

**Mindanao Hour Briefing by Presidential Spokesperson Ernesto Abella with
Assistant Secretary Kristoffer James Purisima, Deputy Administrator for
Administration of the Office of Civil Defense**

[Kalayaan Hall, Malacañan Palace | 04 September 2017]

OPENING STATEMENTS:

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Welcome to Mindanao Hour and Bangon Marawi. We'd now like to defer and give the floor to Asec. Toby.

ASEC. PURISIMA: Thank you, sir. Good morning. And good morning ladies and gentlemen of the Malacañang Press Corps.

Here are the updates on the activities of your Task Force Bangon Marawi.

On relief distribution, several relief distribution activities were conducted the past week for our IDPs in various areas in Iligan City and Lanao del Norte.

The International Organization for Migration distributed kits to five evacuation centers in Iligan City. These kits include school supplies, tables, chairs, basketballs, volleyballs, hula hoops.

Also, the Social Housing Finance Corporation, under the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council gave 109 relief items which include food packs, hygiene kits and medicines for the IDPs at the tent city in Barangay Campong, Pantar, Lanao del Norte.

The Office of Civil Defense-ARMM with the Department of Social Welfare and Development Region 12 distributed relief supplies to the home-based IDPs in Saguilaran, Lanao del Norte.

On the provision of sufficient water supply in evacuation centers, Task Force Bangon Marawi Executive Director Undersecretary Cesar Yano initiated the installation of overhead water tanks in Pantar, Lanao del Norte and in Sta. Elena evacuation center in Iligan City.

A deep well water pump was also installed in Pantar. These water tanks and pumps shall provide sufficient water supply for our IDPs.

The Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative Inc. or LASURECO has provided a source of electricity in [Al Baroni?] Madrasa evacuation center in West Balo-i, Lanao del Norte.

The electricity is use to pump water from nearby sources for our IDPs.

On the initiatives of the National Youth Commission, a series of concerts was initiated by NYC Chairperson Aiza Seguerra as part of the ongoing psychosocial interventions for the evacuees and to uplift the spirits and foster harmony among our IDPs.

The concerts were held in Boroan School of Fisheries and Tibanga Boulevard.

NYC Chair Segueria also initiated the training on resilience coaching for our health workers. Resilience coaching is a psychosocial intervention that could help boost the recovery of its recipients.

On our transitional shelter site, site development of the transitional housing site in Barangay Sagonsongan is ongoing.

Four hectares will have been developed by the DPWH by September 8 or September 9 for eventual handover to NHA for the construction of transitional shelters.

You will note that this is within the target that we initially provided.

Also an update from the original 11 hectares, a total of 17 hectares will now be made available for our transitional shelter sites and we shall provide updates as they come.

The Local Water Utilities Administration or LWUA considers tapping the Agus River for the water supply in the transitional shelter sites.

Assessments are ongoing and the proposal is expected before the site is ready for occupancy.

Lastly, LASURECO has energized the transitional shelter sites.

In this connection, we would also like to thank our numerous private medical professionals and doctors who are providing basic health services to our IDPs.

We also remind our donors to coordinate their efforts for proper resource and relief allocation and management.

I take this opportunity to also provide again the numbers we have at our national emergency operations center.

For Globe, we have: 0995-356-3965 and 0997-950-6414

And for Smart: 0929-144-9242 and 0907-356-1545

I would also like to update the body that there's an ongoing meeting now of the housing sub-committee of Task Force Bangon Marawi here in Malacañang and they have been meeting all morning.

Now, I would like to provide a statement on the recent actions by North Korea.

The Office of Civil Defense is in continuous coordination with relevant national government agencies to ensure the safety of our people in light of the recent actions by North Korea that may put at risk the lives of our fellow Filipinos.

Rest assured that contingencies are being set in motion for the protection of our civilian populace. Their safety is our primordial concern.

Thank you and good morning.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

Alexis Romero (Philippine Star): Asec., kailan matatapos 'yung assessment?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Well, which assessment? For the ---

Mr. Romero: 'Yung sa Marawi po.

