

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
News and Information Bureau**

**PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON SECRETARY HARRY ROQUE
WITH LA UNION GOVERNOR FRANCIS EMMANUEL ORTEGA III
SAN FERNANDO CITY, LA UNION
JANUARY 17, 2018**

MODERATOR: Once again good morning to each and everyone and welcome to the press briefing of Secretary Harry Roque, the Presidential Spokesperson. We are now live here at the Provincial Capitol of La Union. I'm here with Sir Adam O. Mordagan (?), the provincial information and tourism officer of the provincial government of La Union.

And to answer the queries of our media friends who are here today, we have our Provincial Governor Francis Emmanuel Ortega III (signal cut)

SEC. ROQUE: Alright. Good morning and welcome to the first Palace Briefing in La Union, the City of San Fernando La Union and I'd like to thank of course, Governor Ortega for his hospitality for opening up the Provincial Capitol to the Palace 'no for today's press briefing. Let me begin with the customary good news and my first good news had to do with the City of San Fernando here in La Union.

The DICT had signed the Memorandum of Agreement with the City of San Fernando for internet infrastructure. In line with the President's vow to provide accessible and fast internet connection in the Philippines, the Department of Information and Communication Technology signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the City government of San Fernando for the construction of a high speed broadband infrastructure along the seawaters of the City.

San Fernando La Union is one of the only two landing stations of this transformative project alongside Baler, Aurora. The government initiative for the Luzon bypass information, infrastructure project, the first of its kind which aims to lower the cost of government internet connectivity while providing an ultra-speed internet backbone for the whole country by 2019; which would likewise support our free public Wi-Fi project.

Second good news is that the Social Weather Station reported a drop in Filipino's self-rated poverty 'no survey. We are pleased to note that the Filipino public considering themselves 'mahirap or poor' dropped to 44 % in December 2017 as disclosed by the latest Social Weather Station survey. This figure is 3% lower than the 47% registered in September of last year. As campaign to alleviate poverty continues as we strengthen our social protection mechanism which include conditional cash transfer, social pension for indigent senior citizens, supplementary feeding programs among other while expanding opportunities in

agriculture, forestry and fisheries to make food available in every table. We assure everyone that no one will be left behind in the Duterte administration.

More good news. We have another ‘build, build, build’ project rolled out this morning. The Department of Transportation led the groundbreaking of the Taguig Integrated Terminal Exchange. Taguig ITX project will be a six-storey building on a 5.57 hectare property inside the FTI compound which will cater to all provincial buses plying the Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao destination. Construction would start by the second half of 2018 and it’s expected to start operation by first half of 2020. Upon its completion, the Taguig ITX is expected to house around 4,000 buses and accommodate 160,000 passengers daily. It is noteworthy to mention that the government has been able to save 9 billion pesos when Secretary Art Tugade successfully negotiated the waiver of the 277 million annual granters’ payment, payable for 35 years in the concession agreement of the previous administration.

Another good news! We are pleased to announce that we now have covered the entire Philippine airspace with installation of 10 additional radars. Within the country, we now had a total of 30 radars and 1 satellite radar. The Department of Transportation and the Civil Aviation Authority the Philippines launched yesterday, January 16, the new Communications, Navigation, Surveillance/Air Traffic Management system. The new airspace system is expected to decongest air traffic, establish more the airline identification and guarantee the safety and security of passengers.

We would like also to state that we welcome the statement of the National Press Club that the exercise of press freedom and freedom of expression has not been affected or threatened with the Securities Exchange Commission decision on Rappler. As we have said no one is above the law. We are government of laws and the government has to enforce the law and responsible journalism as SEC pointed out means complying with the law.

Finally we would like to reiterate our notice to the public that unscrupulous individuals have using the office of the Executive Secretary or name-dropping the later in fraudulent schemes to solicit funds from the public. In particular, please be warned that the Office of the President or the OES has not authorized any person to solicit money or other things of value from the public in exchange for position in government.

Before I accept question, let me first address the question of Pia Ranada in yesterday’s press briefing in Malacañang. Pia Ranada alleged that Special Assistant to the President Bong Go intervened in connection with the procurement of frigates. Let me read to you the relevant (dates?) to belie reports that SAP Go in anyway intervened with this contract.

