

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

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE**  
**March 11, 2021 (12:09 P.M. – 1:00 P.M.)**

**SEC. ROQUE:** Magandang tanghali, Pilipinas. Narito po tayo sa Dumaguete, Negros Oriental para samahan mamaya si Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte at ang Department of Transportation sa inauguration ceremonies ng dalawang katatapos lang na transport infrastructure projects. Ito ang newly rehabilitated and expanded Dumaguete-Sibulan Airport at upgraded Port of Dumaguete.

Dahil sa improvement sa paliparan ng Dumaguete, pupuwede nang mag-accommodate nang mas malaking eroplano ang Dumaguete 'no; tataas din po ang terminal capacity ng airport na mula mahigit tatlong or 330 na pasahero ay magiging mahigit apatnaraan or 450 passengers.

Samantala, sa pag-upgrade ng Port of Dumaguete ay kaya na nitong mag-accommodate ng 500 passengers.

Kahit may pandemya, tuluy-tuloy po ang ating Build, Build, Build. Congratulations sa masipag na kalihim, Secretary Art Tugade, sa CAAP at sa PPA.

Samantala, sa mga insidente ng pagpatay sa mga aktibista, ipinag-utos na rin po ng Department of Justice ang isang malalim na imbestigasyon sa mga ito. Mismo ang Pangulo ang nagsabi sa maraming okasyon na anumang paglabag sa operasyon ay aaksyunan.

Sa UN High Commissioner for Human Rights at iba pang human rights groups, walang lugar ang impunity sa administrasyong Duterte. Mananagot ang sinuman na lumabag sa batas at mapaparusahan sa ilalim ng ating batas.

Pagdating po sa karapatang mabuhay, ang obligasyon po ng estado ay mag-imbestiga at magparusa ng mga lumalabag sa karapatang pantao. At iyan naman po ang pangako ng ating Department of Justice – mabilisang imbestigasyon at kung kinakailangan ay pagsasampa ng kaso laban po sa lahat ng mga lumabag sa ating batas. Pero siyempre po, kinakailangang malaman ang katotohanan so bigyan lang po natin ng pagkakataon na magkaroon ng isang patas na imbestigasyon ang Department of Justice.

Tungkol naman po sa tinatawag nating COVID spike, patuloy na pinalalakas natin ang pagtugon laban sa coronavirus gamit ang Prevent, Detect, Isolate, Treat, Reintegrate or PDITR strategy kasama ang localized response ng mga local government units.

Tingnan natin ang ilan sa localized responses na ginawa ng mga critical at high-risk areas sa Metro Manila:

- Sa Malabon na critical risk, simula February 27, ibinalik ang curfew hours mula 10 P.M. hanggang 5 A.M.
- Sa San Juan na high-risk area rin, ibinalik ang curfew hours nitong Martes, a-nuebe ng Marso mula 10 hanggang 5 A.M din po.
- Sa 24-hour curfew sa mga minors, mayroon ding ginawang regular cleaning at disinfection kung saan isinasara ang palengke, grocery at supermarket at talipapa gaya ng ginagawa po sa Navotas na high-risk. Ito ay isinagawa noong Lunes.
- Sa Makati na high-risk area rin, mayroon silang Otso-Otso campaign 'no. Dini-disinfect ang mga bahay, workplaces at common areas tulad ng escalators at elevators tuwing alas otso ng umaga at alas otso ng gabi.

May mga lungsod din po na nag-utos ng localized lockdown 'no. Sa Pasay na critical risk, nagdeklara ng maigting na community quarantine sa mga apektadong barangay. Ilan lang ang mga ito po sa ginawang hakbang ng lokal na mga pamahalaan sa pakikipag-ugnayan sa national government para mabawasan nga po ang COVID-19.

Sa ibang bagay naman po, paalala po sa ating mga kababayan, mamayang alas dos ng hapon ha, araw na ito, sabay-sabay tayong mag-duck, cover and hold para sa ating nationwide simultaneous earthquake drill. Live po itong masusundan sa NDRRMC and Civil Defense PH sa Facebook at sa YouTube.

Well, dito po nagtatapos ang ating presentasyon. Kasama po natin ngayon walang iba kung hindi His Excellency Shambhu Kumaran. Excellency, Secretary Galvez and a team of Filipinos are in India to negotiate the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines produced by the Serum Institute of India. Can you please tell us what vaccines we can look forward to? How much in quantity; and if you have any news about the mission ongoing right now? The floor is yours, Ambassador Kumaran.

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** Thank you so much, Spokesperson Roque, for this opportunity to join you and to press corps.

As you rightly said, Secretary Galvez is in India right now. The term sheet that was signed by the Philippine government in January with the Serum Institute of India for supply of the Novavax vaccine which is US-developed vaccine being manufactured in India.

The discussions are essentially underway for 30 million doses, and I believe that the Philippine side has invested in a larger number and that detail is being currently negotiated.

So this visit of Secretary Galvez and his team, he has representatives of the FDA, the Ministry of Finance, I think the President's office, etcetera, high-level delegation. They will, I believe, conclude the discussions, agree on the supply contract. And we're very hopeful that this vaccine can reach early in the third quarter or the late second quarter of this year. So it will provide the backbone for the Philippines vaccination effort in the second half of 2021 this year.