ASEC. PURISIMA: Well, the assessment, if you're referring to the post-conflict needs assessment. Well, we are already beginning the human phase, as I mentioned before.

But the entirety of the assessment would really depend on the all-clear of the AFP. Because this assessment entails going into ground zero, going into Marawi itself and assessing all buildings, all damages.

Because this is a comprehensive assessment, we will need to go there in ground zero. Because we cannot do that now because of the still ongoing military operations and the need to clear the place 'no.

Kasi napakahirap nito dahil hindi lang 'to ordinaryong trahedya dahil kailangan natin i-clear ang mga IEDs dahil ayaw nating masaktan ang ating mga assessors.

So wala pa tayong mabibigay na timeframe although once makuha natin 'yung all-clear gagawin na natin lahat. Trained na ang ating mga assessors. Nag-training na tayo weeks back.

So ready na sila. Inaantay na lang 'yung all-clear.

Mr. Romero: So wala... Not even half of the job eh tapos na?

ASEC. PURISIMA: I wouldn't say. I wouldn't say...

I wouldn't want to give a percentage. Although, a big chunk of that assessment is really the damage assessment of the buildings, of the livelihood, and of the city itself. At 'yun siyempre hindi pa natin 'yun nagagawa.

Mr. Romero: So wala pang figures... Wala pang---

ASEC. PURISIMA: Wala pa.

Mr. Romero: Okay. Thank you po.

Maricel Halili (TV-5): Hi. Good morning Asec. and Spox. May we have your statement regarding the report that Abdullah Maute was already killed in Marawi?

ASEC. PURISIMA: I would not be competent to answer that question.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: We don't have any updates at this stage.

Ms. Halili: Okay, sir. Because the AFP officials, I believe, just announced it during their press conference. But how optimistic are you that the operations will end anytime soon following the death of Maute leader?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, it all depends on the assessment of the AFP themselves. I cannot speculate on any timeline about how soon or when it will be finished.

Dexter Ganibe (DZMM): Asec., good morning. 'Yung sa Barangay Sagonsongan. Marawi City po ito 'no? 'Yung four hectares na sinimulan ng i-develop ng DPWH. Mga ilang families po 'yung pwedeng ---

ASEC. PURISIMA: Depende 'yun sa pagkatapos ng site development 'no. Kasi depende 'yun una doon sa final size ng ating transitional shelters at depende 'yun doon sa utilities na ating ilalagay doon para proper 'yung planning 'no, parang site planning itong area na 'to.

I do not have the figures as to the actual number of the transitional shelters that will be built there. Pero nadagdagan na 'yung ating site so mas darami pa 'yung ating magagawang transitional shelters.

I'll let you know once we have information on that.

Mr. Ganibe: With this development, kailan kaya sila pwedeng pumasok na doon at pwedeng makalipat na doon sa transitional shelter?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Well, magsisimula ang construction ng September 8 'no. Magsisimula later this week, magsisimula ang construction. That is on target 'no sa ating initial assessment at depende sa kaya nilang itayo na transitional shelters dahil modular naman itong ating transitional shelters, madali lang naman 'tong itayo.

Bibigyan namin kayo ng constant updates 'no kung ano 'yung number of transitional shelters na kayang gawin everyday at every week, at 'pag may area na.

Kasi itong four-hectare area na initially na makukumpleto na 'yung site development by later this week. Ito lang area, I understand, dalawang areas lang 'to doon sa initial 11-hectare area na identified. So dadami pa 'to at patuloy ang site development naman ng DPWH.

Mr. Ganibe: 'Yung mga materials na gagamitin para doon sa mga shelter, temporary shelter...

ASEC. PURISIMA: Yes, parating na 'yung materials...

Mr. Ganibe: Ano po 'yung mga gagamitin?

ASEC. PURISIMA: By September 8 or September 9, I understand, nandoon na rin 'yung materials. 'Yung materials na 'to, ito mismo 'yung transitional shelter, kasi modular 'yun.

