

PRESS BRIEFING
BY
PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ERNESTO ABELLA
WITH
CHAIRPERSON DANILO LIM
METROPOLITAN MANILA DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MMDA)

[Kalayaan Hall, Malacañan Palace | 24 August 2017]

OPENING STATEMENTS:

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Good morning. We're pleased to have today Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) Chair, retired Brigadier General Danilo Lim.

Prior to his appointment, he served as a military assistant to the Secretary of National Defense, Chief of Staff of the Undersecretary for Local Government, and the Commanding General of the First Scout Ranger Regiment and Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence in the Bureau of Customs.

As a military man, he received various military awards and commendations, which include the Gold Cross, Medal for Gallantry in Action, and a distinction from the Scout Rangers' Association in 2016. He graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point.

And so, ladies and gentlemen of the Malacañang Press Corps, please welcome, Chair Danny Lim.

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Secretary Ernesto Abella, mga kasapi ng Malacañang Press Corps, mga kasama sa paninilbihan sa gobyerno, magandang umaga sa ating lahat.

Ako po ay natalaga bilang Chairman ng MMDA noong May 22 of this year at nanilbihan sa loob ng ngayon ay tatlong buwan na. At ito ang ulat ko sa inyo sa loob ng panahong 'yon.

It is my honor to present the MMDA's thrust and priority programs. As an overview, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority is mandated by Republic Act 7924 to provide various services to include development planning, solid waste disposal and management, flood control and sewage management, urban renewal zoning and land use planning and shelter services, health and sanitation, public safety, and the most critical or problematic of all, transport and traffic management.

To accomplish this task, these are MMDA's thrust and priority programs.

When I assumed the office as Chairman of the MMDA last May, I said that I will not initially introduce any fancy schemes or complicated solutions but will employ back to basics and no-nonsense implementation of existing traffic rules and regulations to address the traffic situations in Metro Manila.

Going back to basics means strict adherence to our existing laws, practicing a culture of discipline, road courtesy, and changing the habit of our people.

Ibig sabihin po ng back to basics, seryosong pag-i-implementa ng mga batas trapiko.

Ibig sabihin, kung ang sasakyan ay hindi dapat nasa lansangan dahil ito ay may problema sa lisensya o colorum, wala sa linya o out of line, at may problema sa prangkisa, then dapat wala 'yan sa lansangan.

Sa mga daanan ng tao na nababarahan ng mga vendors o stalls, dapat matanggal 'yang mga bumabarang 'yan. Sa mga lugar na bawal tumahi --- tumawid dahil no crossing, dapat hindi tinatawiran ng mga tao 'yan. At sa mga lugar na bawat --- na bawal mag-park, dapat walang nagpa-park diyan dahil sa illegal parking 'yan.

With a forceful action and the development of a culture of discipline, kahit paano, we can restore some order and make life more vibrant and livable here in Metro Manila.

At I also pledged when I assumed office that I will address corruption issues in the agency by instilling and implementing strict discipline and accountability among our employees.

Now, our priority agenda. Shown on the slides is a list of some of our priority programs and activities, concentrating on discipline. *[Shows slides]*

Anti-corruption at iba't ibang programa at activities. *[Next slide]*

The MMDA filed charges in court against seven barangay captains who failed to maintain cleared areas with illegally parked vehicles in Metro Manila. They have been directed by the Office of the Ombudsman to submit answers to these charges. *[Next slide]*

From July 19 to August 18, the MMDA closed down the following bus terminals along EDSA-Cubao and Pasay areas due to pending compliance requirements from their local BPLO or the LTFRB.

Noong 19 July, isinara natin apat na bus terminals sa Cubao area, Quezon City area. Noong August 2, 2017, may dalawang terminals tayong isinara dito sa Pasay area. At noong August 18, may siyam na terminals na isinara natin due to various violations and deficiencies sa mga requirements ng kanilang mga business permits.

Shown on the screen is a list of sample of bus terminals along EDSA that were temporarily closed by the agency along with their violations. Said bus terminals were also cited for other violations such as expired business permits, lack of permit for terminal garage and cargo forwarding, and employees without occupational permits.

The MMDA has implemented the following programs: Anti-Smoke Belching Program along EDSA and other major roads, Anti-Smoke Information and Educational Campaign, and Anti-Littering Operations.

In addition, the MMDA recently launched "Pila Disiplina" among the commuters, with Shaw Boulevard and Boni Pioneer as pilot areas.

Due to the increasing number of illegally parked and stalled vehicles in the major thoroughfares of Metro Manila, the MMDA dispatches tow trucks and forklifts to assist in stalled vehicles and remove vehicles involved in vehicular accidents.

From May 24 to August 18 of this year, the MMDA towed 786 vehicles, while 2,920 drivers were issued with traffic violation tickets.