We're very, very happy with this development. The second source of Indian vaccine—as you know, India is the largest manufacturer of vaccines. We are very keen to engage with the Philippines. Unfortunately, for the earlier version of the AstraZeneca, Serum Institute will not authorize to ... not licensed to supply to Southeast Asia and the Philippines, that's why we couldn't take it up. But for the other vaccine that we're using in India, which is an outstanding vaccine developed by Indian scientists, it's called Covaxin by Bharat Biotech, that Emergency Use Authorization is with the FDA and we are hoping that now that we are entering phase 3 efficacy data has been shared, we have an early EUA and that we can pick up the commercial negotiations I believe as soon as Secretary Galvez and team are back, we should be able to commence their engagement.

So that vaccine also we'd like to see a larger number of doses. The advantage of Bharat is that they could potentially start supplies in late April or in May itself. So that will be, I think, a useful supplement to some of the other vaccine supplies that are coming in to the Philippines. The vaccine itself has shown 81% efficacy in the interim data, making it among the best vaccines in the world. [Unclear] vaccine which uses inactivated virus platform. In India itself, that vaccine several millions of doses have been used.

So we're looking forward to discussions on both these vaccines. I think Novavax is pretty much a done deal. We're hoping the Secretary Galvez will be able to announce that news as soon as possible.

**SEC. ROQUE:** So just to clarify, Ambassador: Aside from Bharat which is the local vaccine developed by India, we can also look forward to AstraZeneca and Novavax, is that correct?

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** Well, Novavax definitely, that's why Secretary Galvez is in India. Potentially, I believe that even AstraZeneca in the second half of the year. But those licensing arrangements, I'm not really confident as to where they're positioned. But that discussion is something that I am told also Secretary Galvez will initiate. But Novavax, they're going to close the contract and possibly have a discussion on subsequent supplies of AstraZeneca as well from the Serum Institute.

As you know, Serum Institute is the main manufacturer of the AstraZeneca vaccine, a licensed manufacturer in India.

**SEC. ROQUE:** So when we talk of a 30 million volume, Ambassador, it will be a combination of Bharat, AstraZeneca or Novavax, or just 30 million for a specific kind of vaccine?

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** Thirty million is currently the negotiated amount for the government purchase of Novavax alone.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Excellent!

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** In addition, we're talking about several millions of doses of Bharat which we could start supplies once we have the agreements, you know, as I said, by late April, early May. And the third pipeline is, potentially which is still to be determined because there are licensing issues to be addressed, potentially AstraZeneca sourced from Serum Institute also and in addition to these both Novavax and Bharat, a third vaccine supply from India that could potentially happen.

**SEC. ROQUE:** That's good news, Ambassador. So we can look forward to more than 30 million actually, the 30 million is only for Novavax. Thank you. Please join us in case members of the Malacañang Press Corps will have questions.

We also have now the head of Cybercrimes Division of the National Bureau of Investigation, Mr. Victor Lorenzo. Sir, are you in the house?

**MR. LORENZO:** Sir, good afternoon, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Sir, bumagsak yata iyong [gov.ph](http://gov.ph). Ano ba ho ang balita diyan sa pagbagsak ng webpage [gov.ph](http://gov.ph)?

**MR. LORENZO:** Sir, we are in close coordination right now with DICT, there was indeed a denial-of-service attack. Nagkakaroon na, sir, ng proper attribution ang DICT, and we will be requesting them the necessary details that they have doon sa attack so we could begin or we could officially begin iyong investigation.

We are confident, sir, that we can track down the hackers responsible for the attacks kasi may mga previous incidents na, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay, sir. I'm sure the Malacañang Press Corps will have many questions for you kasi maraming tanong sila tungkol diyan eh siyempre hindi naman po ako eksperto tungkol diyan.

Pero bago po tayo pumunta sa ating open forum, kasama rin po natin si Dr. Paolo Miguel A. Borja ng Asian Hospital. Sir, nagpaturok na kayo ng Sinovac 'no. Eh bakit po Sinovac ang pinaturok ninyo at kumusta na po kayo ngayon?

**DR. BORJA:** First of all, good afternoon, Secretary Harry and to all the viewers from us here at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center.

Now, as you asked po 'no, yes, nagpaturok na po ako ng Sinovac. This is five days ago. I'm feeling fine. No side effects 'no, not even the localized swelling that we usually see, that minors side effect, wala po iyon sa akin 'no and actually, most of my colleagues as well.

The reason why we selected Sinovac as our choice because it is the first available COVID vaccine that we received here in our hospital and as all of us experts say, the best vaccine is

the one in your arm. So the first one that is made available, you take advantage of that to protect yourself, to protect your patients, your family and everyone else.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Ah, excellent po. Ano naman po ang advice ninyo doon sa mga health professionals na nag-aantay pa po ng ibang mga brands 'no sa panahon na parang dumadami ang kaso ng COVID-19 po?

**DR. BORJA:** Well, yes po 'no. Our advice would be it's really about strengthening the vaccination program for COVID itself 'no. We're not really specifying any particular brands.

We encourage all healthcare workers and eventually the general public po to get vaccinated. All vaccines have been proven to be relatively safe and backed up by clinical trials proven to be protective against severe COVID so definitely po this will protect you against severe COVID and hospitalization regardless of the brand.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you very much, Dr. Borja. Please stay also in case Malacañang Press Corps will have questions for you.

Okay, pumunta na po tayo sa ating open forum. Usec. Rocky, sa mga paunang tanong please.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Good afternoon, Secretary Roque and sa atin pong mga guests. Question from Llanesca Panti of GMA News: Is there a need for HTAC approval for COVID-19 vaccine that will be purchased by the government? Why and why not?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, recommendatory po 'yan. Iyan po'y sang-ayon po sa lengguwahe ng batas. Pero sa patakaran po ngayon eh nagbibigay naman po ng recommendation ang HTAC dahil kung susundin mo naman talaga literally iyong nakasulat sa batas, kinakailangan aprubado ang stage 4 clinical trial. Pero sa panahon nga po ng pandemic at panahon ng emergency, wala pa po talagang nakakaabot ng stage 4.

