

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE
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SEC. ROQUE: Magandang tanghali, Pilipinas.

Magandang balita: Tuluy-tuloy ang dating ng ating mga bakuna. Dumating kaninang umaga ang isa't kalahating milyong doses ng Sinovac. Ikatlong batch na ito ng Sinovac na dumating sa bansa ngayong buwan lamang ng Hunyo. Out of the 1.5 million doses of Sinovac, 500,000 doses ng bakuna ay binili ng private sectors sa pamamagitan ng tripartite agreement sa pamahalaan.

Kung inyong matatandaan, ang unang batch ay 1 million doses noong June 6 samantalang ang pangalawang batch na 1 million doses ay dumating na noong June 10. Sa buwan ng Hunyo, ang ating vaccine schedule delivery ay aabot sa 10,804,820 doses.

As of June 17, 2021 nasa 14,205,870 doses ng bakuna ang dumating na sa Pilipinas ayon sa ating National Task Force. Kasama na po rito ang 1.5 million doses ng Sinovac na dumating kaninang pasado ala siyete ng umaga.

Lumampas na sa pitong milyon or 7,563,241 ang total doses administered as of June 16, 2021, 6 P.M. ayon sa datos ng National COVID-19 Vaccination Operation Center. Humigit dalawang milyon naman or 2,012,154 ang nakakumpleto na nang two doses. Mahalaga na makuha ang second dose ng COVID-19 vaccine para magkaroon nang kabuuang proteksiyon laban sa virus.

Ayon sa DOH, as of May 25, 2021, nasa 98.56% ng ating vaccine recipients ang nagsabi na walang untoward reaction sa kanila matapos mabakunahan ng first at second doses. Ulitin ko po 'no, 1.44 lamang po ang nagkaroon ng reaksiyon at karamihan pa po ay super mild at na-resolve kaagad.

Tara na po at magpabakuna; libre po ang first at second dose. Maging parte ng solusyon, protektahan natin ang ating sarili, ang ating pamilya at ang ating komunidad, magpabakuna na po tayo.

Tuluy-tuloy po ang bakunahan ng ating A4 workforce. Nagkaroon po nang symbolic vaccination of seafarers dito sa Maynila kung saan kasama ang inyong lingkod at iba pang miyembro ng Gabinete. Ito po ang ilan sa mga larawan. Inaasahan po natin na ang bakunahan ng iba pang seafarers sa susunod na linggo, sa Lunes po, diyan po sa Taguig, sa Venetia ay babakunahan naman po natin uli ang mga seafarers at ito naman po ay as organized by the Seafarers Union.

COVID-19 updates naman po tayo. Ito po ang ranking ng Pilipinas sa mundo sang-ayon po sa Johns Hopkins:

- Number 24 po ang Pilipinas pagdating sa total cases;
- Number 24 din po tayo pagdating sa active cases;
- Number 131 po tayo sa cases per 100,000 population; at
- Number 92 tayo sa case fatality rate na 1.7%.

Mayroon tayong 5,414 na mga bagong kaso ayon sa June 16, 2021 datos ng DOH.

- Nananatiling mataas ang ating recovery rate, ito ay nasa 94.1% kaya saludo kami sa magagaling, masisipag at dedicated na medical frontliners dahil patuloy ang pagtaas ng mga gumagaling.
- Nasa 1,253,541 na po ang bilang ng mga naka-recover.
- Samantala, malungkot naming binabalita na nasa 23,121 na po ang binawian [ng buhay] dahil sa coronavirus. Nakikiramay po kaming muli.
- Nasa 1.73 ang ating fatality rate.

Kumustahin naman po natin ang kalagayan ng ating mga ospital. Umpisahan po natin dito sa Metro Manila:

- 45% utilized lang po ang ating mga ICU beds;
- 37% lang po ang utilized na isolation beds;
- 32% lang po ang utilized na ward beds; at
- 33% lang po ang mga ventilators na nayu-utilize.

Sa buong Pilipinas po, ang ICU beds natin ay 58% utilized:

- Ang ating isolation beds ay 47% utilized;
- Ang ating ward beds ay 47% utilized; at
- Ating ventilators ay 37% utilized.

Now, makakasama po natin ngayong tanghali si Dr./Rev. Father Nicanor Austriaco at siya po ay isang Professor of Biological Sciences sa UST. Si Fr. Austriaco po is the lead investigator for the UST COVAX Vaccine Awareness Team promoting the use of COVID-19 vaccines.

Pero bago ko po ibigay kay Fr. Austriaco, mga paglilinaw lang po 'no. Nalathala po ngayon sa ilang pahayagan sa Cebu tungkol iyong sinabi ko na idea po ni Governor Gwen Garcia iyong pagda-divert ng flights. Ilalagay ko lang po sa tamang konteksto. Iyong mga panahon pong iyon na pinag-uusapan nga kung dapat ipagpatuloy ang protocol ng Cebu, ang nasabi lang naman po ni Governor ay dahil iba nga po ang protocol sa Cebu at if the IATF does not agree with the Cebu protocols, eh siguro po i-divert na ang flight sa Manila kasi nga po hindi kontrolado ng Cebu ang protocols na ina-apply dito sa Manila. So iyon lang po iyong tamang konteksto.

Okay. Dr./Rev. Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, alam ko po na kabahagi rin kayo ng isang team na nag-develop 'no ng isang oral vaccine 'no. So please, tell us all about this because we are proud that a Filipino was part of this team that developed this oral vaccine. Sir, the floor is yours.