Under the MMDA's No-Physical Contact Traffic Apprehension, a total of 14,535 apprehensions were made for the period of May 24 to August 18 of 2017.

On Anti-Colorem and Out-of-Line Operations, the MMDA has apprehended 184 colorem and 246 out-of-line vehicles from May 24 up to August 18.

The MMDA also conducts continuous monitoring of personnel found guilty of corruption and implementation of disciplinary actions after due process.

From May 24 up to August 18 of this year, 12 personnel were dismissed from the service, two got suspended, 22 were terminated for cause, 77 job orders were not renewed for cause, and 10 were dropped from rolls due to their absence without official leave.

On good governance, the MMDA has implemented the following:

- Reorganization and reassignment of MMDA personnel to various sectors and divisions to reduce opportunities for corruption.
- The granting of gift certificates and other incentives weekly to deserving traffic se --- Sector Teams where traffic condition in the assigned areas relatively improved.
- And the giving of awards to MMDA employees who showed dedication and exemplified honesty in their line of work.

On Anti-Corruption:

We have suspended --- for towing operations --- we have suspended 23 towing companies and 49 tow trucks were impounded for various towing violations.

On Anti-Drug Campaign:

In support of the anti-drug campaign of the President, for this year, the agency suspended 12 personnel for one month and one day, and three got terminated from the service.

There will be another set of ran --- random drug testing to be scheduled before the end of 2017.

MMDA also provides comprehensive education and training in various areas of traffic management, including road safety, road emergency response, and environmental protection anchored on the values and culture of honesty, professionalism, and responsiveness.

On our other programs and activities:

The conduct of the third Metro Manila Shakedown. *[Next Slide.]*

With the success of the previous Metro Manila Shakedrills last 2015 and 2016, MMDA led the third Metro Manila Shakedrill from July 14 up to 17, to prepare for the worst-case scenario in case of The Big One.

The drill was conducted with maximum participation of the seven LGUs in Metro Manila down to the barangay level, in close coordination with the Metro Manila Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council. Almost 6.2 million people participated in the drill, with 1.5 million additional volunteers.

The Metro Manila Shakedrill 2017's presence on social media reached its peak of 3.5 --- 3.8 billion impressions, making it the number trending topic in the Philippines at that time, and number six worldwide on Twitter.

The MMDA continues to harness the latest technology available for use as a tool to help combat traffic congestion, to promote discipline among motorists and pedestrians, and in order to ensure road safety and prevent accidents, as well as address road traffic problems.

MMDA utilizes some support infrastructures through the installation of traffic signals with high-definition CCTV cameras within the whole stretch of EDSA, C-5, and other major thoroughfares.

The agency also launched the Crisis Monitoring and Management Center, which provides 24-hour assistance to the people of Metro Manila during emergency and crisis situations.

It serves as the primary operation center where all government agencies and non-government organizations would sort information or data as a basis for decision-making in times of disaster and calamities.

The MMDA spearheaded the clearing of illegal structures along Roxas Boulevard and Baclaran up to TM Kalaw in close coordination with the LGUs, DPWH, DFA, and various stakeholders.

This significantly impact on the adjacent thoroughfares, including EDSA. It also improved peace and order and cleanliness in the area, as well as promoted discipline among road users.

Also, this activity led to the recovery of two lanes --- service roads --- to ease traffic congestion resulting in the 14.62 percent reduction in travel time and 17.13 percent increase in travel speed from the Airport Road to President Quirino Avenue.

Following the success of the Baclaran model, Task Force Balintawak was organized by the MMDA for the clearing operations of other areas with target completion before December 2017, starting at Balintawak and Cubao in Quezon City, Monumento in Caloocan City, Alabang in Muntinlupa, and Quiapo and Divisoria in Manila.

For the Balintawak Market, the MMDA conducted clearing operations of illegal vendors, structures, and illegally parked vehicles, installed plastic barriers and signages, and convinced the informal settler families to self-demolish their housing structures.

On flood control and sewerage management, MMDA is operating and maintaining 54 pumping stations in Metro Manila. These pumping stations facilitate the draining of floodwaters.

Part of our clean up and maintenance operations is the conduct of regular dredging, declogging, and desilting of our waterways and drainage network.

From May 24 to August 17, 2017, MMDA was able to dredge 13,495 linear meters of open waterways; declogged 110,287 linear meters of drainage laterals; and desilted 2,288 linear meters of drainage mains and interceptors.

MMDA launched the Estero Blitz program to reduce flooding caused by clogged waterways.

The campaign specifically enjoined community's involvement in the dredging, removal, and hauling of garbage, spoils, silts, and other debris along the waterways.

The MMDA hold a total of 1,286 cubic meters of garbage and silts representing 158 truck loads.