Since nagbigay po sila ng positive recommendations sa paggamit sa Sinovac eh inaasahan din po natin na basta mayroong EUA ang bakuna ay magbibigay din sila ng positive recommendation. So although it is recommendatory, we welcome the positive recommendations of HTAC.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Second question: Will the Palace remove General Parlade as NTF-ELCAC Spokesperson as recommended by the Senate due to constitutional provision banning an active military officer from occupying a civilian post?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hinahayaan na po natin ang desisyon na iyan kay Secretary Lorenzana ng Department of National Defense.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Her third question: The delegation of European Union in the Philippines said the Philippines has made the commitment to protect human rights workers and enable their

work. How do you reconcile such commitment with the deaths of 9 activists during police operations last Sunday?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Gaya ng aking sinabi po ‘no, obligasyon ng ating estado kapag mayroong mga napatay ay imbestigahan at litisin at parusahan ang mga pumapatay. So I ask the European Union, please give the Philippines a chance to discharge its obligation to investigate, punish and prosecute those who may have breached our domestic laws. We are undertaking and discharging the state obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Still from Llanesca: Given constant criticisms on police operations, has President Duterte ordered the whole implementation of the use of body cam during police operations? If so, when was this order given and how as such decision impacted police operations?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Naririyang na po ang mga body cams, nagti-training na po tayo at inaasahan po natin magagamit na po ang mga body cams na ‘yan sa buwan ng Abril nang maiwasan na po iyong pagduda ng taumbayan kung ano talaga ang mga pangyayari ‘pag mayroon pong napatay. Kasi ‘yang body cam po ay physical evidence at hindi po magsisinungaling ang physical evidence.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Thank you, Secretary. Ang susunod pong magtatanong si Mela Lesmoras ng PTV.

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

**MELA LESMORAS/PTV4:** Hi! Good afternoon, Secretary Roque. My first question, Secretary Roque: March 11, 2020 or saktong isang taon mula ngayon nang idineklara ng World Health Organization ang global pandemic. May I ask, nasaan na po kaya ngayon ang Pilipinas? Tayo po ba ay—kontrolado po ba natin iyong sitwasyon, are we winning or are we losing? How would you describe the standing of the Philippines in this fight against COVID-19 pandemic especially nga doon po sa Western Pacific Region?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, nasabi ko nga po ‘no, na we are managing COVID-19 very well. Given iyong ating limited budget for health, napatupad po natin ang isang ECQ na naging dahilan para mapaghandaan natin iyong mga magkakasakit na malala at seryoso ‘no. So we have expanded our healthcare capacity and we are now able to take care of those who may fall ill seriously ‘no.

Sa ngayon po eh hindi pa naman po tayo nasa delikadong healthcare utilization rate – 60 to 65 pa po ang ating ICU capacity at pati po iyong ating mga ICU wards at saka mga isolation wards. At sa buong daigdig po, pang-treinta pa rin po tayo pagdating sa total cases pero mas mababa po tayo pagdating sa mga active cases – kung hindi po ako nagkakamali, nasa kuwarenta/kuwarenta’y uno po ‘no. At pagdating po iyong cases per million ay talagang

mababa po tayo ‘no, parang 137 iyong huling inanunsiyo ko ‘no. At sa case fatality po mababa rin naman po ‘no, nasa 2.09 ‘no, bumaba nang bahagya.

So sa akin po I reiterate, we have been managing the COVID-19 very well. Ang importante po nababawasan natin iyong mga namamatay at handa po tayong gamutin ang mga magkakasakit na malala. At patuloy pa rin po ang pakiusap ng President na habang nagbabakuna na tayo ng mga frontliners eh mag-mask, iwas, hugas pa rin tayo at bakuna para doon sa pupuwede nang magpabakuna.

**MELA LESMORAS/PTV4:** Opo. And then iyong second question, Secretary Roque. Moving forward, ano pa kaya po iyong kulang at ano pa po iyong dapat nating gawin? I understand may IATF meeting po today. May mga bago po ba tayong madi-discuss para nga makontrol din iyong situation lalo ngayon naitatalang COVID-19 spikes?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, sa akin po, importante iyong tracing ‘no. Talagang iyong tracing naguguluhan na po ako, *nahehelo* [nahihilo] na ako ‘no lalung-lalo na dito sa StaySafe app. Hindi ko maintindihan kung bakit hindi pa natin ginagamit ito at matagal na pong na-launch namin ‘yan ‘no, naalala ko po nandoon po ako sa launch ‘no. So napakaimportante po noong tracing kasi iyong tracing will enable us to isolate ‘no the close contacts para maiwasan nga iyong pagkalat.

So I would say that an area for tremendous improvement will be the tracing, the use of a tracing app at saka iyong pagtaas ng mga numero ng nati-trace dapat masunod po iyong sinasabi ni Mayor Magalong na dapat mga at least 32 for every positive case po.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes. Secretary, tanong mula kay Evelyn Quiroz ng Pilipino Mirror: You were quoted to have said that the country does not need to go into full scale lockdown even amid the surge of COVID-19 cases as this could be addressed in other ways. What exactly are the other ways that you had in mind?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Ito po iyong tinatawag nating localized lockdowns ‘no. Hindi naman po automatic na kada barangay ila-lockdown – pupuwede naman pong isang building, isang bahay, isang kalye, isang compound. So sa akin po, ganoon din po ang magiging sumatotal kung talagang maigting nating ipapatupad na mga localized lockdown. At siyempre po patuloy pa rin iyong ating pakiusap na pagsunod sa mga minimum health standards dahil iyan lang po talaga ang napatunayan na nating mga pamamaraan para mapahina po ang kalat ng COVID-19 habang nag-aantay pa tayo ng bakuna.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Her second question po already answered by the Ambassador. Ang next na magtatanong po ay si Tricia Terada ng CNN Philippines.