FR. AUSTRIACO: So thank you so much, Secretary Harry, for the invitation to speak today. I would like to focus—I've shared my screen so there are two things I would like to focus in on today. First of all, just a comment, I would like to comment on understanding the current pandemic in the country so that we will understand what is actually happening here and then I would like to reinforce the NCR Plus 8 exit strategy from the COVID-19 pandemic.

So if you want to understand the pandemic in the Philippines, this is the good place to begin. This is the pandemic curve for our country, you can see that the vertical axis, the number of cases and the horizontal axis is the day. And you can see here, this is the first large surge in July and August and of course you see here the second peak which happened just a few months ago.

Now notice that in the first surge, you had two peaks, a larger peak for the NCR and a second peak for the provinces and you are seeing that again today. So when a lot of people ask me what is happening in Bicol today, what is happening in Zamboanga – I look at this particular picture. Because what is happening is that the variants are spreading around the country like ink in a glass of water. So the variants always enter the country in the NCR and then they spread.

So if there is an ECQ in the NCR Plus bubble, the variants cannot spread and when the ECQ is lifted, they begin to spread around the provinces. So this is what you see here three times this has happened – the Wuhan variant last year, the provinces followed the NCR; the B1 variant, the provinces follow the NCR. And again, what you're seeing is now this time the UK and Indian variant are following the NCR.

So, what is our challenge? We must protect the Filipino people from new variants of COVID-19 especially the Indian variant. Because the Indian variant is 50% more transmissible than the current variant we have today – the UK variant. And this is why I would like to support the science for enforcing a strict 10-day hotel quarantine for international travelers in the NCR and Cebu. Why? Because the science shows that this quarantine is 99.7% effective at preventing variants from entering a country.

Now, there are stricter quarantines in other countries. In Thailand 14 days in a hotel, United Kingdom, New Zealand Australia 14 days in a hotel, Hong Kong 21 days in a hotel or in your home but with daily checks from the government. Why? Because this is 100% effective. So I know that there is a debate in our country about shortening the quarantine. There is no scientific evidence that a 7-day quarantine would protect us enough from the Indian variant. And if it enters Cebu, it will enter the entire country and it will be catastrophic because we will get another surge and it would destroy Christmas this year.

So my point is, let us not just follow India; let us not do allow the Indian variant to enter the Philippines; let us follow the Science. So instead of shortening the 10-day quarantine, we should seek ways to verify the vaccine status for returning Filipinos. Now, I know how incredibly burdensome and expensive the 10-day quarantine is. I returned to the Philippines from the United States in May and I had to stay in a hotel for ten days. It's very expensive, it is difficult, but it is a sacrifice for the Philippines because we must protect the country against the Indian variant. And so, now we have to ask, are there ways to allow vaccinated Filipinos to bypass testing and quarantine and you know we can always consider the IATF travel pass that will be released either this week or next week around the world for precisely this question.

The second concern that I will have is the vaccines. So, I would like to consider exit strategy for the Philippines. So a lot of people are asking today, 'how can we end the pandemic?' This is called an exit strategy and I want you to understand, remember this picture. The variants entered the NCR and then they spread throughout the provinces. So this is the exit strategy, if you vaccinate the NCR, then they cannot spread to the provinces and there are three different ways for this exit strategies. And the government has chosen the NCR+8, first. And so I would like to focus on this. So what percentage of a population needs to be vaccinated? You have to understand how vaccines work. So this is a wonderful image, on upper left hand, you have zero percent, so the red dots are people with COVID-19 and the blue dots are people who have not been vaccinated. And you can see with no vaccination, the number of red dots increases quickly, because they can easily find blue dots. Now, notice what happens as the number of yellow dots increases. And the yellow dots are the vaccinated people.

When you get to 75%, the red dots cannot spread because they cannot find blue dots, because they are surrounded by yellow dots. This is called herd immunity and so this is the picture of a herd of elephants. So when a lion attacks a herd of elephants, the elephants will form a circle around the young and old elephants to protect the baby elephants and the old elephants from the lion. The same thing is happening with population immunity when we get vaccinated, we don't just protect ourselves and protect our families, we protect the nation as well. So what is our target, there are two levels of targets, one is called containment 40% to 50% and the attack rate will drop, below 1 in 100,000 and herd immunity against COVID-19, 70 to 80%; the attack rate, which is the number of cases per day, relative to the population will be near zero.

So what does containment do, it protects against future surges, it allow us to open the economy, it allows us to have no mask when people are vaccinated, outbreaks will still occur, but the virus (garbled). Herd immunity, the reason why we target herd immunity is because when you reached herd immunity, the virus starves, the virus dies, we will return to old normal and even the unvaccinated are protected against the virus, it will be the end of the pandemic.

Now, one of the key ideas I need to stress is that we have to build herd immunity yet every level – we have every family must be become herd immune, every office, every business, every barangay, every LGU has to attain herd immunity. It is not just the herd immunity of the country, but the herd immunity is built from the bottom up. 70% at every level will build herd

immunity in our country, which is why we should incentivize building herd immunity. Families and households should be vaccinated first. So all the members in the family should be vaccinated to reach herd immunity. Seniors should be allowed to go out once they are fully vaccinated as long as they have mask, and indoor dining should be allowed for fully vaccinated persons and their families.

Remember, we must make vaccination special to encourage vaccine envy. So businesses when they achieved herd immunity they should be rewarded. Barangays also when they achieved herd immunity. The entire country must be trying to get herd immunity at the low level building up. Now, can it be done? Yes, it can. So New York and California, the two largest states that were affected by COVID, as of two days ago they have no more mask, no more social distancing. Disneyland is open because they were able to reach containment. Israel was also able to reach containment so they have no more mask.