So parang transitional shelter kits 'yan eh. So itatayo na 'yan para mas madali 'yung pagtayo...

Mr. Ganibe: Would this --- tent po ba ito o mga light materials?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Hindi... Hindi 'to tent. Hindi ito tent. We would have... I'll provide the pictures 'no of the traditional shelter 'no.

Pero hindi ito tent because I understand may sensitivities ang ating mga IDPs pagdating sa tents 'no. So we want to be culturally and --- sensitive pagdating sa kanilang faith and culture 'no.

So hindi tayo magpo-provide ng tents. So this is a modular design that has been approved by NHA and we'll provide the details.

Mr. Ganibe: Okay, thank you.

Henry Uri (DZRH): Asec., good morning. May mga report na may nakapasok na mga pekeng semento sa bansa at ito'y posibleng magamit din sa konstruksyon ng Marawi City. Anong inyong direktiba sa mga tao sa field at paano ninyo binabantayan ito?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Well, lahat ng initiatives na gagawin para sa rebuilding at reconstruction at rehabilitation ng Marawi and other affected areas, lahat ito dadaan sa Task Force.

So ive-verify ng Task Force lahat ng gagamitin para dito sa rebuilding 'no. At sinasabi... Sinabi ko nga kanina, nagmi-meet ngayon ang housing sub-committee ng Task Force Bangon Marawi and I'm sure isa 'yan sa pinag-uusapan nila.

Dahil siyempre ayaw nating malusutan tayo ng substandard na mga materyales at i-e-ensure natin na lahat ng gagamitin dito ay above standard. At gagawin natin ang lahat para ma-verify na walang mangyayaring ganyan.

And alam mo, halos araw-araw nag-uusap ang mga opisyal ng Task Force para malaman kung ano na 'yung updates sa lahat ng subcommittees, hindi lamang ng housing subcommittee.

So I'm sure naka-alerto sila para dito at papaalalahanan natin sila tungkol dito. And our National Emergency Operation Center sa Iligan City, isa 'yan sa kanilang primary responsibilities 'no to ensure na lahat ng goods at services at supplies na papasok diyan sa area na 'yan ay verified at according to specifications.

Mr. Uri: Kaya po bang ipangako ng Task Force na hindi kayo talaga malulusutan ng mga pekeng construction materials?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Gagawin natin ang lahat para hindi tayo malusutan. At makakaasa kayo na palaging nag-uusap ang inyong Task Force, ang mga miyembro ng inyong Task Force, upang lahat kami ay on the same page, ika nga. Para alam namin ang lahat ng gagamitin, ang lahat ng specifications at lahat ng ito ay naaayon sa ating standards at proper procedures ang gagawin natin.

Kaya nag-expand nga ang ating Task Force, nadagdagan ng subcommittees, nadagdagan ng mga miyembro para lahat tayo, all hands on deck, ika nga, para dito sa reconstruction ng Marawi.

Mr. Uri: Konting background lang ho, paano kayo nag-accredit ng mga developer?

ASEC. PURISIMA: NHA would be the one to answer that. And pagdating sa housing 'no, nasa kanilang mandato 'yan.

So I'm sure they're providing the proper accreditations. They're reviewing the suppliers and the contractors that may be accredited for this purpose.

And we will be very transparent. 'Yan ho ang mapapangako natin, na magiging transparent ho tayo, at isasama ko ho 'yan sa mga subsequent updates natin.

Mr. Uri: Salamat po.

Joseph Morong (GMA 7): Sa OCD po. Sir, sa Korea. What sort of contingency measures are we looking at 'cause wala naman tayong mga anti-missile systems?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Actually, mostly, we are meeting to make sure that all our agencies are in place.

In fact, there will be a meeting this afternoon precisely to discuss that within OCD and with selected government agencies.

And basically, information campaign 'to para alam ng ating mga mamamayan kung ano ang kanilang gagawin. This is partly prevention and partly remedial 'no.