On solid waste disposal and management, MMDA continues to conduct the following activities:

- Monitoring of the daily activities in the three MMDA accredited sanitary landfills and inspections and documentations of the total volume of incoming waste.
- Ongoing installation of CCTV cameras at the three MMDA accredited sanitary landfills.

- Maintenance of closed facilities in Carmona and Boso-boso sanitary landfills.
- Hauling of accumulated waste in the pumping stations for disposal at Navotas and Rizal provincial sanitary landfills.

As part of the agency's program on disaster management, MMDA is continuously providing rescue, life-saving and water skills training free of charge to various government and private institutions.

Enumerated in the slide are the major training modules that we are providing. For the period of May 24 to August 18, the MMDA conducted rescue and life-saving training for 11,392 individuals.

That ends my presentation. Maraming salamat po. I am now ready for your questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Leila Salaverria (Philippine Daily Inquirer): Good morning, sir. Sir, based on your assessment, did the suspension of Uber contribute to the improvement of traffic flow in Metro Manila?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, sa mga narinig natin mukhang lumuwag nang konti 'yung traffic because of the suspe --- because the problem talaga in Metro Manila is a volume problem of vehicles.

Talagang napakaraming sasakyan at 'yung mga kalsada natin ay hindi naman nadadagdagan ano.

Ilan ba 'yung units daw ng Uber na na-suspend? 60... 70,000 units? So napakarami po niyan.

So from what we heard, 'yung mga report, pati 'yung data natin sa Metro Base show na mukhang nakatulong sa pagbawas ng traffic.

Of course, 'yung traffic natin eh talagang malala pa rin, but kahit paano nakatulong daw.

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, may estimate po ba kayo by how much 'yung improvement po sa traffic?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Siguro mga five percent, mga ganun, sa travel time.

Ms. Salaverria: Thank you.

Kris Jose (Remate): Sir, doon po sa project niyo na --- 'yung paglilinis po ng estero, gaano po kadalas ang gagawin nating paglilinis sa estero lalo na po ngayon na tag-ulan?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, sa totoo lang araw-araw po 'yung mga tao natin sa MMDA naglilinis ng esteros, 'yung mga declogging natin ng mga canals, sewerage lines.

Araw-araw po ginagawa natin 'yan pero kahit na gaano 'yung paglilinis mo talagang nandon pa rin 'yung ano, 'yung mga basura.

Marami sa mga kababayan natin, hindi pa rin natututo sa --- 'yung problema ng ginagawa nila nagtatapon ng basura kung saan-saan ano.

Ang tuwing ano nga, tuwing bumabaha, gawa ng malakas ng pag-ulan, ito ang nagiging problema dahil 'pag kailangan ng mag-pump ng mga water, pumping stations natin, 'yung mga pumping equipment, 'pag nagpa-pump na 'yan ng tubig, kailangang tumigil every so often dahil nakakasira itong mga ito, nakakabara eh.

So 'yan po ang problema natin. Malaking sanhi ng pagbaha eh itong mga basura na ano, na napakaraming --- sa esteros, sa waterways natin nandiyan lang araw-araw.

Ms. Jose: Masasabi po ba natin na may pagkukulang din po 'yung mga barangay officials?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: 'Yung mga karamihan kasi na source ng mga pagtatapon na ito ay galing sa mga lugar na maraming informal settlers kaya dapat makipagtulungan din dito 'yung ating mga local government units at hindi lang kaya ng MMDA ito na mag-isa.

Llanesca Panti (Manila Times): Sir, good morning po. You mentioned before of implementing a two-day coding system. Is this policy still being considered at this point? And, sir, can I... Baka pwede kayong mag-cite ng reasons kung ---

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Yes we...

Ms. Panti: --- bakit i-implement pa 'to?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: We floated that idea dahil 'yun na nga as I have said earlier we have a volume problem sa vehicles.

We floated that idea so people would talk about it, pag-usapan makita natin 'yung response, 'yung sentimento, 'yung reaction ng ating mga kababayan and mostly negative and up to now, we haven't even tackled this sa Metro Manila council meeting natin. Hindi pa namin napag-uusapan 'yan.

Alam naman ninyo that the MMDA cannot by itself, without the imprimatur of the MMC, hindi kami on our own do itong mga desisyon na ganito. We have to get the approval of the MMC.

Ms. Panti: So, sir, hindi po receptive 'yung MMC, would you say?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Sa ngayon, as I have said, hindi pa namin pinaguusapan.

Ms. Panti: But, sir, you mentioned about negative feedback. Kanino galing 'yung mga negative feedback?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Sa mga kababayan natin, sa social media. So mukhang negative 'yung reaction.

Ms. Panti: Thank you, sir.