So, we can do the same thing in the Philippines. We have to vaccinate the NCR+8. Why the NCR+8? Because we do not have enough vaccines with the severe global shortage. So how many do we need? 33 million for containment and 52 million doses for herd immunity. When will we get this? Well, Secretary Galvez, provided the schedule for the vaccine arrivals and basically by September or October, we will have enough vaccines to vaccinate the NCR+8. And when we build herd immunity in the NCR+8, we will protect the rest of the country, because surges always begin in the NCR.

So how long will it take? We calculated: If 250,000 per day, we will get to containment in October and herd immunity in November. And this is a realistic and attainable goal for all of us. So we have to imagine as a country a no-mask Christmas. Can we have a no-mask Christmas? What would it look like? It would look like what it was before. This is possible, Israel showed, once you attain containment. You do not even have to have herd immunity. The average daily attack rate has to fall between 1 and 100,000. That is about a hundred cases per day in the NCR. When that happens, we can begin to lift social distancing and masking arrangements. So this is something, this is my last slide, this is something that we can imagine.

Let us all do this together, where we achieve herd immunity – the NCR+8 by Christmas and the rest of the country, by sometime next year.

Thank you very much and I can answer questions about my vaccine as well.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you very much, Dr. Rev. Father Austriaco. Sir, actually napakalinaw ng explanation ninyo pagdating sa population protection na ang tawag po ninyo ay containment at saka iyong kaniyang different sa herd immunity. Thank very much for a very clear distinction between containment and herd immunity. Punta na po tayo sa ating open forum. I'm sure tatanungin po kayo ng ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps tungkol sa inyong oral vaccine. Usec. Rocky, let's start.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Roque and kay Father Austriaco.

From Rose Novenario of Hataw for Spox Roque: Suportado at maglalaan ba si Pangulong Rodrigo Duterte ng pondo para sa imbensiyon ng oral COVID-19 vaccine ni Father Nic Austriaco?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I'm sure kung mari-recognize po talaga na epektibo at ligtas itong ating vaccine na dinivelop nila Fr. Austriaco eh mayroon pong ibibigay talagang prize ang ating Presidente dahil mayroon naman po siyang pinangako na prize para doon sa mga magkakaroon ng imbensiyon na makakatulong sa laban natin sa COVID-19. Pero sa ngayon po ang matutulong ng gobyerno, ang DOST po, Fr. Austriaco, I'm sure you know already can fund a clinical trial for the oral vaccine that you have 'no. We can even fund it using government money and the clinical studies would be conducted by leading universities 'no.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Second question po niya para kay Fr. Austriaco: Batay daw po sa mga naunang pahayag ninyo, aabot lamang sa P35 ang halaga ng inyong yeast-based oral—
[AUDIO CUT]

SEC. ROQUE: Nawala ang audio mo. Go ahead, please.

FR. AUSTRIACO: Thank you for that question. First of all, I would like to thank Secretary Roque for his support. We have built the vaccine delivery system; I built it with my students in the United States. It took us 3 months. We are now assembling a scientific team here at UST to undertake the animal studies that we will need in order to apply for clinical trial permissions from the national government of the Philippines.

So at this point, the animal trials would take several months and then of course it will take several months for clinical trials. So the earliest, probably it will be second generation vaccine, the middle of next year. But we do hope that it will be successful – only God knows at this time – and my goal is this vaccine is for the poor of the Philippines. So we would like to make it as cheap as possible.

I have a vow of poverty myself; I do not have a salary so I'm doing this as my students will say – for God, for the Philippines and for UST.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you. Her second question for you, Fr. Austriaco: Kung sakali daw, kailangan bang iparehistro sa Amerika dahil grupo ninyo sa US ang nagsagawa ng pagsasaliksik at US National Institute of Health-funded laboratory ang ginamit para mabuo ang inyong bakuna?

FR. AUSTRIACO: Thank you for that question. In anticipation of doing that research here in the Philippines, we did not use any NIH funding for the development of this vaccine in the United States. So we used private funds and right now I am going to—I'm in conversations with UST to begin the process of patenting the oral vaccine here in the Philippines.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Fr. Austriaco. Thank you, Secretary Roque.

SEC. ROQUE: Yes. Punta naman tayo kay Mela Lesmoras, please.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Hi! Good afternoon, Secretary Roque at kay Fr. Austriaco. Sir, unang question ko lang, just a quick follow up kasi maganda iyong panghuling statement ni Fr. Austriaco. May I ask lang po sa Malacañang, for you Secretary Roque: Naniniwala po ba ang Palasyo na kaya nating ma-achieve iyong no-mask Christmas? At kay Fr. Austriaco, just a quick follow up. At this point, ano po iyong mga nakikita nating exit strategies, iyong mga kailangan pa nating gawin para talagang ma-achieve itong naging presentation nga natin sa dulo?

SEC. ROQUE: Kaya po ‘yan ‘no. Kaya nga po we are aiming for population protection or iyong containment na sinasabi ni Fr. Austriaco kasi alam na natin na sa mga bansang nakamit na nila iyong containment eh hindi na sila nagmamaskara – at least sa outdoors ‘no gaya po ng Israel at ilang lugar sa Amerika. So that is what we’re aiming for ‘no. Tama po si Fr. Austriaco, a mask less Christmas.