And we will make sure that we have our assets, that we will have all our contingency plans in place. Meron naman tayong mga contingency plans at mga response plans. Set na naman 'to. This is... Meron na 'yan ang NDRRMC, meron na rin 'yan ang OCD. We're adjusting it per scenario.

So regarding this, siyempre aalamin natin 'di ba kung saan pwedeng tumama or 'yung trajectory. Although, we do not anticipate that there will be, of course, we'll be part of the direct trajectory of any launch, we will prepare 'no for the debris, at nagagawa naman natin ito dati pa.

So ipapaalam lang natin sa ating mga kababayan perhaps particularly in our eastern coast 'no kung anong kailangan nilang gawin, kung alin 'yung evacuation shelters na available at kung anong mga municipalities ang kailangan naka-alerto para dito.

Again, this is normal. We do this all the time. Parang typhoon preparations 'yan 'no na ina-alerto natin ang ating mga local chief executives sa kanilang dapat gawin. And, of course, part of this is our intensive information and educational campaigns.

Mr. Morong: Yeah, at the most, I think, we can suffer from an event of a nuclear attack it can be a fallout 'no? Kung halimbawang medyo maligaw or whatever.

ASEC. PURISIMA: Yes, yes.

Mr. Morong: But how do you prepare for a nuclear fallout?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Well, we will provide the necessary information 'no. Dapat ready ang ating mga local government units, ang ating mga local chief executives para dito.

Dahil alam naman natin na --- this is according also to our national disaster response plans, parating ang first responders diyan 'yung ating LGUs, parating 'yung mga local chief executives ang nandiyan.

So sila, ginagabayan natin sila, binibigyan natin sila ng guidance at abiso kung paano sila dapat mag-prepare. And we're checking their preparedness. We're checking their operational readiness, so to say.

Dahil lahat naman ng ating mga LGUs dapat may local disaster risk reduction and management officers, at offices, at councils na dapat nakahanda para mag-responde dito.

At on the part of OCD, we are tasking --- as we have been doing all along --- our regional directors, our regional offices, and our regional councils to make sure that all the local government units under them are preparing accordingly.

Mr. Morong: So we can say we're ready just in case may nuclear fallout?

ASEC. PURISIMA: Well, we're preparing and we would like to be ready when that time comes.

Mr. Morong: Are we coordinating with other countries to share information as far as maybe the possibility, or mga --- ?

ASEC. PURISIMA: The DFA maybe the more competent agency to answer that. But we are also coordinating with DFA regarding this.

Mr. Morong: All right, thank you.

Pia Ranada (Rappler): This is for Spox Abella. Sir, over the weekend, the President was able to meet with Ilocos Norte Governor Imee Marcos. Do we just have any more details, any more concrete details on the plan to return the Marcos wealth? How much are we talking about? Who are the people who will be involved in this endeavor? And which government programs will be funded by the gold bars, if ever?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: We don't have specifics regarding that particular issue. But as the President has promised, this entire negotiation will be done professionally and transparently, with a full accounting to the people, and especially, authority from the Congress.

We therefore urge the Congress to authorize the President to proceed with negotiations and set parameters taking into account concerns raised by critics and the citizenry.

It would be best if we all work together for final justice, closure and national reconciliation.

Ms. Ranada: And, sir, the President also expressed a stance, saying that he will just accept the explanation of the Marcoses that the wealth was hidden for safekeeping and some citizens were angered by this saying that it's revisionist and the proper word is "stolen." What is the Palace stance on this wealth? What is it? Is it stolen wealth? Is it --- ?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: The President has said that he will accept however they explain it. So we're not taking a stand regarding it. He is speaking like a lawyer and accepts what the other party is saying.

However, the final word will have to come from Congress.

Ms. Ranada: So, sir, we won't be expecting any follow up action like filing of charges or do they just return the money and that's it?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, like we said earlier, we said that we now urge the Congress to take... We urge the Congress to authorize the President to proceed with the negotiations.