Pia Gutierrez (ABS-CBN): Hi, sir. *[Sir, dito po.]* Sir, Uber and other TNCs have been saying that itong kanilang ride-sharing technology is an innovative way to minimize traffic on the streets. So based on your data, sir, ibig sabihin hindi po totoo? Hindi ganito 'yung nangyari, sir?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, maybe, pero when it's not regulated at wala nang control 'yung pagdami ng mga ganitong sasakyan, eh talagang nakakapasama sa traffic ano.

May mga regulations tayo. Ilan ba dapat... Ilan ba 'yung dapat 'yung naibigay na prangkisa diyan? Ilang units?

But kung more than 100,000 mahigit na 'yung mga sasakyan na in effect lumalabas na colorum. So hindi nakakatulong 'yan kung ganyan.

Rocky Ignacio (PTV-4): Sir, 'yun daw pong --- *[Sir, si Rocky dito sa left]* Sir, kasi laging problema sa Metro Manila 'yung basura talaga. Dati 'yung mga previous years nagkaroon ng Waste Management Summit kasi kailangan 'yung coordination na ng mga LGUs, particularly Metro Manila nga

dahil sa problema. May ganon po bang kailangan niyo dapat nang mas maigting na coordination ng mga mayors dito sa Metro Manila para talagang ma-solve na 'tong problema ng basura?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, 'yung sabi ko nga eh, pag-upong pag-upo ko diyan, sabi ko napakarami ng technology ngayon. Ginagamit na ng iba't ibang mauunlad na bansa, specifically itong waste-to-energy na technology for example.

At bakit tayo eh patuloy pa rin na nagti-tiyaga na 'yung mga basura natin, itinatambak lang sa landfill na hindi nagagamit.

Actually, 'yung pera basura 'yan eh. So 'yan siguro ang isang thrust na patuloy tayong makikipagkonsulta, makikipag-ugnayan sa mga iba't-ibang ahensya, lalung-lalo na 'yung nakakaalam dito, 'yung mga technical people para pag-aralan ito.

Dahil 'yung basura natin sa Metro Manila, we are generating in the whole MM, mga almost 10,000 tons everyday. Napakarami po niyan.

May tatlong landfills tayong ginagamit, diyan napupunta 'yan. Samantalang itong ganito karaming basura, napakalaking enerhiya. Ewan ko lang kung ilang megawatts ang pwedeng ma-generate out of this.

So 'yan po ang isang punto na gusto namin sa MMDA na i-pursue.

Maricel Halili (TV-5): Hi, sir. Good morning. Sir, I understand there was a floated idea before na tanggalin 'yung mga old cars to ease traffic congestion in Metro Manila. Do you still consider this idea, sir?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Yes, as I have said, hindi kasi MMDA lang itong mga desisyon na ganito ano. More on the LTO 'yan and sa LTFRB siguro kung it involves franchise. Pero tama po 'yan dahil sa totoo lang, napakaraming lumang sasakyan. Every car na na-stall, nag-break down, nagkaroon ng diperensya, nasira sa kalye, the effect is multiplied and magnified in terms of 'yung delay natin sa traffic.

So isa po 'yan na 'yung mga obstructions created by these old vehicles na nasisira, nasisiraan, in addition to other incidents, of course, like aksidente.

But 'yung mga ganyan na na-stall 'yung vehicles dahil sa kalumaan, sabi ko nga, the whole lane is affected. Tremendous 'yung epekto niyan, multiplied and magnified, it worsens the traffic situation.

I agree po with that. But makikipag-ugnayan po tayo sa other concerned agencies dahil hindi naman po sa MMDA 'yan.

Ms. Halili: Sir, I don't know if you have an initial estimate, but practically gaano po kalaki 'yung possible na mabawas nito sa traffic congestion if ma-push po 'yung idea.

CHAIRPERSON LIM: I cannot give you any hard facts, figures. Pero ang -- my guess is malaki po dahil if you're talking of 15-year-old vehicles and older, napakarami po niyan. And, in fact, may mga sasakyan diyan na 30 years old na tumatakbo pa rin.

So ito ang madalas na nasisiraan. Ito ang nakakapagbigay ng problema sa atin sa traffic.

Ms. Gutierrez: Si LTFRB Chairman Martin Delgra was here the other day said --- sir. And he said that LTFRB is planning to increase the number of taxis to address the problem of demand. Ano pong masasabi ng MMDA dito, sir?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, ako naman eh hindi natin saklaw 'yung mga plano at 'yung direksyon ng ibang ahensya. But kung sa palagay nila eh tama 'yan, then we will support that ano.

Ang importante lang dito is magkaroon ng --- sumunod 'yung mga kung taxi man 'yan o Uber o Grab 'yan --- sumunod sila mga --- sa mga 'yung impositions ng LTFRB.

