCTA projection wherein we hit almost 11,000 and talagang kung dadating sa situation ng ano then it would be very hard for Metro Manila lalo na iyong mga hospitals to cover the number of beds and specially for the moderate and severe.

Siguro ito na iyong time na talagang we will have to readjust and make sure that these patients are coordinated in other areas or other regions like Region IV and Region III.



**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Okay. Sir, do you see that happening in the next few weeks or in the next month if the current trend continues?

**USEC. VEGA:** Alam po, Pia, the future really starts with what you do now. I always believe in that. In other words, if the alarm bells of OCTA is there, it's already a measure that we have to do something now because the future really depends on what we will be doing individually and as a community and I think I do believe that with last year's experience, we were able to contain and mitigate the virus because of several interventions, all public interventions.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Okay. Doc, kanina you said something about enhancing minimum health standards like double masking. Do you think it's high time for the public to do that?

**USEC. VEGA:** Yeah, ini-emphasize ko ito because as you all know the transmissibility or the contagiousness of this virus is getting to be out of hand. And for me, minimum health standards dapat i-enhance na natin individually, this is an individual responsibility kasi, Pia, eh. This is a shared responsibility and the individual change of behavior and we have to enhance what we are trying to do now so that on our end as an individual person, we contribute for the common good of the community by enhancing what public standards there are.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Okay. You said double masking, Sir. What other recommendations do we have, sir?

**USEC. VEGA:** Aside from that is of course the other recommendations of siyempre iyong ventilation, if you are in a group you have to be in a well-ventilated area. You have to be very sure that you do not interact with the person for so long, iyon! And social hygiene and of course, if there is nothing important to do and not stroll or find yourself in a very crowded place.

So, you just have to enhance it, meaning individual behavior has to be enhanced in terms of changing your mindset of doing things.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** What about the recommendations to wear mask inside the house kasi apparently parang pami-pamilya na iyong nagkakahawaan daw?

**USEC. VEGA:** I think it is better if you're in a bubble and you just mingle among yourselves then you don't have to wear mask. But if you have a grandmother there and you work as health care worker and you know very well that the pre-clinical phase of COVID, you can easily transmit, so I would advise better to have mask.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Follow-up po kay Spox. Ito pong enhancing minimum health standards, are these something that the IATF will consider mandating in the next few days or weeks to address the increasing number of cases?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, mamaya po isasama po sa agenda ‘no. Binasa ko na po iyong agenda pero mayroon po ditong proposed circuit breaker for the rest of the Philippines. I think circuit breaker ito po iyong immediate measures that can be implemented para huwag na magtuluy-tuloy ang projections.

And because of the agenda this afternoon, we will be having a press briefing tomorrow to tell you kung anong nadesisyunan ng IATF and hopefully tomorrow we will also be joined by the different czars. Hopefully si Usec. Vega can also join us because we would be inviting the isolation czar, the testing czar, as well as chief implementer and vaccine czar Charlie Galvez also tomorrow to join us.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Just to give us an idea what to expect, sir, what do you mean by circuit breaker rules?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi ko po alam. Hindi ko pa po alam, it’s just in the agenda. I just got the copy of the agenda now. There was a technical working group meeting yesterday but as you know, I’m in isolation so hindi ko masyadong alam kung anong nangyari but I will be joining the IATF meeting by Zoom later.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Sir, last na lang. Sir, you said kanina, you are in a facility in San Juan but I’m sure you’re aware of some posting that you’re isolating in a presidential suite in a hotel somewhere in Pasay. So, could you respond to this issue, Sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** That’s fake news po. I’m in San Juan along Anapolis Street.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Can you clarify lang kasi you said kanina na you’re staying in a hotel? For information lang po of the public, as a policy, Sir, are COVID-19 patients allowed to isolate inside hotels?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yes, there are some hotels that were hired by the government to house mild and asymptomatic patients. Hiwalay pa po ito doon sa mga hotel na ginagamit na isolation for OFWs. Iyong tsini-tsismis po na nandoon ako sa Pasay, I do not even know if we have the means to pay for that hotel dahil masyadong grand po iyan, seven-star hotel po iyan. Ang alam ko po, two to three-star hotels lang po ang kinukuha natin including motels. Hindi naman po ako nasa motel, two-star hotel lang po.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** Pero are you considering going home and isolating at home na lang, sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, there’s a possibility. Kasi kagabi tatlo iyong tinulungan kong pumasok dito and I’m noticing na parang ako lang asymptomatic dito and everyone else has symptoms ‘no. So I’m conferring with my doctor actually if I’m better off staying here or if I should go home ‘no but I will be discussing it with my doctor at saka iyong doctor dito is also doing her rounds

at 4 P.M. But as of yesterday po, tatlo talaga iyong aking tinulungang makapasok dito – isang Director po from the Office of the Presidential Spokesperson, isang sikat na broadcaster sa PTV-4 at isa pa pong Usec. ng isang line department have checked in here. So the rooms fast being occupied and I understand we're almost in full capacity.

**PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN:** All right, sir. Thank you very much. Get well soon, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you very much po. Usec., go ahead.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, unahin ko na po iyong tanong muna ni Leila Salaverria para po kay Usec. Vega. Iyong double masking daw po, is that the official DOH recommendation or kung kay Usec. Vega lang daw po iyon?

**DOH USEC. VEGA:** Actually, Rocky, sa akin lang rin iyon. I was just trying to emphasize enhancing our behavior in public to strictly adhere to public health standards. So when I said that, it was really a way of... a proposal to do it so that you can enhance our actions individually. Iyon lang, nothing parang ano—not on a set na this is going to be the directive of the Department of Health. We'll wait for that.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. May follow up din po si Ace Romero ng Philippine Star, to Secretary Roque: Usec. Vega says 64% of ICU beds in Metro Manila are already occupied. Ano po ang implication nito? What is the likelihood that the capital region will be placed under a stricter quarantine measure or a lockdown specifically ECQ?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Sa ating standards po 'no, sa ating criteria, isa po sa mga criterion para mapataas ang quarantine classification eh iyong healthcare utilization rate 'no. Kapag umabot na po tayo sa danger level, iyong red na tinatawag, that may be a ground to increase the quarantine classification. Pero mayroon naman po tayong One Hospital Command Center and sa aking mga narinig kay Dr. Vega eh posible naman pong i-augment natin ang healthcare capacity natin sa Metro Manila by utilizing the healthcare capacity of the regions adjoining Metro Manila kasama na iyong CALABARZON at saka Central Luzon. So titingnan po natin kasi with the One Hospital Command Center, mai-estimate naman po ng team ni Dr. Vega kung talagang makukulangan tayo ng mga hospital beds or hindi, utilizing already the adjoining provinces.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Follow up po ni Ace Romero: 60% occupancy ng ICU, hindi po ba daw alarming na iyon?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, I would say na it is a bit of a reason to be alarmed. Pero sa akin po given that the people I think are now mobilizing themselves and concentrating on lowering the numbers, tingnan po natin kung ano magiging resulta noong concerted effort ng sambayanan to halt the rise in cases of COVID-19.

Sir Vega, are you alarmed?

**DOH USEC. VEGA:** Yes. The numbers, moderate risk na kasi iyan. It's alarming, we can be very comfortable 'pag low risk talaga, below mga 30% ano. But this is already 60% so alarming but we need to do something. We have to do the appropriate response po in terms of capacitating iyong mga hospitals, both public and private dito sa Metro Manila.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Secretary, tanong naman po ni Pia Rañada ng Rappler: Is DOH daw po compiling the number of cases among government personnel? What's the latest figure of total active cases?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Sir Vega, mayroon ba hong [garbled]?

**DOH USEC. VEGA:** I don't have the—I have the active numbers of the total but I don't have the—I cannot qualify kung how many of these active COVID patients are government workers. That, I have to look into Pia.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Pero alam mo Usec. 'no, kasama ko ngayon dito sa facility isang anchor ninyo diyang sa PTV-4. Hindi ko alam kung nag-anunsiyo na siya 'no, dalawang taga-MARO, iyong aking Director sa aking opisina at isa pang Usec. na taga-ibang departamento 'no. This is just one isolation pero ang feeling ko nga doon sa communication department ng gobyerno, lima na kaming naka-billet dito sa quarantine facility na ito.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes, Secretary. Iyong second question po niya, ni Pia Rañada: What will the government daw po do about the rise in cases among government personnel and what's driving this?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, tingin ko po kung ano iyong dahilan na mabilisang kumakalat itong COVID ay siyang dahilan din kung ba't maraming nahahawa sa mga taong-gobyerno kasi hindi naman hiwalay sa mas malaking lipunan iyong mga taong-gobyerno. Pero iyon nga po 'no, for what it's worth, marami pong nahahawa ay asymptomatic or mild cases 'no. Ang ating pakiusap ko nga eh huwag masyadong mag-panic kung mayroon pong mild symptoms, pumunta sa isolation facility at huwag nang pumunta ng hospital dahil uulitin ko po dito sa mga isolation facilities, mayroon din pong doktor na mag-aalaga sa inyo.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Ang tanong naman po ni Christina Mendez ng Philippine Star: According daw po to Mr. Mon Tulfo, General Sinas and his security team got vaccinated with Sinopharm last year. He contracted COVID-19. If this happened, should there be a cause of concern for the PSG since the President's close-in security officers also got Sinopharm jabs? Should there be a review of this protocol since PSG got compassionate use certification from FDA for additional boosts?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I would prefer that a doctor answer that 'no. Dr. Salvaña?