FR. AUSTRIACO: And let me just add. Secretary Roque is absolutely correct. I followed the numbers of vaccinations in the NCR and the NCR Plus 8. We have the capacity as long as we have the supply. And I am hopeful that the supply is arriving based upon the schedule that Secretary Galvez has published and it’s very clear round the world that more vaccines are being released now that the United States and many of the countries in the west are completing their vaccine program. So I’m incredibly hopeful that we will have, if possible, a no mask Christmas as Secretary Roque pointed out – at least outside, if not inside amongst vaccinated people.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Opo. And, Secretary Roque, bukod naman sa face mask, isa sa mga mainit na issue ngayon sa face shield naman. Can you just clarify once and for all iyong isang tweet po ni SP Sotto na sinabi niya last night the President agreed that face shield should only be used in hospitals. Ano po ba ang naging pahayag ni Pangulong Duterte ukol dito? Kayo na po ang mismong magsabi sa publiko.

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi ko po sinagot ito kanina doon sa seaman’s vaccination dahil alam ko magagalit ang Malacañang Press Corps if I did. But I can only confirm what Senate President Tito Sotto and what Senator Joel Villanueva said earlier that the President did say that the wearing of face shield should only be in hospitals.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Pero coming from this statement po, Secretary Roque, paano na po iyong—magkakaroon po ba nang bagong polisiya iyong IATF? Magkakaroon po ba tayo nang updated guidelines on this?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, alam ninyo, ang IATF is recommendatory to the President ‘no and when the President has decided, then that’s the policy. This is without prejudice to IATF appealing possibly ‘no and alam ninyo kasi ang position naman ng DOH ay may mga pagkakataon talaga

na dapat isuot pa iyong face shield 'no at ito po iyong lalung-lalo na kapag nasa indoors na maraming tao. So I think the possible move of IATF now is to appeal what the President said and what was repeated to the public by the Senate President and Senator Villanueva.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Opo. And for my final question, Secretary Roque, isabay ko na rin, sir, mula kay Karen Villanda of PTV since iyon nga nabanggit ninyo na rin po: Ano po iyong stand ng Malacañang regarding nga dito sa sinasabi nating public places sa pagsusuot ng face shield? Considered daw po ba iyong public transport terminal? Puwede po bang hindi magsuot ng face shield kung open naman iyong sasakyan at hindi naman aircon?

SEC. ROQUE: Uulitin ko po 'no, mukhang the President mentioned a new policy. And of course, IATF is recommendatory because it is composed of all alter egos of the President. Nonetheless this is without prejudice to the IATF appealing the decision of the President particularly the wearing of shields in enclosed public spaces, in schools, in workplaces, in commercial establishments such as but not limited to food establishments, malls and public markets, in public transport and terminals and in places of worship.

All I'm confirming is the President said that and of course what the President says becomes presidential policy.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Opo. Sorry, sir, last na lang pong follow up about this and my last question. So, magkakaroon po ba ng memorandum or para lang magkaroon nang clear order about this po?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, may pagpupulong po ang IATF mamayang hapon at I will be the one to personally raise this if IATF would want to appeal. Kasi as it stands po, nagsalita ang Presidente.

MELA LESMORAS/PTV4: Okay. Thank you so much po, Secretary Roque at kay Fr. Austriaco po.

SEC. ROQUE: Yes. Can we now go back to, Usec. Rocky, please?

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Thank you, Secretary Roque. From Red Mendoza ng Manila Times for Secretary Roque: Reaction sa trial results ng Novavax having 90.4% efficacy sa isang malaking trial sa US. Makakatulong ba ito kung sakaling mag-apply ng EUA ang kumpanya?

SEC. ROQUE: That's very good news for us po kasi ang plano nating orderin na Novavax ay hindi po bababa nang 40 million 'no. Iyan nga po iyong original na pinakamaraming i-import natin 'no. So that's very encouraging and very good news for us.

USEC. IGNACIO: For Fr. Austriaco: Based on your projection [garbled] has finally got out of its [garbled] hospital decongestion and has finally reached the level it reached before the surge?

FR. AUSTRIACO: Thank you for that question, Red Mendoza. As Secretary Roque pointed out with the data from the DOH at the beginning of the hour, all the critical threshold suggests that the NCR has entered a period of lower risk than we were two months ago during the surge. And so let us work hard to maintain this level of the pandemic and even try to make it lower.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question for Father Austriaco. With the current surges happening in other parts of the country, do you think it's feasible for the government to re-prioritize its vaccine allocations, or should we stick to the current NCR+8 focus as suggested?

FATHER AUSTRIACO: So the allocation policy, of course, is the government's responsibility. However, it is clear from the science that vaccines are not used to deal with a current surge. Vaccines are used to prevent a future surge. And the reason why, is that vaccines take 6 weeks to two months to take effect. So if you are going through a current surge at the moment and you start vaccinating people, there will not be an effect on that surge for two months. And our hope and prayer, of course, is that a local government will be able to control a surge before that period. So, our exit strategy is a good exit strategy, it is a strategy that will hopefully give us a no-mask Christmas at least in the largest urban areas of our country. And so it is the government's responsibility to try to discern exactly what is going to go through/which proportions of the country. But like I said, vaccines are not usually used to stop a surge, they are used to prevent a future surge.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you Father Austriaco.

SEC. ROQUE: Alam po ninyo, ipasok ko na po ngayon, I will call the attention of Congressman Rufus Rodriguez, who is my very good friend. But I did not lie, because he claimed that I lied and I take offense with that. I merely repeated what the President said, that he has ordered a more equitable distribution of vaccines because of the rise of cases in other parts of the country.