Now the acquisition/decision memorandum for these frigates actually was entered into as early June 7, 2013. On June—on January 24, 2016 the final technical specifications for the procurement of the frigates was approved by then Secretary of National Defense Gazmin.

On March 17, 2016 the submission and opening of the bids was done. On June 9, 2016 - prior to the term of President Duterte - after full qualification has been completed, the winning bidder was appointed.

The lowest calculated, the responsive bid was a Hyundai Heavy Industries of South Korea with a bid price of 15,744,571,584 for two frigates.

Now on June 30 as you all know the President assumed office and the only involvement of the Duterte administration in this regard is the ministerial issuance of the Notice of Award. Note that under the government procurement law, a bid once it has been awarded is then given a Notice of Award and all that Secretary of National Defense Lorenzana did on August 18, 2016 was to issue the Notice of Award.

What does this mean? Well of a contract has been given/awarded that means it is futile to intervene. Na-award na po iyong kontrata, bakit pa manghihimasok si SAP Go. Manghihimasok lang po kayo kung wala pang Notice of Award at pupuwede pang ma-influence kung sino o kung kaninong produkto ang bibilhin ng gobyerno.

I think this chronology of events, as well as the legal provisions of the government procurement law will belie in the report of Rappler that SAP Go in anyway intervened in connection with the acquisition and procurement of these two frigates.

Uulitin ko po: Tapos na po iyong bidding noong pumasok ang gobyerno. Notice of Award po na-issue na, ano pang halaga na para maghimasok si SAP Go.

Now the President challenge to Rappler to come up with evidence that SAP Go in anyway intervened and promised to fire SAP Go if Rappler came up with evidence. Apparently, responding to this, Rappler issued or published an article showing a marginal note purportedly originating from Secretary Lorenzana saying that certain matter were being referred to the Department of National Defense by SAP Go.

SAP Go po, is also Head of PMS. All communications received by PMS are as a matter of course, forwarded to the relevant line agency. Ganoon din po ang gawain ko bilang Spokesperson, kapag mayroong query ang media, ipadadala ko lang po 'yan doon sa appropriate line agency. We have no other options, but to transmit communications sent to us relevant to the undertaking of a line agency, but to send it to that line agency.

So if that is the evidence that Rappler is referring to, I'm afraid that's not evidence of anything. Because as a matter of course, kami pong mga members of the Cabinet based in Malacañang, we have no recourse but to send all relevant information that we receive to the relevant line agency of government. Okay.

So, I'm now ready to address your questions.

Q: My question is, the President is so serious with the ‘tanggalan’ program – to remove erring officials on the program of anti-corruption. And, what happened to that ‘sibakan’ or the ‘tanggalan’ for the operation of anti-drug program.

SEC. ROQUE: Ah... kung ang sinasabi ninyo po kung may tatanggalin si Presidente in relation to the conduct of the anti—the war against drugs – ‘yan ba ho ang tanong natin? Eh, nangako naman po ang Presidente kasabay noong pagdoble ng suweldo ng ating Kapulisan at ng ating mga Hukbong Sandatahan, na mayroon siyang iaanunsiyo na mga pulis na tatanggalin for various reasons ‘no. So, within the month po ‘yan – 70 ang numero na nabanggit po ng Presidente.

Kung wala po pong questions ang local media, may phone-in question po dito si Joseph Morong of GMA. Mayroon ba hong question diyan?

Q: (garbled)

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pa naman pong natatalagang kapalit kay Chairperson Licuanan. Ang tatayong acting po diyan ay ang pinaka-senior na Commissioner ng CHED ‘no. Mensahe po ng Presidente, seryoso po siya sa kampanya laban sa korapsyon. Paulit-ulit ko na pong sinasabi, kung nais ninyong magbiyahe, kung nais ninyong magpayaman, umalis na po kayo ng gobyerno at lumipat na kayo sa pribadong sektor.