Ms. Ranada: Sir, just to clarify, what will the Congress do exactly, they will authorize the negotiation? How does that work?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I don't know the specific exactly. But what we can say is that the President cannot just simply be acting on his own. It has to be... The legislative has to come into play in this case.

Ms. Ranada: So it will be an order from the legislative branch to begin negotiation? Why can't the President do this on his own?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: At this stage, that is --- it's beyond him. I think, I believe, he has already said so that it is not just him who will do with the negotiation. He works in concert with the Congress.

Llanesca Panti (Manila Times): Good morning, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Panti: Sir, follow up lang po. Konting clarity because why is it that the President would need congressional discretion or approval in negotiating with the Marcoses given that we already have the PCGG in place, which mandate is to recover the Marcos's ill-gotten-wealth. So why the need for congressional approval on Presidential action?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: As far as we understand it... As far as we understand it, it demands a --- not demands, it necessitates setting the proper parameters regarding the matter.

Ms. Panti: So, sir, the existing parameters with the PCGG and the Marcoses --- ?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: This is new ground, right? This is entirely new ground. So we need guidance --- we need... We defer to that... We defer to that --- the statement of the President that it will have to be referred to the Congress --- to Congress.

Ms. Panti: Okay, sir, follow up. Given that you need congressional approval and this is a new negotiation, does that mean that the Marcoses will withdraw their appeals pending before the court? Because they are they are contesting the ill-gotten findings on their wealth. So babawiin --- they will withdraw their appeal because there's a new negotiation?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: We cannot... By stating that, we're not implying that --- we are not implying anything. We simply are saying that the President has said that the Congress needs to be able to frame it. That he is also --- that the final --- *[how do you put it?]* that it would be in concert with the Congress, that decisions on the matter will be taken.

JP Bencito (Manila Standard): Hi, Spox, good morning po. Sir, can we get the Palace opinion as to what are the legal loopholes in our laws or in the current jurisprudence on Marcos wealth as to why the President wanted the Congress to step into the negotiations and give him the authority?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: We're not... We have to defer to... We have to defer to Congress to be able to point that out, okay?

Mr. Bencito: Last na lang, sir. Sir, there was a 2003 ruling that states that Marcos legally earned 300,000 from --- in his 20-year term. But, sir, is this ruling some kind of enough to allow the government do with finality all the --- the legal needs or whatever it's needed to recover all the Marcos wealth? Because that was a contention raised by the President in attacking PCGG, former PCGG Chair Carranza?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: The question is?

Mr. Bencito: Is the 2003 ruling enough, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I cannot make any comments regarding that. All I can say is that the President has stated that he will involve the Congress.

Mr. Bencito: Thank you.

Mr. Romero: Usec, the President mentioned last Saturday, regarding the Marcoses that if there will be prosecution it will be within the realm of the justice department. Is it a statement which somehow indicates that the government will still be open to a --- to filing charges against the Marcoses?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I don't know what the implications are. But the proper venue for questions like that would be the DOJ.

Mr. Romero: But filing charges is not yet --- you're not discounting the possibility of not --- of filing the charges against the Marcoses?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: We're not discounting... At this stage we don't have --- we are not making any statements about discounting any charges.

Mr. Morong: Sir, clarification lang po. Okay, so the committee that the President wants to create is for purposes of negotiating for a settlement?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Regarding the actual process, we leave it to that, we leave it to the President and the Congress, okay?

We're simply saying that at this stage, the President said that he will listen but that at the final analysis he will let --- Congress has to --- the whole process has to be in concert with the Congress, okay?

We cannot say which comes first, which takes precedence. We simply are saying that he is involving the Congress at this stage.