Hindi po ako nagsisinungaling; sinabi ko lang po kung ano ang sinabi mismo ng Presidente sa isang Talk to the People. At dahil nga po dito ay nagkaroon po ng aksiyon ang ating Vaccine Czar, at nagpadala na nga po nang mas maraming mga bakuna sa mga lugar na tumaas ang COVID. At for the information of Congressman Rufus Rodriguez, mayroon na po tayong 1,735,630 vaccine doses na na-deliver sa Mindanao at 35,000 po nito ay sa distrito ni Congressman Rufus Rodriguez.

Let's be more careful about alleging other public officials lying to the public, because I do not lie. I repeated what the President's said.

Yes, Pia Rañada please?

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Sir, my first three questions are just about the ICC developments. Sir, can we just ask, how did President Duterte hear about the request of the chief prosecutor and what was President Duterte's reaction to it?

SEC. ROQUE: I sent a copy of the press release made by the prosecutor's office. And a day later, I sent a copy of the 52-page opinion of the prosecutor. And immediately his reaction was, bakit ganito ito, bakit puro Rappler, ABS-CBN ang sina-cite ng prosecutor? Kaya nga po after we saw the 52-page decision, knowing that they were citing Rappler and ABS-CBN and Inquirer, eh medyo napayapa na po kami because in law, all these newspaper accounts are mere hearsay.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Did the President issue any directives given nga that the prosecutor accuses the government of failing to cut down or at least prosecute a majority of the drug-related killings? Mayroon po ba siyang deadline for example for the DOJ panel to finish its review and file cases?

SEC. ROQUE: You know, he shrugged off. The opinion, after checking the sources, media sources, kasi all lawyers know, that will not stand in court. And since you need the judicial authorization to proceed an investigation, lawyers know that you cannot start any proceedings on the basis of hearsay evidence. So, we are confident. Even if magpatuloy pa iyan sa imbestigasyon, ang sinasabi ko nga ay kung puro galing naman sa media ang gagamiting sources at galing sa mga makakaliwang grupo, hindi po iyan tatayo kasi mayroon din pong stage sa ICC na tinatawag 'confirmation of charges'.

Isa po iyan sa pagkakaiba ng ICC sa domestic courts. Bago po isampa sa korte iyan, kinakailangan iko-confirm din ng pre-trial chamber. Pero kung ganoon lang po ang ebidensiya, eh talagang iyong aking emotional outburst in my PNP press briefing was uncalled for. But at the time I had that press briefing, hindi ko pa po nakikita iyong 52-page opinion. So it's no big deal, and we will allow and let the DOJ do its job, because that is really the obligation of the Philippine state to investigate, prosecute and punish if need be.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Sir, so it's no big deal, he shrugged it off, doesn't this only bolster the accusation of critics that, for the President he is not really serious in running after justice for the drug-related war victims?

SEC. ROQUE: That's really a wrong conclusion because, I just said, the DOJ and an Inter-Agency body created by EO 35 are now investigating, have been investigating and we will file charges and punish those who are guilty of murder. And the President has also repeated na suportado niya ang pulis kung ligal ang ginagawa; pero kung labag sa batas, hindi po niya susuportahan.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: And then, sir, just for you na lang, sr, specifically si Rommel Bagaris tweeted that you were nominated to International Law Commission. Could we just ask, where did this come from, sir, this nomination? Can we know more about your plans on this? Does

this mean that you will definitely not be running in 2022 because you have been nominated to this body?

SEC. ROQUE: The International Law Commission is a group created to codify international law, customary international law. But the elected members of the International Law Commission do not hold any office, it is not a job. They will only meet twice a year; once in Geneva and once in New York. But it is not a job. So none of the elected International Law Commissioners are employed full time. There is no such salary, it is a voluntary undertaking of recognized experts in International Law. So that does not preclude, I guess, if and when I so decide, that does not preclude running for the Senate, it will not affect an office in the Senate. If elected, it will not affect any other office that I may occupy.

PIA RAÑADA/RAPPLER: Is it something, Sir, that the President asked you to do to join this body?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, it's something that could not have happened without the President's say so, because it had to be an official nomination. Although if elected, the members of the ILC are elected because of their expertise in international law and they do not, in any way, act or participate in the proceedings as state agents.

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

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you very much. And of course, I am very grateful to the President and to Secretary Locsin for the nomination.

Usec. Rocky please?

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes, thank you, Secretary. From Llanesca Panti of GMA News Online: When is the President getting his second dose of Sinopharm vaccine?

SEC. ROQUE: Let me clarify that once and for all. Next question please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question: Why is the President saying home government was not aware of the Philippine vote favoring UN probe in Israel's operations in Gaza when you previously said that the President is leaving the call to Philippine delegation, similar question of Joyce Balancio of DZMM-Teleradyo.

SEC. ROQUE: Well, I was correct that normally we leave it to the DFA. However, this is a vote where the President has expressed his concerns on the mechanism and procedure that led to our votes in the UN Human Rights Council. Of course, this is on a resolution called for inquiry into the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory. Appropriate guidance has been given to relevant senior officials in government to ensure that Philippine interests are protected and upheld in multilateral fora. The Philippines value and will continue to maintain excellent relations with and indeed with all partners in the international community in the pursuit of

common goals and objectives grounded on shared values and interest. So if you think, if the question is did the President disagree with the votes, yes he did. Can it be taken back? Apparently not, but the President has made sure that there will be hence be a mechanism and procedure as far as voting in crucial issues where the views of the Chief Architect of foreign relations should at least be consulted.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you. Melo Acuña please.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary, and nice to see you again. You mentioned that the Department of Justice is doing its job in looking into these alleged cases of human rights violations in the conduct of police operations against drugs. Would you care to tell us *[technical problem]*

SEC. ROQUE: Nawala.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: ... in its job.