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

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Good afternoon, Spox and to our guests. Sir, first two questions for you then I'll go to, maybe, to Ambassador. Sir, una lang po 'no. Sir, Vice President Leni's camp says the President is spending more time attacking her than addressing the problems when in fact kulelat daw po tayo pagdating sa bakuna. Would you want to respond to this?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, hindi po, hindi namin siya pinag-aaksayahan ng panahon 'no. Tuloy po ang aming mga pagtatrabaho samantalang si VP Leni po ay namumulitika at nangangampanya na para maging presidente sa pamamagitan po ng kaniyang walang tigil na birada sa administrasyon. Kinakailangan lang pong sumagot pero this has not deflected us from [garbled] to serve the nation at the time of pandemic. Nakatutok po kami sa trabaho at ang pulitika po is at the very back end of the mind of the President. Trabaho lang po kami, patuloy ang paninilbihan.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Sir, iyong latest World Health Organization data shows that Philippines has the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the Western Pacific Region and highest new number of cases in the Western Pacific Region din po. How are we going to reconcile this, sir, with the government's performance and assessment na naging maayos po iyong pag-manage natin ng COVID-19?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Trish, iyong nangyayari kasi sa past 4 days should not erase what we have done since the outbreak of the pandemic. Totoo po may pagtaas sa mga apat na nakalipas na araw pero marami na pong hakbang ang ginagawa, inisa-isa ko po iyan doon sa ating press briefing 'no – nagpapaigting ng mga localized lockdown, naglilinis nang husto, iyong Otso-Otso sa Makati at saka iyong mga paglilinis ng mga public places kung saan marami talagang mga tao na kinakailangang puntahan 'no gaya ng mga supermarket at mga groceries.

So ganiyan po talaga ang anyo ng COVID-19, tataas po iyan kapag konti lang tayo nagpabaya ng ating minimum health standards 'no. So ang patuloy na panawagan natin – mask, hugas, iwas at bakuna.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILIPPINES:** Spox, maybe you can answer this or si Ambassador po can answer this. After the deals of Secretary Galvez or after his trip in India, how many vaccines can more or less we expect apart from the 30 million from Novavax? And maybe the Ambassador can also share with us the effect of the vaccines, kasi I understand sir, millions have already been vaccinated in India. We're interested to know how this has been reflected in terms of the number of cases. Has it lowered already?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yes. Your Excellency, would you care to answer the questions?

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** Thank you, Secretary. I believe that the volume that we are discussing with Novavax itself is 30 [million] plus. I am not sure exactly how much more it can be but there is a discussion to have 30 million plus volume from Novavax itself. From Bharat, I think the conversation that the local partner for Bharat has been having is anything of 8



million doses over a year and a half, go up to 20 million doses. As you know this vaccination process it's going to take some time as has been spread out over a certain period.

In addition, of course there is a possibility, as Secretary Roque was also mentioning, that Serum could potentially in the latter half of this year or later supply of its AstraZeneca vaccines but that is very much an ongoing discussion at the moment. So that's in terms of the volumes.

In terms of the impact of vaccination on the COVID-19 cases, obviously, you know in India, we started vaccination from the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, for about month and a half, we focused on the healthcare workers and the frontliners and obviously that's in terms of building up the healthcare capacity to deal with the continuation of cases. So, I don't think anybody expecting an immediate and dramatic decline and basically it is a process. We have a population of 1.3 billion, we are looking at vaccinating about 300 million by August, it's an ambitious struggle, but we are on the way.

And I believed that a certain volume of cases will continue to exist and we need to find a way to manage it, like it's being done very well in the Philippines, with all the preventive measures and all the standard practices, to have distancing, etcetera and the kind of be able to have the healthcare capacity to respond to any increase in the cases. So, the vaccination is also a help to improve public morale and to have people become more and more confident, it could help in the successful efforts to restart the economy.

We are very happy to know that India is going to be the largest and fastest growing economy in 2021, the IMF estimates about 11 ½%. I believed the good prognosis from the Philippines is also very good. So, as vaccination rolls out, I think the economic confidence will come in, so cities will open up, people will set travel and do business. So it's a process, an important first step in the process and we are looking forward to taking that to its logical [unclear].

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** Thank you, Ambassador Kumaran. Sir, just one more question, my last question for Chief Victor Lorenzo po.

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

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** Hi, Chief Vic! How are you? Good afternoon!

**CHIEF LORENZO:** Hi, Trish! Good afternoon.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** Clarification lang, sir, about the previous statement. You mentioned, sir, that there was a denial-of-service attack. Do we acknowledge, sir, that there is really a group behind this? Because there is a group, CyberPh Human Rights, claiming that they are behind this and they are warning that they will be launching more attacks in the coming days. Are we prepared for this, sir? How are we going to make sure, sir, na for example there are specific government sites that hold information, may mga data po silang hawak, ng

mga individuals, so how were we going to protect the data and other government sites from this attack?