**DR. SALVAÑA:** Yes po. Iyong first generation vaccines natin na tinatawag, iyong pinakaunang type sa vaccines na lumalabas ngayon, ang main objective po talaga niya is to prevent severe disease. Now iyong prevention ng transmission is secondary kasi hindi pa nagagawa iyong mga pag-aaral, kasi mas mahirap pong aralin iyong prevention of transmission. So ang advice po namin, kahit nabakunahan ka na, for now continue to use iyong ating minimum health standards or enhanced health standard as Usec. Vega said, to make sure na hindi kayo asymptomatic carrier, kahit nabakunahan na kayo.

The vaccine, the main effect of the vaccine is really to prevent you from dying lalo na kung nasa high risk group ka. Sinasabi ko nga sa mga tao, kung itong mga bakuna na mayroon tayo ngayon, even if hindi pa tayo sigurado na transmission blocking sila or hindi, kung mayroon tayong bakuna na ito last year, doon sa 2.6 million na namatay na from COVID-19 less than 10% of noon would not die. So these vaccines are very helpful especially in preventing severe disease, pero sa ngayon iyong transmission blocking is still a question mark and so we need to continue to stick to our health standards para hindi po tayo makahawa, bagama't miniscule na iyong risk natin na mamatay sa COVID, baka naman makahawa tayo sa isang tao na hindi pa nababakunahan at high risk at iyon iyong mamatay.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, may tanong po si Kylie Atienza ng Business World: The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Wednesday urged the national government to allow the private sector to import and purchase vaccines on their own without restrictions and taxes as the country faces a fresh surge in coronavirus infections. Will the government consider this proposal?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Allowed pong mag-import ang mga private sector, kaya nga lang po sa pamamaraan ng tripartite agreement. Hindi po gobyerno ang nag-i-insist on the tripartite agreement. Ang katunayan po wala pa kasing bakuna na commercially available, wala pang bakuna na approved for general use. So kinakailangan maging partido pa rin sa kasunduan ang gobyerno, dahil kasama doon sa kasunduan na kung mayroong side effect ang bakuna, gobyerno ang mananagot. So, sa mula't mula po hindi po natin pinipigilan ang private sector pero gustuhin man nila, they cannot go to a manufacturer and purchase on their own, dadaan at dadaan pa rin po siya sa gobyerno, dahil siyempre iyong manufacturer dahil nasa Emergency Use Authorization pa lang po sila ay kinakailangan din ng garantiya na hindi naman sila hahabulin for the side effect and government will answer for it.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Iyong second question po niya, Secretary nasagot na ninyo about a coalition of so-called democratic forces seeking to challenge admin bets in the 2022 polls, ni-launch daw po today. Retired Associate Antonio Carpio will head the coalition which considers VP Robredo, Manila Mayor Isko Moreno, ex-soldier Sonny Trillanes and Senators Grace Poe and Nancy Binay as its candidates. Ano daw po ang reaksiyon ninyo dito? Tanong pa rin po iyan mula kay Kyle Atienza ng BusinessWorld.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi pa po panahon sa pulitika pero hindi po natin sila mapipigilan. I wish them the best. Good luck to Justice Carpio.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** From Maricel Halili ng TV 5. Private companies reiterate their call to allow them to directly buy vaccines pa rin po from the manufacturers to hasten the delivery. Will the government reconsider it since tumataas po ang kaso ng COVID cases?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Asked and answered na po.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** May follow up lang po si Ace Romero at mayroon pa rin si Sam Medinilla. Follow up po ni Ace Romero: Ano po ulit iyong percentage na dapat ma-breach for health care capacity para tawagan itong critical? At kapag critical po ang Metro Manila, will that be a reason to impose lockdown?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Sa ngayon po hindi ko po maalala iyong exact percentage, I'm sorry nagsi-senior moment ako. But tomorrow, I will answer that.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Tanong po ni Sam Medinilla ng Business Mirror: May naging reaksiyon na po kaya si President Duterte on the proposed adjustment of MAV and tariff rate for pork after some lawmakers raised their concerns that it could be abused by some people? Is he still waiting for the recommendation of Department of Agriculture on the said adjustment or nag-decide na po siya na i-shelved ito?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala pa pong desisyon. And the President, I verified this, would like to know more about this latest controversy.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay, Secretary, so far ay wala na po akong tanong na nakuha na dito. Maraming salamat po, Secretary Roque at sa ating mga bisita ngayong araw.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay, maraming salamat po sa ating mga naging bisita, si Dr. Lobo, Dr. Salvaña and Usec. Vega. Maraming salamat, Usec. Rocky. At dahil nga po mayroong IATF meeting bukas at dahil kinakailangan na patuloy po ang impormasyon na makarating sa ating taumbayan ay magkakaroon po tayo ng special presidential press briefing tomorrow para talakayin iyong mga magiging desisyon ng IATF mamayang hapon po.

Pero hanggang bukas po, sa ngalan po ng ating Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte, ito po ang inyong Spox Harry Roque nagsasabi: Pilipinas, kaya natin itong COVID-19. Nakaya nga natin ang bagyo, lindol, pagputok ng bulkan, kakayanin din natin itong COVID-19.

Hanggang bukas po ... magandang hapon po, Pilipinas.

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