Q: Follow up, sir. Speaking about foreign travels, so ilan na po iyong Cabinet members na nag-explain po ng kanilang foreign travels? Last year I think kasama—kabilang po kayo doon or si Secretary ng Agriculture.

For this year, 2018, paano po ang magiging kalakaran and paano po i-a-address naman po iyong foreign travels ng mga local Chief Executives, mga Mayors? And for Department Heads, sa mga LGUs, paano po iyong coverage naman sa kanila sa pag-limit ng kanilang mga foreign travels, lalo na ‘pag dinadala sila ng Mayors or Governors for that travel?

SEC. ROQUE: Nag-issue na po ng Executive Order ang Presidente diyan through the Executive Secretary. Sinabi na po na ang panuntunan ay unang-una, dapat related sa katungkulan ng taong-gobyerno ang kaniyang biyahe abroad; number two, ito’y hindi dapat masyadong magastos sa gobyerno; at number three, dapat malinaw iyong benepisyo ng bansa na makukuha ‘no dahil po doon sa foreign trip na ‘yan. Mayroon din po tayong reporting requirement, and yesterday the President said - let me repeat - 20 travels a year is too much ‘no. So, I think the policy has been issued – minimize foreign travels. Because after all, unless you are in the Department of Foreign Affairs, your job is here in the Philippines.

Q: Good morning, sir. I am Rey Anthony from DZNL Aksiyon Radyo. The Energy Regulatory Commission has already warned the public of massive blackouts because of the absence of Commissioners to act on power rate petitions. If this is so sir, what action could Malacañang do to avoid power failure in the country?

SEC. ROQUE: I think, the Office of the Executive Secretary is currently studying the matter. Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Sal Panelo has stated that there could be acting commissioners designated, while the commissioners are under suspension by the Ombudsman.

Q: Thank you so much sir, and another question. Sir, ano po iyong mas priority ng Duterte administration – is it the Bangsamoro Basic Law or Charter Change to Federalism?

SEC. ROQUE: The President has said, both are priorities; but he said that we need to pass BBL first, because as soon as we start with Charter Change, baka hindi na pumasok iyong mga provisions na kinakailangan ipasok through BBL. But both are priorities.

Q: Okay. Thank you so much, sir.

Q: Good morning, sir. My name is Bernadette from Bombo Radyo Philippines. Kaninang umaga lang po sir, mayroong news release from National Food Authority na magtataas po sila ng presyo. Ano po iyong puwedeng gawin ng inyo pong opisina, para itong ating mga masa eh hindi po maapektuhan ng nasabing pagtaas ng presyo?

SEC. ROQUE: Eh, mayroon naman po tayong Conditional Cash Transfer, at dahil po diyan sa TRAIN na tinatawag, eh mayroon pa pong additional na 200 pesos per month na ibibigay sa mga pinakamahirap na ating mga kababayan. Ito po’y tataas to 300 pesos sa susunod na taon.

Q: At second question lang po sir, iyong sa status po ng Mayon Volcano sa ngayon. Kumusta po ang actions na ginagawa ng ating mga concerned agencies na po sa national?

SEC. ROQUE: If... scheduled po siya through my press briefing will in fact be from Legazpi tomorrow.

We continue to be on Alert 3, and that means na iyong mga tao po na naninirahan sa danger zone ay pinapakiusapan na lumisan muna for the time being. There is also an expanded danger zone of 7 kilometers into south flank of the volcano. The government has assured that there’s at least 5 million budget for relief assistance, and the different line agencies from the DSWD, DILG, continue to be vigilant in providing assistance to the affected communities.

We will be in Legazpi if our schedule will not change tomorrow to conduct the press briefing in Legazpi.

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: Hello sir, I'm Jo from ABS-CBN Baguio. Sir, actually you've already answered this so many times, but just for reiteration. About iyong comment ba natin with regard doon sa issue with Rappler, sir.