Mr. Morong: Okay, before that point. Si Imee po 'yung kausap ni Presidente ano? Kasi during the ambush, I think, ang sabi ni Pre --- ano no not the ambush. During the speech, I think, two weeks ago, he said that there's a spokesperson and then that's spokesperson said that Marcoses are willing to return a few gold bars. But I think, *[kelan ba 'yung kagabi?]*, last Saturday, pinangalanan niya si Representative Imee Marcos 'yung kausap pala niya. Is that correct?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: He said so? Okay.

Mr. Morong: Okay. All right. So --- no, I just wanna get the confirmation 'no.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: All right, okay.

Mr. Morong: Okay. Going back to the point. You are talking to the Marcoses because they want to settle, right? And we are amenable to that. Ganun ba 'yun?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: The President simply said that he was approached and that --- and for this matter... And that... We don't know the exact tenor of the conversation. Except that as the President has said, it has been opened to him that the Marcoses apparently are open to this negotiation.

Mr. Morong: Okay. So, if we're talking to them, are we --- how different is the final outcome from the settlements of previous administrations as far as the cronies are concerned? Kasi 'di ba meron namang mga ibang nag-return ng mga --- may nag-settle na mga cronies.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Okay. So?

Mr. Morong: Ganun din po ba 'yung mangyayari with the Marcoses?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I cannot confirm that nor deny that. I'm simply saying that the President listened to the --- listened when he was approached.

Mr. Morong: Sige na nga, sir.

Ina Andolong (CNN Philippines): Hi, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Yes, ma'am?

Ms. Andolong: Sir, ano po bale muna ang status --- status of efforts to form that team that the President was talking about pending the, what you mentioned, 'yung authority from Congress?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: At this stage, we don't have any clear reports as to what steps have already been taken.

At this stage, all we know is that the President was approached and that he has voiced his opinion regarding the matter and then the next steps will have to be taken as it unfolds.

Ms. Andolong: Okay, now this is similar to what were asked earlier, but why just not let the PCGG handle it? Why the need to form a new team?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Then we'll have to clarify that. We can get back to you on that.

Ms. Andolong: And, sir, 'yung sinabi po ninyo that the President will just accept the explanation to be given by the Marcoses ---?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: That is not what I said, that is what the President said.

Ms. Andolong: In saying that, can you expound to us what the President meant, does this mean that he will not dispute or challenge whatever explanation will be given by the Marcoses?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: All he said at this stage is that he was --- he accepted --- I mean, he did not contradict whatever the representative said, that he was taking it on face value.

Ms. Andolong: And lastly, sir, how important is it for the President to recover itong wealth? How do you strike a balance between --- in recovering ill-gotten wealth and at the same time holding the Marcoses accountable for whatever wrongdoing they have done?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, that will have to be a process that will have to be carefully worked out.

Ms. Andolong: Thank you, sir.

Pia Gutierrez (ABS-CBN): Sir, can we get a reaction tungkol po dun sa pagkamatay ng --- people are saying this is another Kian delos Santos case, the death of 19-year-old Carl Angelo Arnaiz, who was killed a few days ago by Caloocan police?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: At this stage, we don't have... We will be coming up with a statement soon. So will you please just --- we will be --- and you will be the first to know.

Ms. Gutierrez: But the Palace is aware of his case, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: It's something that... We still have to verify.

Philip Tubeza (Philippine Daily Inquirer): Good morning, sir. The MILF has expressed concern about lack of sponsor for the BBL in Congress and they're saying that this is non-compliance on the part of the government when it comes to the ---

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: This is a matter of legislative at this stage. So we'll have to defer to them.

Mr. Tubeza: They also expressed concern that it was not included initially in the 28 priority bills.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: It will be... As far as I know, it's going to be touched on in the next LEDAC.

Ms. Halili: Hi, sir. On other issue. Former senatorial candidate Greco Belgica said that members of the Liberal Party is having a --- parang planning a destabilization plot against the President and assassination plot against President Duterte. What do you say about... What can you say about this, sir? And do you receive same reports?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: My office has not received any of those reports. However, if he has made any statements regarding the matter, I'm sure he has --- he should, he needs to have substantial evidence regarding that matter.