**CHIEF LORENZO:** Triciah, the DICT is doing the proper attribution right now. And if you will remember, Trish, in 2010 there were massive attacks on government websites and we addressed these by arresting very notorious hacker at that time, kaya nag-subside iyong attacks before sa government website; and this is going to be our approach also. May mga previous attacks in 2020 and we have been monitoring their activities. We are confident na maa-address namin iyong isyu and we could identify those people behind these attacks.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** Sir, soon enough before a possible, before possibly ma-compromise iyong mga data ng mga tao in specific websites?

**CHIEF LORENZO:** There were claims na mayroon silang exfiltration ng certain data bases. But it's yet to be proven, they could easily claim that. Kaya lang minsan nagba-brag lang sila. One of the motives in hacking website or defacing websites or doing those attacks is for bragging purposes or, of course, plain and simple hacktivism. Kapag sinabi nilang may mga na-compromise nang data bases, we should not take that hook, line and sinker. We have to validate that. Kasi maraming mga reports talaga, pero wala naman pala.

**TRICIAH TERADA/CNN PHILS:** All right. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Spox.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you, Trish.

So just to answer your question, the Philippine government has initially targeted purchasing up to 40 million, but that could increase depending on ability of the other western vaccines to actually deliver the vaccines to us. Okay, back to Usec. Rocky?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, tanong mula kay Leila Salaverria of Inquire: The lawyers and supporters of the activists slain on Sunday have accused the military daw po of blocking the release of the bodies of the activists despite submission of proper documents and payment of fees. Their lawyers are concerned that this is being done to prevent a forensic investigation of the bodies?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I am looking to this po. I will communicate with the authorities. Pero as a lawyer with experience on investigation and prosecuting killings, importante po talaga na ma-subject to autopsy 'no because physical evidence will not lie. Iyong mga tama ng mga bala, depende iyon sa trajectory, will indicate if there was in fact abuse of force that would prove murder. So importante po talaga na matuloy iyong autopsy sa mga labi ng mga naging biktima. So, I look into it. I will call no less than Chief Sinas after this press briefing and maybe in a subsequent press briefing, I can tell you what Chief Sinas will tell me.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Pero how does Malacañang view this latest move of the Armed Forces, is this a cause for concern?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Okay, so I stand corrected. I have to call General Sobejana pala 'no. Well, I do not know the facts po and you know naman in law, there is always a presumption of regularity. Siguro po kaya nga po naaantala iyong pag-release is there is a need to subject them to autopsy, kasi SOP po iyan kapag mayroon talagang krimen na nangyari, dapat talaga i-subject to autopsy. At hindi naman po mga pribadong doktor ang mga nag-o-autopsy, it has to be accredited government physicians such as the PNP Lab or the NBI. So let me look into it, I will call po General Sobejana after this broadcast.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Will this not support allegations that the state is harassing activists?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I don't know if there is any harassment po. What is happening is, we are investigating and autopsy is part of the investigation, so we could prosecute and punish the perpetrators, if there any.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Ang susunod na magtatanong, Secretary, si Melo Acuña ng Asia Pacific Daily.

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

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary. I just have one question for you today. My question is, if you recall the violent incident in 2009 in Maguindanao Province immediately after that incident, the police elements in the area were all relieved. Do you think it is high time for the government to relieve the police in Samar and in areas where the killings took place last Sunday?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I cannot compare it with the Maguindanao massacre 'no. Because ang nangyari po sa Maguindanao massacre, we had about 70 policemen charged as co-accused with some local officials. So ganoon po ka grabe iyong involvement ng kapulisan sa Maguindanao and we are talking of, yes nine, but in separate occasions po. So they are in fact victims but limited to one in an area. So number one, the President does not make decisions of this nature, so hahayaan na po natin iyan sa hierarchy ng pulisya. That's a decision of Chief Sinas o kung hindi po si Chief Sinas then iyong kanilang mga regional commanders.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Thank you, Secretary. I have two questions for the good Ambassador from India?

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

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** Your Excellency, good afternoon and greetings to you. I am just interested as anybody else, how much does the Indian government spend for research and development compared to its Gross Domestic Product?

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** Well, thank you. Good to meet you too. Good afternoon. You know, the Central Government's Science and Technology budget which provides for all the central institutions and then there's a lot of research that is currently happening on the part of the private companies. COVID vaccines for instance was a joint effort by the Indian Council of Medical Research which is a top body that coordinates all the medical institutions in India, and the National Institute of Virology and the private company. So, our estimate is that this number is currently not sufficiently high enough, it could be around a percent of GDP at best, possibly lower. So, there's a lot of national attention, time increase that to a level which has commensurate. But as I said, it's difficult to estimate it comprehensively, because a lot of the research and development is now shifting to the corporate sector.

**MELO ACUÑA/ASIA PACIFIC DAILY:** I see but what incentives does your government provide to people who are deep into research and are successful?

**AMBASSADOR KUMARAN:** There is a large amount of budgetary support as I said, released through the Department of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Science and Technology. In addition, the Department of Space and Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Biotechnology, Department of Ocean Development, all of them have research budgets. The Defence Research and Development Organisation has a very significant budget too which amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars each year.

So, the idea is that we need to provide both support for organized R&D and also, we have a national program initiative by the Prime Minister called "Start Up India" where we encourage young start-ups and innovative minds to start contributing to the national research effort. So, it is really a national effort spread across various stakeholders.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Thank you, Ambassador. And thank you, Melo. Can we go back now to Usec. Rocky, please?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Yes. Thank you, Secretary. Question from Maricel Halili of TV5: Mayor Belmonte thinks that quarantine classification is not very useful at this time. Nakakalito na raw ang ibig sabihin nito dahil hindi ipinatutupad iyong original protocols under quarantine classifications. Do you think it is still necessary to maintain quarantine classifications? Will it be more effective if the government will just be clear on the protocols instead of the quarantine classification?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, actually, I think the statement of Mayor Joy Belmonte is very sound. From the point of view of the IATF we need to tell the people that, number one, that the pandemic is still ongoing, that there is still a crisis and that there is still need of a quarantine because this is a pandemic.