SEC. ROQUE: Well gaya po ng sinabi ko, kahit ano pa sabihin ng Rappler, 15 years po ako nagturo ng Constitutional Law – you cannot claim a violation of freedom of the press unless there is prior restraint or actual censorship. Ito po, hindi pinagbabawalan ang kahit sino na mag-eksersisyo ng kaniyang propesyon ng pamamahayag. Ang sabi po ng Securities and Exchange Commission, iyong kumpanya po na Rappler Inc. at saka Rappler Holdings ay lumabag po sa probisyon ng ating Saligang Batas na naglilimita ng pag-aari ng mga kumpanyang engaged in mass media sa mga Pilipino lamang. Dahil hinayaan nila ang dayuhan sa pamamagitan ng isang Philippine Depositary Receipt na magkaroon ng control pagdating doon sa pag-amyenda ng Articles of Incorporation at saka ng bylaws ng Rappler Holdings 'no.

SEC. ROQUE: So it is not an issue of freedom of the press. It's an issue of upholding the Constitutional ban on foreign ownership as far as the business of mass media is concern. Wala pong kahit sinong sinupil ang pananalita, wala pong kahit sino na pinagbawalan na ganapin ang kanilang papel bilang mga mamamahayag, wala pong kahit anong press company na pinasarado at pinagbawalan na maging journalism outfit. Pupuwede pa po sila na maging bloggers, malinaw po iyan. Maria Ressa can continue to blog, Pia Ranada can continue to blog, kaya nga lang po baka kinakailangan silang kumuha ng accreditation as bloggers. Kasi they cannot continue conducting their business as Rappler since that company has, for all intents and purposes been declared void by the SEC.

Q: Sir, second question question. You have already answered this din po, but just for the record, sir. Iyong about sa alleged intervention of Bong Go again in the purchase of the 15.5 billion ahm, hindi niya type?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pong katuturan iyan. In the first place, paano maghihimasok si Bong Go, eh tapos na iyan, na-award na po iyan doon sa Hyundai. Manghihimasok ka lang sa isang government procurement para ma-award ang isang kontrata sa isang kumpanya! Eh ito po iyong bidding at saka iyong determination na ang responsive lowest bidder ay Hyundai ay naganap pa doon sa administrasyon ni Presidente Noyonoy Aquino.

Ang tanging ginawa lang po ng administrasyon natin sa pamamagitan ni Secretary Lorenzana iyong notice of award na. So bakit pa po manghihimasok ang kahit sino diyan, eh done deal na po iyan.

Q: Sir, a while ago, pagdating n'yo po, you mentioned that you have a big announcement, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: Iyon lang naman po ang ating announcement na pinabubulahanan po namin iyong report ng Rappler, wala pong katuturan, walang katotohanan, iyan po ay speculation. Wala pong ebidensiya na iprinisinta ang Rappler gaya ng hiningi ng Presidente, dahil kung meron namang ebidensiya, sisibakin niya si Bong Go. Dahil iyong mga ibang sinibak naman po niya kasing-lapit din gaya ni Bong Go. Secretary Sueño, Mr. Peter Lavina, lahat po iyan kasing-lapit iyan ni Bong Go. Wala pong sinasanto ang Presidente, pero kinakailangan may ebidensiya naman, hindi tsismis.

Q: Good morning po. I'm Pamela Geminiano from Philippine News Agency. Kay Secretary po, when you visited Baguio during Baguio Day, sir, you spoke na you support the autonomy in Cordillera. So, now sir may we know if your stand is still the same. If you still supportive and how can you help the Cordillera regarding this request?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, as Spokesperson, I don't have my own opinion anymore. So please refrain from asking for my personal opinion.

Q: Okay, sir. Follow up na lang po. Sir, how will you going to help, try to convince President Duterte to include the autonomy bill which is pending at the Congress as of the moment, as a priority legislative agenda?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, alam n'yo po, wala pong incompatibility doon sa ninanais ni Presidente magkaroon ng pederalismo sa hinihingi na otonomiya ng Cordillera. Iyan din naman po ang hinihingi ng ating mga kapatid na Muslim. So, sa akin po, inherently, philosophically, politically, wala pong pagkakaiba ang ninanais ng ating Pangulo na magkaroon ng tunay na otonomiya ang mga local na pamahalaan. So sa tingin po baka naman hindi sasalungat ang Presidente, bagama't hindi ko po masabi, unequivocally na kung ano talaga ang magiging impact nung autonomy bill doon sa proposed amendments to the Constitution providing for a federal form of government. Perhaps the people of Cordillera should lobby, like the rest of the Muslim areas that they should also be accorded either autonomy or a separate federal state. But that something that you can lobby for in Congress!