Ms. Halili: But will the Palace look into this? Or are you going to investigate this report, the basis?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: As far as we know, matters like these arise everyday, almost everyday. Threats and the like. And so, I'm sure it's going to be also looked into.

Ms. Halili: But is this a cause of concern on your part, sir?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Any threat is a cause of concern.

Ms. Halili: Thank you, sir.

CCTV: Sir, I would like to know because yesterday the BRICS Business Forum's opening ceremony held in China and President Xi Jinping said in his speech that China would like to promote the BRICS Plus cooperation model. And as of now the Philippines has a very good performance on the economic side. So I would like to know do we have any plan to become a part of BRICS Plus in the future?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: For that, we need to defer to the economic managers, NEDA, DOF. And also we need to bring in, of course, the participation of the DFA. Regarding these matters, we defer to them. Thank you.

Mr. Morong: Sir, pa-shoot naman ng isa. Isa lang.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Sige, sige.

Mr. Morong: Sir, si Senator Gordon has announced na invite daw po sila Vice Mayor Pulong and tsaka si Atty. Carpio for a Senate investigation, September 7.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Okay. So you're saying?

Mr. Morong: Reaction ng Palasyo?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, like the President has said, you know, he has given his bless --- not the Pres... I'm sure the gentlemen are willing to --- as they have said, are willing to face the Senate.

Morong: Face and also talk? Kasi sabi ni Presidente sa speech, I mean, they can go and then just invoke their right against self-incrimination. Or depends on who's going to ask?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, that will be their prerogative. But they definitely... They've definitely said that they're willing to face.

Mr. Morong: Thank you.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Following significant developments regarding Marawi and in connection with Asec. Toby has said earlier.

The recent retaking of two critical bridges in the city namely: (a) the Balo-i Bridge and at Mapandi and the Bayabao Bridge in Banggolo are indicative of the decreasing maneuvering space of the rebels and will facilitate their defeat.

The continued use of hostages as human shields and the employment of IEDs in all areas the rebels have vacated will continue to slow down our advance but will not be a critical factor against offensive operations that will remain relentless.

Clearing operations are progressing albeit slower these last few days because of the remaining complexities in the very significant developments that will greatly expedite the defeat of the rebels still holed up inside the remaining portions of the city's business district.

Regarding statistics.

Building cleared, 7, and as of yesterday, September 2, that was the other day, 1.

Status of the cash donations as of August 31: Donations for Marawi casualties remain at P37,408,938.23; and donations for the IDPs, P956,030.21

Just one or two more. The Philippines tops Consumer Confidence Index:

Pinoys have, once more, gained the top spot as the world's most confident consumers.

The results of the Second Quarter Nielsen Global Survey of Consumer Confidence and Spending Intentions showed that the Philippines posted an index score of 130 points.

The high confidence of Filipino consumers affirms the gains of the Duterte administration in creating a more sustainable and inclusive economy for all Filipinos.

Also, touching on some portions of the agenda for this afternoon's Cabinet meeting.

There will be a briefing on the flu outbreak. Also there will be a discussion on the microeconomic performance during the second quarter of 2017.

Also, there'll a discussion on regarding OFWs with cases abroad.

And for information, the status of the President's legislative agenda. That is all, thank you.

Mr. Morong: Last lang, with regard to the Marcoses. Should any compromise with the Marcoses come with admission of guilt? Admission to the crimes they have allegedly committed. As a matter of principle, sir.

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: Well, that would be foisting an opinion and that's not, you know, that's not within my purview. Okay? So that should be within the President's terrain.

Mr. Bencito: Sir, last na lang. Can we get confirmation on the military's claims that Abdullah Maute might have been killed already?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: I think we addressed that earlier. We will get to you as soon as we get verified reports.

Mr. Bencito: But, sir, how will this new development be crucial to the efforts to retake Marawi or possibly end the crisis?

PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON ABELLA: We'll have to... That kind of the conclusion will have to come from the AFP themselves. Thank you.

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