Dahil kung wala 'yun, kung hinidi na sinusunod 'yan, then wala na tayong ano, wala na tayong direksyon, wala ng batas. Hindi na iginagalang 'yung batas natin.

I'm sure ang bottom line consideration ni Secretary --- ng LTFRB dito ay hindi para to inconvenience the public.

But para ma-professionalize at maging responsive 'yung mga serbisyong ito sa nangangailangang publiko. Hindi 'yung walang kontrol, walang direksyon.

Ms. Gutierrez: But sir, you mentioned kanina na ang problema natin is volume of vehicles. So do you think that we need more taxis on the streets?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: The truth is talagang --- talagang 'yung volume ng sasakyan natin sa Metro Manila grabe. As of two years ago, ang total number of registered vehicles sa buong bansa ay siguro mga almost 10 million. Sabihin mo mga more than 30 percent of that is nandidito sa Metro Manila.

Eh 'yung road network natin dito sa Metro Manila is not even three percent of the whole total national road network. So nandito 'yung napakaraming sasakyan na nagsisiksikan dito sa kakaunting lansangan.

So ang solusyon talaga mainly infrastructure. Talagang kailangan natin ng mga dagdag na kalsada, tulay, skyway, subway.

Truth is we are several decades behind in terms of infrastructure kumpara sa ibang bansa. Other metropolis na they have similar problems --- high population density per square kilometer have long gone underground. 'Yung mga subways nila are several levels below ground. Tayo mag-uumpisa pa lang next year, hopefully, 'yung projecting JICA.

So in truth, marami sa mga metropolis na ito, mas madami na 'yung nagko-commute na mga tao sa ilalim ng lupa kaysa sa ibabaw. Dahil sa ibabaw, skyway, 'you can only do so many above ground. Pero sa ilalim, kahit ilang levels 'yan 'pag nandiyan.

So huling-huli na tayo. Kaya nga itong programa ng ating kasalukuyang gobyerno, "Build, Build, Build," ito ang tama, ito ang makakasagot sa problema ng ating trapiko.

Kasalukuyan, sabay-sabay 'yung mga ginagawa ngayon. May ginagawa sa Commonwealth, meron sa Quirino, meron sa Araneta, meron sa Marcos Highway, sabay-sabay po and understandably, magkakaroon ng dagdag na trapiko 'yan pero maiintindihan ng mga kababayan natin na temporary lang 'yan.

In the end, pagkatapos ng lahat ng ito, andiyan pa 'yung bypass from the NLEX to SLEX. Ito ang makakatulong.

Sabi ko kanina, magdisiplina tayo. Back to basics. Makakatulong 'yan. Pero we can --- again, we can only do so much because of the volume problem that we have ay talagang kailangan itong mga infrastructure na ganito.

Ms. Gutierrez: Following on that, sir, nabanggit niyo nga, nagsimula na 'yung doon sa Commonwealth and we expect more of that situation to happen in many parts of Metro Manila. Ano po 'yung mga paghahanda na ginagawa po natin? Are we planning to increase the number of our personnel to manage traffic?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, the limited number of personnel that we have ay pinag-aaralan natin 'yung mga deployment niyan, kung saan mas kailangan, doon natin ilalagay.

The truth is again, kulang din 'yung mga tao natin. We are siguro, napakalaki 'yung pagkukulang natin sa --- in terms of traffic enforcers to man all these national roads dito sa Metro Manila. So we are making do with what we have.

Hannah Sancho (SMNI): Good morning, sir. Sir, na-mention niyo po sa presentation ninyo 'yung internal cleansing po. Kasama po ba doon sa mga na-suspend or natanggal doon sa trabaho 'yung mga nangongotong po na mga traffic enforcers?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Yes. Magmula nung naupo tayo diyan and naintindihan ng mga kasama natin na wala tayong tolerance for 'yung mga activities na ganito.

So may mga natanggal na diyan. And kung natatandaan ninyo 'yung mga figures ko, may mga job orders that were not renewed for some reasons ano, kasama na rin po 'yan.

At marami naman diyan, may mga... Alam nila na may nagawa sila na hindi maganda. So kaysa they submit themselves to the investigation process, marami diyan nag-a-AWOL na lang, hindi na rin pumapasok. So sama-sama na po 'yun sa ano, 'yung internal cleansing natin.

Ms. Sancho: Sir, last na po. Is it enough po na ginagawa niyong hakbang itong pagbibigay niyo ng mga gift certificates, 'yung mga iba pa pong freebies para hindi na po ma-tempt 'yung traffic enforcers or 'yung ibang empleyado niyo? Or may iba pa po kayong programs para hindi na po talaga sila ma-involve sa corruption po?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: Well, ang isang problema talaga diyan, 'yung mga traffic enforcers natin lalung-lalo na nandiyan 'yan maghapon na nakabilad sa araw, nauulanan. 'Yung sweldo, 'yung tinatanggap nila na monthly eh talagang napakababa.