There is a psychological benefit to it that people will be reminded that they still have to be very careful because a pandemic is ongoing. So, by and large, while we appreciate the

suggestion of Mayor Joy Belmonte, perhaps what we will do in the IATF is to simplify the dos and don'ts for the different regimes as we further reopen the economy.

Naiintindihan ko po iyon kasi iyong mga GCQ nabago na po lalung-lalo na sa Metro Manila also by way of accommodating the mayors na gusto pa rin nilang GCQ although they stand committed to reopen the economy. So, we'll work on that po and we'll find a middle ground somewhere.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Second question po niya: Some senators call for the President to place the country under state of emergency due to African Swine Fever. Will the President consider this? Is it necessary at this point to declare a state of emergency?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, the President always considers naman po mga suggestions ng ating policymakers, pero sa ngayon po ang solusyon nga is iyong repopulation at naglaan naman po tayo ng sapat na halaga diyan at bukod pa sa repopulation, iyong pagpasok po ng bakuna at siyempre, iyong pag-aangkat po ng baboy sa iba't ibang parte ng Pilipinas at soon po sa iba't-ibang parte ng daigdig 'no.

So, point well-taken. We welcome the suggestion. It will be considered but it has not been decided upon by the President.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Iyong third question po niya, nasagot ninyo na, Secretary, about General Parlade na spokesperson ng NTF-ELCAC. Ang susunod na magtatanong, Secretary, si Joseph Morong ng GMA News.

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

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Sir, good afternoon! Good afternoon to the guests. Sir, sa iyo muna, couple of questions from other reporters. From Mariz: Sabi noong anak ng Mayor sa Calbayog na they see this na politically motivated iyong pagpatay sa kaniyang tatay because there have been efforts in the past prior to the ... you can call it ambush, na i-link sila sa drug list. Your comment, please.

**SEC. ROQUE:** I don't have a comment. An investigation is ongoing at kung maalala mo, Joseph, the investigation was already transferred to the NBI because of the possible involvement of men in uniform. So, like the rest of the nation, hinihintay po natin ang resulta ng imbestigasyon ng NBI at ang aking sinasabi lang, dapat talaga malitis at maparusahan ito dahil kinakailangan magsilbing halimbawa na habang papalapit na ang eleksiyon ay hindi dapat po pumapatay dahil ang pagpatay po iyan po ay kalaban at kabaliktaran ng demokrasya. Kinakailangan mapayapang pamimili po ng ating mga leaders.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Okay, sir, another topic. Sir, iyong PDP... at least some members of the PDP are pushing for the President to run as Vice President to Senator Bong Go. Your comment?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I have no information on that, I will consult the President about this possibility bagamat I've heard the President say at one point na siyempre, naging Presidente na siya, bakit siya magba-vice president. Pero I don't know if there's been any change, I will consult with him and one of the reasons why I'm here in Dumaguete.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Between Sara and SBG, who do you think the President will prefer or endorse?

**SEC. ROQUE:** I'd rather not really comment on these matters 'no habang nakatutok tayo sa pandemya ano.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** All right, sir. Just a couple of questions on the COVID issue. Sir, kahapon kausap namin iyong OCTA Research and they're saying that kung hindi kaya ng stricter community quarantine like MECQ or ECQ, at least tighten iyong GCQ. Some of the proposals that they said was: Number one, maybe we can go back to 30% capacity for mass gatherings; reduced capacity in malls and restaurants; and even impose a liquor ban. What do you think of those proposals? Are those doable? Are we doing it?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Alam ninyo po sa IATF, it's an entire government approach, a whole-of-nation approach, so hindi po tayo magkukulang ng brainpower in addressing this issue. We welcome the suggestion of OCTA but we are cognizant of what is happening and in the next meeting I'm sure there would be recommendations to be approved by the IATF including those that they have recommended.

Pero hindi naman kasi ibig sabihin na because recommended sila lang nag-isip 'no, continuously at work po ang iba't-ibang ahensiya ng gobyerno kaya nga po whole-of-government approach iyan, hindi lang ang DOH, nandiyan po ang DOST, nandiyan po ang mga economic planners dahil hindi lang naman ito strictly speaking something that's should just be viewed from the point of view of health, mayroon ding economic aspect iyan, mayroong social aspect. So lahat po iyan tinitingnan at binabalanse kaya nga po mahirap iyong trabaho ng IATF.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** But have we reached the point given the rising COVID cases and si Dr. Wong said yesterday na probably UK variant ang nagda-drive niya. Have we reached the point that we too have to change what is prevailing now in term of quarantine protocols?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, we definitely have to convince our people to be more strict in following iyong minimum health standards kasi iyan naman ang dahilan kaya tumataas ang mga bilang outside of the new variants. Pero ang sinasabi ko nga kahit ano pang variant iyan pareho din ang panlaban natin diyan – Mask, Hugas, Iwas, at Bakuna 'no.