SEC. ROQUE: Please repeat your question, please.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Nasaang stage na *[technical problem]*

SEC. ROQUE: Well, nasaang stage. Ang sabi po sa akin ni Chief PNP noong kami po ay magkasama noong Lunes, they have turned over at least 61 files, initially. But they're willing to turnover all 6,000 files 'no. Kaya nga lang po, mao-overwhelm naman ang DOJ. But I think they have more or less come up with a working relation where after 61, at random, they will submit also from the 6,000 files; so gumagana po ang proseso ng pag-iimbestiga.

Nawala ang ating Melo Acuña. Well, Usec. Rocky, andiyan ka ba? Usec. Rocky? Naku, nasa Zoom din siya. Okay, we have internet problem. Siguro po I'll go to some of the questions 'no. Nandiyan ba si Maricel Halili? Wala, wala. Naku, failure. Sandali po ha, okay.

Question from Maricel Halili: *Can you clarify the policy on wearing of face shields? Who are exempted? Sabi ni Usec.Vega, puwedeng tanggalin ang face shield kung nasa labas o kung naglalakad lang. Is this already a resolution?*

Gaya po ng sinabi ko, nagsalita po ang Presidente kagabi, and I confirmed what Senate President Tito Sotto and Senator Joel Villanueva said. Ang sabi ni Presidente, the wearing of face shield should only be in hospitals. But as I said, puwedeng umapela po ang IATF sa desisyon na iyan.

Next question po ay: *President Duterte said, he will support Cong. Romualdez if he runs for VP. Mayor Sara said, she is not in favor of Duterte-Duterte tandem. Does this mean that the idea of*

President Duterte to run for vice president is already out of the picture? If President Duterte will support Romualdez, who will he support for presidency?

At this point, siguro po ipa-flash ko iyong actual text na sinabi ng ating Pangulo ‘no. I will quote what he said ‘no, “There are a lot of people pushing me to run for vice president. Vice president, wala iyan eh. It’s just flower there until the other wilt.” Then the President continued, “Marami pang iba na hindi ko nagawa. I promised about four things: Corruption – I’m doing it. I’m firing people, left and right, sa gobyerno. Then I promised criminality, I think that medyo bumababa na ang crimes against the people. Ang isa pa ay iyong droga, the other itong to pursue other infrastructure projects; iyong naiwan ko na, hindi ko magawa at hindi ko na kontrolado.”

So the question is: Does this mean that the idea of President Duterte to run for [vice] president is already out of the picture? Well, on the basis of his actual words, I guess you can conclude either way. You can conclude that he is still thinking, considering running for vice president because of the unfinished tasks. But at the same time, you can conclude that he has decided against it because he said, “Vice president, wala iyan eh. It’s just a flower there until the other wilt.” So textual analysis, you can make your own conclusions, either way, there is textual basis.

Okay, going back to Melo Acuña, please.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Yes. Secretary, pasensiya na po kayo, namatay iyong PLDT ko, hindi pa naaayos eh. But anyway, nabanggit po ng Pangulo ng Association of Local Government Units Social Workers na si Annie Arlan sa forum namin kahapon na napuna nila na tumataas ang bilang ng violence against women at incestuous rapes mula po nang nagkaroon ng COVID-19. Will there be concrete efforts from the government to put a stop to this practice as noticed by local government social workers?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, there are existing laws against violence against women; this is VAWC and of course, there’s always been a statute against rape, including incestuous rape ‘no. So it’s a matter of law enforcement. Siguro po kung totoong tumataas ang mga numerong iyan ay paiigtingin po natin iyong mga women’s desk para magkaroon po ng kumpiyansa iyong mga biktima na maghain ng kanilang mga complaint. Kasi kung hindi po talaga sila maghahain, hindi mapaparusahan iyong mga lumalabag sa ating batas.

At bukod pa po rito ay perhaps we will call the attention of the DSWD, as well as National Commission on Women for their further inputs dahil talagang alam naman natin itong pandemyang ito, because people were stuck in their homes, that’s probably one reason why violence against women increased ‘no. It should not have been the case. Let me be clear on that. Hindi po dapat naging dahilan iyan, pero dahil may mga batas po tayo na dapat ipatupad, kinakailangan ng concerted effort po na ipatupad po ang mga batas laban sa violence against women and against incestuous rapes.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Yeah, thank you. For Father Nic Austriaco if you will, Secretary, may tanong lang po ako.

SEC. ROQUE: Go ahead, please.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: Father Nic, welcome back to the Philippines. Ang tanong ko sa inyo ay, ano bang problema ang nakikita ninyo sa pag-develop ninyo ng oral vaccine? What are the headwinds you are facing at the moment to [technical problem]

SEC. ROQUE: Kinakailangan po talagang tawagan natin ang PLDT para to make sure na hindi kayo mawawala, Melo Acuña. Pero I think, Father, nakuha ninyo naman iyong question ni Melo?

Nawala na rin si Father. Okay, punta muna tayo sa next question. Nandiyan ka ba, Usec. Rocky?

FATHER AUSTRIACO: We have challenges with equipment, but overall, our hope is that we will be able to surmount these challenges in the next month or so.

MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY: I see. Thank you very much and keep us posted. All the best! Thank you, Secretary. Good afternoon.

SEC. ROQUE: Good afternoon. Siguro talaga dapat lahat ng Malacañang Press Corps ay magpa-vaccine na 'no nang tayo ay hindi na napuputol sa ating online press briefing. Back to Usec. Rocky, please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Thank you, Secretary Roque. From Maricel Halili of TV5: Can you clarify the policy on wearing of face shields? Who are exempted? Sabi ni Usec.Vega, puwedeng tanggalin ang face shield kung nasa labas o kung naglalakad lang. Is this already a resolution? Pero basahin ko na lang din [technical problem]

SEC. ROQUE: Usec. Rocky, nabasa ko na po iyong tanong ni Maricel Halili.

USEC. IGNACIO: ... came out with a new policy of not wearing face shield. Is it now executory or hihintayin pa ang appeal ng IATF and final decision of the President bago ma-implement?

SEC. ROQUE: As I said po 'no, legally speaking, IATF is recommendatory to the President. When the President speaks, then that becomes the policy. But let's wait for an appeal if one will be lodged, and we will find out today.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay, talagang nagkakaproblema po tayo sa ating internet connection. I appeal to all our internet partners, this is the presidential press briefing. And siguro naman alam ninyo na po na this is important for the nation 'no.

Okay, from Rosalie Coz, the question is: Ano ang gagawin ng pamahalaan na hindi rin naipagkakaloob na adjustment sa suweldo ng nurses na pangako ng gobyerno bukod sa iba pang dapat na matanggap na benepisyo? Ano ang reaksiyon sa panukalang mag-realign ng budget para may ilaan na pambayad ng mga utang sa nurses?

SEC. ROQUE: Alam ninyo po, effective June 1 naman iyong memorandum ni Executive Secretary na ipatutupad nila ang Paquiz decision on the minimum salary grade of Nurse I ‘no allover the Philippines ‘no, sa mga pampublikong mga ospital.

So ngayon po ay June 17 lang naman po, so bigyan po natin ng panahon para mapatupad ang Paquiz decision ng ating gobyerno.

Now, pagdating po doon sa retroactive, ang sabi ko nga po dati, ganoon pa rin ang posisyon – inaantay po natin ang guidance ng Executive Secretary kung mayroon pong retroactive effect itong decision na ito.

Now, pagdating naman po sa pondo sa prospective, dahil iyan po ay desisyon ng Korte Suprema, hahanapan at hahanapan po iyan ng pondo. Kung wala pong pondong mahanap sa existing budget, then baka sa supplemental budget.

Anong development sa IATF kaugnay ng apela ng medical group sa Bicol Region na ibalik sila sa ECQ lalo na ang Albay, Sorsogon at CamSur? Kailangan ito aksyunan ng IATF. Magtatalaga ba ng Cabinet members na tututok sa mga probinsiyang nakakaranas ng COVID-19 surge?

Mamaya po may pagpupulong po ang IATF and I’m sure this is one of the items in the agenda.

Nasagot ko na po iyong pangatlong question ni Rosalie Coz, tungkol sa sinabi ni Cong. Rufus Rodriguez.

Okay, from Kyle Atienza of—Nandiyan si Ivan Mayrina, let’s attempt a connection with Ivan Mayrina, please.

Ivan Mayrina? Go ahead please, Ivan. Ivan, wala kang audio. Go ahead, Ivan. Ivan, go ahead. Wala kang audio.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: There it is. Good afternoon, Sec.! Can you hear me now?

SEC. ROQUE: Yes, I can hear you now.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Yes. Hanggang nitong Martes po noong tinanong si Health Secretary Duque ni SP Sotto tungkol sa paggamit ng mga face shield, ang sinasabi po niya, may basehan sa siyensiya ang paggamit ng face shield at kailangan pa ng mas malawak na coverage sa ating

vaccination before we can even to talk about, you know, bawiin itong utos na magsuot ng face shield. Ito hong sinabi ng Pangulo kagabi, ano ho kaya ang naging basehan niya, Sec.?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, the discussion also focused on mayroon ba talagang ibang bansa na nagpapasuot ng face shield 'no? So, let's leave it at that 'no, kasi iyon lang iyong talagang words that came from the President's mouth and let's await the further action of IATF, if any.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: If I may, Father Nico Austriaco please, Sir?

FR. AUSTRACO: Yes?

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: May we get your expert opinion on this matter, Sir, on the efficacy and necessity of wearing face shields in public?

FR. AUSTRACO: So, the Science suggests that face shield add about 9% additional protection, whether or not it's 9% is worthwhile. In the particular context really is a political prudential decision. So, the idea is it's an additional 9% and again, you know when you're outside, the additional 9% might not be as important but if you're on inside especially in a crowded space, the additional 9% may be important.

So, the Science says it's an additional 9%, now the government has to decide exactly if that 9% is worth the sacrifice that the Filipino people would have to undertake.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: So, if you were to be consulted by the President, for example, if the public should continue wearing face shields, what would be your recommendation?

FR. AUSTRACO: Well, especially now in those areas which are undergoing surge, I would recommend you know, in high-risk areas where there is surge, the 9% may be important. But here in Metro Manila for example if you're outside and there's no one around you, I think it is reasonable to say that lowering the risk by 9% may be something we are able to tolerate in order to mitigate some of the burden that we have on the Filipino people. Again, their political decision and I defer of course the President of the Philippines.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: All right. Secretary?