So we are doing this kahit paano to address their morale, maipakita naman natin sa kanila na we care for them na... Sa amin kasi sa military eh you do your mission pero at the same time, never forget the welfare of your people. Ganon lagi. So we're accomplishing the mission. Ipinapakita natin na may pag-aalaga, pag-aaruga tayo sa kanila.

Mas maganda sana eventually and I have been talking to some people who may help, who can help --- sa Kongreso, sa DBM --- na kahit paano madagdagan nang kaunti --- kahit kaunti 'yung take-home pay ng mga kasama natin na mga traffic enforcers, those involved in the field lalung-lalo na 'yung araw-araw nandodoon. So 'yun po ang isang makakatulong talaga.

Ms. Jose: Sir, patanong lang po ni Mr. Alvin ng DZIQ. Open daw po ba ang MMDA sa paggamit ng incinerator to address the garbage problem?

CHAIRPERSON LIM: May mga batas naman tayo po diyan ano, na bawal yata 'yung incinerators. But kung meron man, kung gagamitin man 'yan, we have to make sure na 'yung emission is within certain standards.

Siguro kung hindi naman lalampas sa 'yung standard na nakakasama talaga sa kapaligiran, then why not ano dahil itong basura napakalaking problema talaga.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Good morning. We'd like to give an update on the Philippine performance in the Southeast Asian Games.

We wish to extend our congratulations to the Filipino athletes who won and gave honor in yesterday's events in Kuala Lumpur.

Trenten Anthony Beram and Aries Toledo won gold for the Philippines in Athletics Men's 200 meters and Athletics Men's Decathlon, respectively.

Kaitlin de Guzman won silver medal in Artistic Gymnastics Women's Floor Exercise event while John Paul Bejar also won silver medal in Karate-Do Men's Kumite-below 55 kilogram event.

Also winning silver are Mark Harry Diones for Athletics Men's Triple Jump and Marco Vilog for Athletics Men's 400 meters.

Finally, we got bronze medals from the following: Reyland Capellan in Artistic Gymnastics Men's Vault; Kaitlin de Guzman for Artistic Gymnastics; Arniel Ferrera in Athletics Men's Hammer Throw; Mae Soriano of Karate-Do under 55 kilograms; Jasmine Alkhaldi, Aquatic Swimming Women's 100-meter Freestyle; and again for Aquatic Swimming Women's 50-meter Butterfly.

We likewise got bronze medals for Swimming Women's 4x200-meters Freestyle Relay from Nicole Oliva, Rosalee Santa Ana, Nicole Pamintuan, Jasmine Alkhaldi; and for Squash Women's Doubles from Jemyca Aribado and Yvonne Alyssa Dalida.

As of yesterday, August 23, 11 p.m., the Philippines has won 10 gold, 15 silver, and 20 bronze medals.

So we continue to cheer Team Philippines.

Also, on the Southwest Intermodal Transport Exchange:

The Department of Transportation (DOTr) has announced that the construction of the second floor, which covers Zones 1 and 2 of the Southwest Intermodal Transport Exchange (SWITEX) in Parañaque has already begun.

According to DOTr, the SWITEX will allow for "seamless transfers, fixed departure schedules, and centralized ticketing system for provincial buses."

Its construction is expected to be completed in April 2018, which will reduce the number of buses travelling along EDSA.

We are open to a few questions.

Ms. Salaverria: Good morning, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, what does the Palace make of all these allegations concerning the Bureau of Customs? First, coming from Senator Lacson. The President has repeatedly expressed his trust in former Commissioner Faeldon. So will he support any investigation of Commission...

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Of course, the President will support all investigations. And at this stage, we just --- it's...

Since the inquiries already have started, at least best that we do not be seen to be interfering in any way at all.

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, how about the fresh allegations from Mr. Faeldon about Senator Lacson's son's involvement in smuggling?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Senator Lacson's?

Ms. Salverria: Son.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Son?

Ms. Salaverria: Son's involvement, yes.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, that also has to be verified, that also has to be --- to undergo proper investigation.

Ms. Sancho: Sir, may panawagan si Customs Commissioner --- ex... I mean, ex-Customs Commissioner Faeldon na magkaroon ng third-party investigation. May directive po ba 'yung Pangulong Duterte sa DOF na tugunan 'yung request niya?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Regarding if there is any directive, we cannot affirm or confirm that. But we expect that the DOF and the new Customs chief will give due consideration to Senator Lacson's speech for example, [inaudible] the Justice Department and the Ombudsman to charge graft or along with agencies fighting drugs, crime and terrorism and so forth. So all the more impetus for the President to go back to his anti-graft stance.