Pero sa ngayon po, I don't think there's any need to panic because that's the nature of viruses – they tend to mutate at they tend to ... they will really infect a lot more. So, tayo alam natin

kung paano labanan iyan, mas paigtingin lang at siyempre, titingnan natin kung kakayanin nating bigyan ng tulong iyong mga magkakasakit nang matindi at so far po, we do not have any critical health care utilization rate. We are in fact wala pa po sa moderate 'no, so mabibigyan po natin ng medical attention ang mga magkakasakit nang seryoso.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** All right. Can I go to – a little bit – to Dr. Borja to get the hospital perspective, sir?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yes. Dr. Borja, supposedly hospital perspective. Go ahead please.

**DR. BORJA:** Yes, from the private hospital—

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Hold on. Can you give the status of occupancy—I mean the number of cases of COVID in your hospital and from a public health management minus the economy, what do you think should the government do? Have we reached the point we do have to tighten certain protocols?

**DR. BORJA:** Well, from a private hospital perspective specifically here in Asian Hospital – Yes, there's definitely a number of cases compared to the recent weeks. We've seen an increase but as Secretary Harry has mentioned, for me it is not a source of concern for now. Our teams have been deployed and our units have been upgraded as compared to last year.

So, we are definitely more equipped in handling these situations. Asian Hospital has been deploying a lot of programs to make our hospital tagged safe. So, definitely can control this and for me, there is no need for any intervention from the government for now.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** So, we're fine with the present protocols?

**DR. BORJA:** This is actually expected for now and as Secretary Harry has mentioned, as long as we stick to the minimum safety protocols, we should be fine.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** All right, sir. Thank you for your time. Thank you, Secretary Roque. Thank you, Ambassador. Thank you, Director.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Yeah. Perhaps Joseph should visit Asian Hospital to have a better perspective. I hope Dr. Borja—

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** I'm work from home, sir.

**SEC. ROQUE:** —you can entertain Joseph Morong when he visits Asian Hospital.

**DR. BORJA:** We'll gladly do so, sir.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA 7:** Thank you for your time, sir.

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

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, from Jam Punzalan ng ABS-CBN: Nakuhanan daw po ng video kamakailan ang isang pulis na nagtanim ng ebidensiyang baril sa tabi ng isang napatay na drug suspect. Allegations of tanim-ebidensiya, tanim-droga have surfaced as far back as 2017, why does this keep happening? What were the steps done to stop this? What does this say about the drug war?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, kinakailangan pong imbestigahan iyan 'no. At siyempre kung mayroon video, napakahirap namang magsinungaling ng video. Kung iyang video pong iyan ay mao-authenticate, masisibak po iyang pulis na iyan at malilitis din dahil iyong pagpa-plant po ng ebidensiya ay isang krimen din. So hayaan po nating umusad ang proseso, at mabuti na nga lang po ay mayroong video dahil ang video nga po ay hindi magsisinungaling.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Tanong mula kay Sam Medenilla ng Business Mirror: Kung na-sign na daw po kaya ni President Rodrigo Duterte iyong Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises or CREATE Bill?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Pirmado na po iyan. Na-announce na po natin iyan. Pirmado po ang CREATE.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Question from Rose Novenario of Hataw: May balak po ba ang Palasyo na maglaan ng pondo para sa research ng locally-produced COVID-19 vaccine upang hindi na umasa ang Pilipinas sa ibang bansa?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Rose, in fact, magtatayo na tayo ng institute of vaccinology 'no. Isa po iyan sa mga initiatives ni Secretary dela Peña diyan po sa DOST. Tama po kayo, dumating na iyong punto na ang Pilipinas ay nag-iisip na rin na magkaroon ng kakayahan na mag-develop ng sariling bakuna. Bagama't aktibo tayo, Rose, ha doon sa mga clinical trial natin para sa virgin coconut oil pala at saka sa Tawa-Tawa at saka doon sa blood plasma na undergoing clinical trials also. So, nakiki-contribute naman tayo doon sa worldwide effort to come up with treatment to COVID-19.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Tanong naman mula kay Vanz Fernandez: With the recent incident daw po involving the PNP, as well as local police district, will the Palace be willing to push for a mid-pandemic internal cleansing of the country's police forces? Incidents such as officers gunning down personnel of the AFP, the misencounter with the PDEA, and the shootout that led to the death of Mayor Aquino, will the President move towards a re-staffing of the PNP? If potentially yes, would that re-staffing involve an appointment of a new chief or will it focus on the clearing out the lower ranks of the PNP?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, ang masasabi ko lang po diyan, ang Presidente po ay nagsasabi na kung mayroong banta ang buhay ang isang alagad ng batas, siyempre pupuwede siyang gumamit ng dahas. Pero kinakailangan mayroong banta sa buhay mismo ng alagad ng batas, at kung



wala po iyan, posibleng maging krimen na murder. Iyan nga po iyong sinasabi na sa larangan ng International Human Rights Law, hindi naman bawal sa parte ng mga alagad ng batas na gumamit ng puwersa basta mayroong necessity at mayroong proportionality.