Q: Good morning, Secretary. My question is for the Commissioner on Higher Education. I'm Bernard Ver from Ilocos Norte. The resignation of the Chairperson Licuanan, is it because she is from the Liberal Party or appointed by PNoy rather that Duterte, that is why?

SEC. ROQUE: Resignation is a voluntary act. You need to ask Chairperson Licuanan.

Q: According to sources, it was then Executive Secretary Medialdia asked Licuanan about it, to resign.

SEC. ROQUE: Number one, I have no personal information on that fact. Number two, even if were to, she could have resisted if she did not want to resign. But the fact she did and that's the end of the controversy.

Q: Next question is all about Dengvaxia. How was the investigation now, sir?

SEC. ROQUE: It's ongoing. I was with the NBI Director yesterday and they are conducting their investigation. He was saying that they will also resort to physical evidence, pathological examination, but they have their own doctors in NBI.

Q: Sir, I'm Roel De Guzman from Bombo Radyo-Dagupan sa Pangasinan. My question is follow up lang po doon sa natanong po ng ABS-CBN. May mga gagawin po ba tayong mga investigation o pag-aaral po para ma-pursue iyong similar cases po ng Rappler. Maybe mga media outfits po na may mga traces po o mga indications na pupuwede sila po ay managed na po ng hindi po mga Pilipino?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, unang-una po medyo misleading po iyong tanong natin, kasi hindi naman po Malacañang ang nag-imbestiga diyan sa Rappler. Ang nag-imbestiga po diyan ay Securities and Exchange Commission!

Pangalawa po ay alam n'yo po ang trabaho talaga ng SEC ay siguraduhin na lahat iyong mga binibigyan natin ng tinatawag na corporate personality, na mga korporasyon ay sumusunod sa ating Saligang Batas at sa ating mga batas. So, trabaho po talaga nila iyan! At sa tingin ko naman po, sa tagal-tagal na meron tayong prohibition against foreign ownership sa mass media, nasa 1935 Constitution na po iyan, eh talaga naman iyong mga media enterprises dito ay sumusunod diyan, except nga lang po itong Rappler, kasi bago naman itong Rappler. At saka alam naman natin talaga na matagal na iyong kanyang mga koneksyon sa mga dayuhang mga namumuhunan.

Q: Sir, makapagbigay po ba tayo ng updates tungkol po sa mga territorial disputes kung saan po involved ang Pilipinas po ngayon?

SEC. ROQUE: Naku! Ang hirap namang update, anong gusto mong update?

Q: Especially with the case po ng Pilipinas at ng China kung kumusta po iyong pag-uusap regarding doon sa territorial dispute po.

SEC. ROQUE: Ang pinag-uusapan po ngayon ay iyong tinatawag na code of conduct. So iyan po ay gumagalaw po ang ating mga negotiators from the Department of Foreign Affairs at siymepre po iyong mga counterpart agencies niya sa buong ASEAN at sa bansang Tsina. Samatala po kung tatanungin ninyo ako, iyong aking mga kliyente galing dito sa La Union, Pangasinan, Zambales eh ngayon po ay nakaka—they are able to fish doon sa borough na dati-rati po nung panahon ni Presidente PNoy, hindi po nila nagagawa.

Part 4

SEC. ROQUE: I will refer to Governor Ortega.

GOV. ORTEGA: Thank you very much. First of all, gusto kong magpasalamat sa presence ni Secretary Harry Roque, nafi-feel po namin ang presence ng national government by his visit. So thank you very much sir, for your visit.

Doon po sa tanong natin, kasi nung ako po ay na-proclaim as a duly elected governor. I started working and unang tanong ko is: “*where will I lead my people to.*”

But before I answer that question, I ask myself another question: “Ano ba ang role ng local government unit?” And I answered it this way: “The role of the local government unit is to provide services to our people.” How can we provide services to our people? Based on the resources that we have!