Ms. Sancho: Sir, after... 'di ba nag... Sinabi na ng Pangulo na si Sid Lapeña na po ang papalit kay Faeldon. Do we expect na magkaroon po tayo ng top to bottom cleansing sa Customs?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, there should be a substantial change that we expect. There ought to be. I cannot say top to bottom what --- but there should be substantial and felt changes.

Ms. Sancho: Kailan po papasok si Faeldon?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Ano na po 'yan, subject 'yung kanyang ---

Ms. Sancho: I mean, sorry, si Lapeña po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Ang alin po? 'Yung?

Ms. Sancho: Kailan papasok si Lapeña po?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Nasa ano... That should be happening soon. I cannot give you the exact date but that should be happening soon.

Ms. Sancho: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Gutierrez: Other issue, sir. Sir, what is the Philippine government's response to the warning issued by TECO to the Philippine government against doing business with a fugitive in Taiwan who is planning to invest P18 trillion in an economic zone and IT building in Pangasinan?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Ma'am, regarding the ano, regarding that, I checked with the DTI.

Right now, they are doing their due diligence. So, and... So that's... Specifically, PEZA is I think under the DTI and that should be --- and they're also doing their due diligence to make sure that... And they have been I think being given the directive to make sure that --- to study, to investigate --- not investigate but to check into the background of the said potential investor.

Ms. Gutierrez: And also, sir, sources say Xianglu Dragon's Chairman Chen is scheduling a meeting with President Duterte. Is the President going to meet with him? Is he in favor of pushing through with the multi-billion dollar deals with Xianglu Dragon?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Ma'am, that should be dependent on the recommendation of his economic managers.

Ms. Salaverria: Good morning, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, has Malacañang verified reports that China has planted its flag in a sand cay of Kota Island, which is within Philippine controlled territory?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I inquired about that and apparently, as of this stage, there is no flag, you know, as of this stage.

And but it seems that the place, in itself, is subject to many [*what do you call it?*] passers-through and in fact, there are evidences of people who do park there.

And mainly but these are not military but mainly these are citizens who may be --- but this is not verified --- but mainly, these are citizens and not white or gray ships.

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, you mean we sent people there and they checked and there was no Chinese flag?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yeah, according to the source that I referred to, there was none. There were no flags during that time.

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, may we know the source? Is it the DND? The military?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: It's a very reliable source. Thank you.

Ms. Salaverria: Isa pa. Sir, related to Philippine territory. According to Rep. Alejano, Malacañang has canceled the proposal to build an outpost on Philippine Rise well supposedly because this wasn't a priority. Sir, what's the reason for --- ?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Can you say that again?

Ms. Salaverria: The... Sir, why did Malacañang cancel the project to build an outpost on Philippine Rise?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I don't know if anything was cancelled so far. But we'll have to check regarding that.

I don't think anything has been cancelled. It may have been postponed or whatever but let me verify on that, okay.

Ms. Salaverria: Sir, the report kasi quoted --- well, it was Rep. Alejano quoting Agriculture Secretary Piñol.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: It may have been a project of Secretary Piñol 'no --- a DA project that may... Let me check on that, okay.

Ms. Salaverria: Thank you.

Elijah Rosales (Business Mirror): Good morning, Spokesman. How is the government monitoring the situation in Hong Kong given that we have a number --- a significant number --- of Overseas Filipino Workers in Hong Kong?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Specifically regarding the matter of?

Mr. Rosales: Of the strong typhoon.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, we will have to get reports on that. We still haven't gotten feedback regarding that recent --- recent occurrence.

But we will get back... We will inform you as soon as we get fresh feedback.

Mr. Rosales: Thank you.

Llanesca Panti (Manila Times): Sir, other issue po. About Justice Secretary Aguirre saying that the death of Kian delos Santos is --- has been blown out of proportion and it's just natural. Does the Palace share these sentiments of the Justice Secretary?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Let's put it this way. Like we have said, there is depth and seriousness regarding the matter. We may not --- that is the --- that is the opinion of Secretary Aguirre.

But from the Palace's point of view, this is a serious matter. And we --- we have given it due --- the kind of due attention. And... But, on the other hand, it's also wise to make sure that everything is continually in perspective.

Ms. Sancho: Hi, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Sancho: Sir, 'yung visit po last Tuesday ni Nick Warner, 'yung head po ng Australia Interna ---

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes po.

Ms. Sancho: ... 'Yung International Spy Agency ng Australia. Marami po kasing ---

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Intelligence po. Intelligence.