So kung sila po ay namaril at nakapatay na wala pong necessity at walang proportionality, malilitis po sila para sa krimen ng murder. At ilang beses na pong sinabi ng Presidente iyan, 'Sagot ko kayo kapulisan, kasundaluhan kung talagang tama ang ginawa ninyo na gumamit kayo ng puwersa dahil mayroong banta sa buhay ninyo. Pero kung wala, parurusahan kayo.' Iyan po ang mensahe ng Presidente bilang isang abogado, na bilang isang dating piskal.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, may follow up lang po si Dreo Calonzo ng Bloomberg maging si Pia Rañada ng Rappler: Paki-clarify po kung ang signed ba ay iyong CREATE Bill? Kasi ang na-announce po earlier ay iyong FIST Bill.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Let me verify that 'no. Let me verify that and I will post it in heads-up this afternoon.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Opo. Secretary, tanong mula kay Tina Mendez ng Philippine Star: How is the IATF and Malacañang address what some describe as COVID-19 protocols fatigue or burnout? Is there a need to shift strategy or communications campaign?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Pag-uusapan po iyan mamaya sa IATF.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Tanong naman po ni Genalyn Kabling ng Manila Bulletin: May we get an update on health situation of some government media personnel deployed to Dumaguete who reportedly tested positive for COVID-19? How many are infected? What assistance will be given to these government workers? Will the President push through with his visit to Dumaguete City today?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Wala po akong alam. Pero kung napapansin ninyo po, tayo po ay naka-Zoom. Wala po akong cameraman ng PTV 4, wala rin akong cameraman ng RTVM dahil parang kulang nga po sila dito sa Dumaguete that's why we are purely on Zoom. Aalamin ko po because I left the airport in order to do this press briefing.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Thank you, Secretary.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat. Mayroon pa bang magtatanong?

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary, sa part ko, wala na po. I think Joseph Morong or kung sino po iyong nasa Zoom. Si Joseph Morong po nakikita ko.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Joseph, you have additional questions?

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Sir, iyong sa IATF, sinabi kasi ni Sec. Galvez before, before he flew to India, na as NTF 'no, he's thinking of maybe bringing back iyong mga pulis and mga military to maybe psychologically remind the people that we have to follow protocols. Is this one of the agenda of the meeting later in the IATF? And mukhang ang attitude ng gobyerno, sir, status quo, but we have the rising numbers of COVID cases. Parang that doesn't seem to tackle the problem.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Let me clarify 'no, ang sinasabi natin ay ayaw nating bumalik sa ECQ kasi napakadami nang nagugutom kapag sinasara ang ekonomiya. Hindi natin sinasabi wala tayong ibang mga hakbang na gagawin. Paiigtingin talaga natin iyong ating mga polisiya para mapatupad ang minimum health standards. Kung kinakailangang gumamit muli nang mas maraming mga pulis at sundalo para dito, gagawin po natin iyan. Dahil ang isa talagang medyo maluwa ang pagsunod ng ating mga kababayan ay iyong pagtipun-tipon, iyong kawalan ng social distancing. Bagama't sa mga pag-aaral, lumalabas na ang pagsuot naman ng mask ay walang problema po ang mga Pilipino; talagang social distancing iyong problema ng ating mga kababayan. So kinakailangan talagang gamitin ang mga ahensiya ng batas para rito.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** Yeah, from a policy level, in terms of contact tracing, you touched on a subject kanina and you've admitted there are some areas of improvement there, correct?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, sabi ko nga po, ako na mismo ay *nahehelo* [nahihilo] kasi hindi ko maintindihan kung bakit itong StaySafe Philippines ay hindi pa talaga tuluyang napapatupad 'no. So alam ko, mayroon ding programang ginawa ang DOTr. So whatever program is, kinakailangan talaga nating mag-automate dahil, I will have to admit, ito ang pinakamahina natin sa response sa COVID-19 ngayon, iyong ating tracing. Sabi mismo ni Mayor Magalong, hindi sapat iyong sina-subject natin to contact tracing pagdating doon sa mga nagkaroon ng close contact, dapat talaga 30 plus 'no at malayo pa talaga iyong mga numero na nati-trace natin lalong-lalo na dito sa Metro Manila. So it's really an area na dapat talagang tutukan.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** So, in other words, Sir, we have an increasing number of COVID cases which is potentially being driven by UK variant which is more transmissible but we're not getting, hindi natin nahuhuli iyong mga nai-infect?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Hindi naman po, ano. Basta ang ating solusyon diyan, paigtingin natin iyong prevention, iyong ating isolation, iyong ating treatment at iyong ating tracing. So habang dumadami ang numero, dapat pinapaigting natin itong mga responses na ito.

**JOSEPH MORONG/GMA7:** All right, sir. That's it for me. Thank you.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Secretary Roque, may pahabol po si Vanz Fernandez: Iyong response ninyo daw po doon sa PNP internal cleansing?

**SEC. ROQUE:** Well, sa ngayon po ‘no, ang Presidente ay nagsasabi na ang mga kapulisan ay malilitis kayo kapag kayo ay gumamit ng dahas na wala pong dahilan kung walang threat sa inyong mga buhay ‘no. Pero hindi ko po alam kung ano talaga ang sinasabi ni Vanz na internal cleansing. Hintayin na po muna natin kung ano ang mga magiging desisyon ng liderato ng PNP kung kinakailangan na gawin nga iyang cleansing na iyan.

Pero sa ngayon po, panawagan po ng Presidente: Mga kapulisan, kinakailangan maging propesyonal, kinakailangan po gumamit lang ng dahas kapag mayroon talagang tunay na banta sa inyong mga buhay.

**USEC. IGNACIO:** Okay. Maraming salamat po, Secretary Roque.

**SEC. ROQUE:** Maraming salamat, Usec. Rocky. And I’d like to thank His Excellency, Ambassador Shambhu Kumaran. Thank you, Dr. Borja. And maraming salamat sa ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps.

Mula po dito sa Dumaguete [City], Negros Oriental, sa ngalan po ng ating Presidente Rodrigo Roa Duterte, ito po ang inyong Spox Harry Roque ang nagsasabi: Naku, mga kababayan, patuloy po tayong mag-ingat dahil ang nais ng Presidente lahat tayo ay umabot sa bakuna. Mask, hugas, iwas at bakuna. Magandang hapon sa inyong lahat.

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