SEC. ROQUE: Go ahead.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Secretary Roque, sir? Thank you, Father Nic. May patanong po iyong kapuso nating itago natin sa pangalang Joseph Morong.

SEC. ROQUE: Go ahead.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Sec., some cities are wondering like Naga City why they were placed under MECQ when they have a low number of cases. Mayor Legacion says they only have a

little more than 300 active cases. He thinks ang nakakarating po sa National IATF is libu-libo ang mga cases nila. Do you think there's a disparity in what the IATF gets from the actual situation on the ground, same is true for Lucena City?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po, kasi ang mga datos naman po talagang nanggagaling din sa mga local government units at saka doon sa mga lokal na opisina ng DOH. Alam ninyo po, iyong mga kaso is only one of the criteria ano, it's a criterion 'no. Pero tinitingnan din po natin iyong health-care utilization rate at alam naman natin na talagang outside of Manila ay kakaunti po talaga ang ating mga ospital at capacity to care for those who may become seriously ill, iyong tinatawag na ICU bed capacity.

So, sa tingin ko po, iyong mga nasa probinsiya ngayon na talagang nasa kumbaga areas of concern eh tinitingnan din kasi iyong health-care utilization rate at iyong capacity ng lugar. So, maski mababa po nominally ang mga kaso kung kakaunti naman po ang ICU beds at kakaunti po iyong ating mga isolation beds eh iyan po ay dahilan pa rin para magkaroon ng escalation ng kanilang quarantine classification.

IVAN MAYRINA/GMA 7: Secretary, thank you. Dr. Austriaco, Sir, thank you very much.

SEC. ROQUE: Maraming salamat po. Thank you, Ivan. Punta tayo ulit kay Usec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary Roque. From Kyle Atienza ng Business World: The President on Wednesday said that a run for vice president in the 2022 polls is a good idea because he has an unfinished business including solving the countries drug problem. Has the President mentioned/said something new about his potential vice-presidential bid in next year's elections? When will he finalize his decision regarding this? Are you confident that the President's crusade against illegal drugs would still gain the trust of the public despite his failure to fulfill his campaign promise of ending the country's drug problem within six months?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, Kyle, with all due respect I think your question is misleading. Again, I quoted the President verbatim. Wala naman siyang sinasabing running for vice president is a good idea. I do acknowledge though that because of his mention of unfinished business eh that probably is basis for concluding that he is considering still a run for the vice president.

But iyong kaniyang naunang deklarasyon naman na "the vice president wala iyan eh, it's just a flower there until the other wilt" also indicates na you could construe it as the President having decided not to run. So, hintayin na lang po natin 'no. At this point, we cannot definitely say that he will or will not run and that's his right because he has until October to decide.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question: Has the President signed into law the bill extending the state tax amnesty program sa June 14 deadline?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi pa po and it's not—and it's only because we only got the transmittal from Congress this week. Pero huwag po kayong mag-alala, kapag iyan naman po ay napirmahan then the deadline will still be extended even of the original deadline had already expired.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Tanong mula kay Henry Uri ng DZRH: Iyong lifting daw po ng ban/moratorium on mining kasama din ng lifting ng ban para sa open-pit mining?

SEC. ROQUE: Okay, there is nothing po in the Executive issuance on mining which is EO 130 which is lifts the ban on open-pit mining. I have conferred with Usec. Benny Antiporda and he says the matter is still being studied by the DENR. However, I will repeat what the President had previously said in at least two instances that he is against open-pit mining 'no.

He said this in 9th April 2018, "Iyon ang masasalahan ko and maybe next year I will ban open-pit mining. Sleep on it. Sleep on it." And then in 21 November 2017 when asked regarding recommendation of the Mining Industry Coordinating Council to lift the ban on open-pit mining, the President said he does not like this because it is destroying the soil and the environment and there are no corrective measures immediately available. "Hindi na bale, sana may makita akong scraped area when I go back there to visit this place and I could see a lot of trees growing and the environment corrected of its decision 'no."

So, anyway, from what the President said 'no, he's apparently against open-pit mining but there is no mention of open-pit mining in EO 130, the matter is still being studied by the DENR. But I understand from Usec. Benny Antiporda that both the President and Secretary Cimatú agreed that the mining industries must reinvent mining in a manner that would ensure that it is sustainable and would cost the least damage to the environment.

Now, correction po ano, iyong papel ng real estate, iyong sa amnesty, it was received last Wednesday, so wala pa pong aksiyon ang Presidente. It's pending his consideration but I repeat, kung pipirmahan naman po niya iyan, then the effect is the deadline would still have been extended.

Usec. Rocky? Wala na naman? Go ahead, Usec. Rocky, next question.

Okay, nawala na naman. Hay naku! Naku sambayanang Pilipino sana nga po magsimula na ang third provider because even a Presidential press briefing cannot proceed unhampered because of dicey internet connection.

May we ask of course the National Telecommunications Commission to please be our guest next Monday so that we will at least ensure that the Presidential press briefing which I think is very important to the nation can be broadcasted unhampered. Please invite the National Telecommunications Commission next time.

I am sorry we have lost internet connection, I will have to end the press briefing. For those with further questions, ipadala ninyo na lang po sa amin at sasagutin namin by way of a release

pero for now, this is on behalf of the President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, ito po ang inyong Spox Harry Roque nagsasabi: Hindi lang natin matatalo ang COVID-19 sa pamamagitan ng pagbabakuna, sisiguraduhin din ni Presidente na mas magiging mabuti ang internet service ng lahat bago siya bumaba ng kaniyang termino.

Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat.

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