Ms. Sancho: Intelligence, sorry po. Marami po kasing na --- nagalit sa post nila, 'yung fist bump post nila. They find it completely inappropriate na 'yung head nila sa Intelligence Service ay nagkaroon ng ganoong pose with the President. Can we get your reaction po?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Oo, basically I was there when we --- when the photo was taken. It was done in a lighthearted manner. It wasn't meant to be in any way political. It was simply a show of --- it was just a warming of relationships.

Ms. Sancho: How about 'yung reaction ni Elaine Pearson, siya po 'yung director ng Human Rights Watch ng Australia. Ito po 'yung sinabi niya, "It was sickening to see head of Australia's spy agency fist-pumping a man who has instigated the killing of thousands," po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, that is the perspective of the HR Australia. But as far as the --- the way the situation went, it was basically all in --- all --- it was just a --- it was a warm situation. It was very relational.

Ms. Sancho: Thank you, sir.

Ms. Halili: Hi, sir. Good morning.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Halili: Sir, just curious.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes.

Ms. Halili: Sino, sir, 'yung sinasabi ni Presidente na government official daw doon sa kanyang speech na nagbu-book ng Presidential suite sa hotel and very luxurious kapag ka nagta-travel?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Hindi po niya pinangalangan. So alanganin din po akong magsabi kung sino po 'yon. *[laughter]*

Ms. Halili: Pero, sir, may we know kung saang branch ng government? Because sabi niya hindi daw part ng Executive eh.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Tama, so you have two remaining branches. *[laughter]*

Ms. Halili: Ah... Supreme Court, o Senate?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: It is not my purview to be commenting on that.

Ms. Halili: Pero, sir, when the President said that they are looking into it, does it mean that you're starting an investigation on this certain government official?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: These things, I don't know if we can call --- if, you know, it's a formal investigation or anything. But these are things that we are --- the President seek --- apparently is aware of.

Ms. Halili: So are you planning to file any cases or charges to this government official anytime soon?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: That, you know, if --- charges are very serious matter, you know. So it must be something that's pretty substantial.

Ms. Halili: Thank you, sir.

Kris Jose (Remate): Sir, patanong lang po ni Dexter Ganibe ng DZMM.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Bakit wala siya?

Ms. Jose: Kung alam daw po ng --- ng Palasyo 'yung mga isiniwalat ni Faeldon, ano daw po ang tingin niyo doon sa mga sinabi niya, 'yung mga pasabog po niya, and kung 'di raw po ba nagsalita si Senator Lacson, hindi raw po ba magsasalita si Faeldon? `Yun po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Alin pong mga pasabog supposedly ni Faeldon, what specifically?

Ms. Jose: `Yun pong pagkadawit po kay Pampi Lacson sa smuggling sa Senate --- sa cement smuggling po.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Ma'am, mas maigi siguro if we don't make any comments regarding that matter. After all, investigation is ongoing.

Ms. Jose: Thank you po.

Ms. Gutierrez: Sir, may we know ano po yung napag-usapan kahapon ni President Duterte and Admiral Harris?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Of the US? Okay. Ma'am, it was all about --- it was... First, it was a cordial visit. And pangalawa po it was about just talking about regional security issues.

Ms. Gutierrez: Nabanggit po kahapon ni President --- and we were able to get that --- regarding the concerns on North Korea? So ito din po ba yung naging sentro ng kanilang pag-uusap?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Hindi naman po siguro sentro, pero we were talked --- the conversation went around regional security issues.

Ms. Gutierrez: Also, sir, President Duterte also met with China Communications Construction Company, the group. How do we address the concerns of the public, especially regarding the background of that company? On 2011, na-debar sila ng World Bank for fraudulent practices under Phase 1 of the Philippine National Roads Improvement and Management Project.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Ma'am, there are at least --- as far as I know, there are about 40 companies that are making presentations and they are one of them.

So it's not --- the visit was not necessarily implying that they were already -- already won any contracts. But they were simply visiting, making their presence known. But they are in truth actually, one of many.

Ms. Gutierrez: Pero will the Philippine government take that into consideration, 'yung background po ng mga kumpanya na gustong pumasok sa Pilipinas?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Opo. The Department of Finance specifically is very --- very keen on making sure that those companies that we deal with are financially stable and have integrity and we --- and that is what we hold on to.

Ms. Gutierrez: That also holds true dun sa fugitive, sir, na binabanggit ng TECO?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Naturally po, totoo po 'yon.

Ms. Ignacio: Sir, may updates sa Marawi?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes ma'am.

As of 7 p.m., 23 August:

Civilians killed by terrorists - 45

Civilians rescued - 1,728

Enemy killed - 595

Recovered firearms - 656

Government casualties, killed-in-action - 129

And buildings cleared - 9

The balance so far of the Marawi Casualty Fund: P35,683,053.23.

And Marawi IDP --- displaced persons --- the balance remains at P943,945.21.

Thank you very much. We'll see you tomorrow.

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