And para po sa akin, I believed na iyong resources namin puwede po naming palakihin. Kasi like for example, our budget last year was 1.2 billion. For this year, nadagdagan po ng 200 million, so we have a budget of 1.4 billion pesos.

So ang gusto po namin is to focus on local economic development and we adopted systems like the performance governance system, ISO, so on and so forth. And during the course, we have conducted several workshops like the economic profiling. And we were able to identify together with our Mayors and all the stakeholders that two industries that are our potential and strength, which is agriculture and tourism.

So we came up with a vision for La Union to become the heart of agri-tourism in Northern Luzon. So we want to focus on these major industries. We want to create an atmosphere that is conducive for business.

We hope that investors would come in and if investors would come in, with that comes job opportunities, whether new generation and going back to the basic role of the provincial government or the local government with unit which is to provide basic services to our people. We hope that with these investments that will come in, we hope that our resource pie, so to speak will become bigger and bigger. And if our resources will become bigger and bigger, then we can give more and better services to our people.

And ang maganda po dito sa La Union, we have blessings like, we have very good peace and order, we are insurgency-free. We are accessible from Metro Manila. So kumbaga all roads, so to speak all roads lead to La Union now and we want to really provide development dito sa province and iyon na nga iyong agriculture and tourism and tourism ang na-identify namin. So we are promoting this and we hope that more tourist would come in, investors spend their money para gumanda po ang ekonomiya dito sa La Union.

SEC. ROQUE: Doon naman po sa question ninyo sa ASEAN, naku! Mula po nasimulan ang ASEAN, we have grown by 10 folds, the amount of trade between countries within ASEAN and between ASEAN and its trading partners. We have also now basically visa-free travel for all ASEAN country promoting tourism within ASEAN. And of course in terms of investments,

we are working on unifying all these laws and investments to promote inter-country investments within ASEAN. So, ibig sabihin po talaga hanapbuhay ang naging resulta dahil po dito sa ASEAN being a common market.

Now, phone-in question from Joseph Morong. Number 1: Rappler said that they were not given a chance to fix Omidyar, PDR. Omidyar waived and closed on informing them of changes in 'Articles of Corporation.'

SEC. ROQUE: I am not aware that the SEC is duty-bound to give them an opportunity to rectify what basically begin the basis for declaring their corporate existence to be void. In other words, ano ba naman ang gusto ninyong mangyari pa sa gobyerno 'no, dineclare na nga kayong void, binigyan sila ng pagkakataong marinig, binigyan ng show cause order, sianbihan na mali iyang iyong PDR na nagbibigay ng control sa mga dayuhan.

Ang sinagot nila: "Walang mali diyan, inaamin namin, walang mali diyan!" Eh ano pang gusto naming gawin ng gobyerno po. Siguro kung talagang sila ay genuinely intent on complying with the Constitution, upon receipt of the show cause order, eh di binago na nila. Hindi na dapat sila nag-antay ng desisyon na void sila for contravening the Constitution.

So, I think, it's asking for too much na ngayong meron ng desisyon na void, gusto nila ng opportunity to rectify. That opportunity was when they were served a show cause order. Let's not be beating about the bush. Nagkamali sila, pinaglaban nila iyong legal position nila na walang mali iyon, well, unfortunately under our laws, it's the SEC that would decide that issue, not them.

On the DOJ filing, investigating officials of Rappler: Well, that was the intent of the SEC, when they furnish the DOJ a copy of their decision. Because the decision of the SEC says that the issuance of the PDR which gave control to a foreign investor is a means of circumventing the Constitutional prohibition on Filipino ownership of media businesses and thereby a violation of the anti-dummy law. Kaya po ni-refer ng SEC iyan sa DOJ. It is the SEC that is of the belief that Rappler should be investigated for violating the anti-dummy law which is criminal in nature.

SEC. ROQUE: *"The President mentioned his calling for an emergency meeting on law and order. He said threats are coming in fast. When will this be?"* — I have no information on when this emergency meeting will be, but I myself will be attending a 1:30 meeting in Malacañang.

Additional: *"Re Bong Go, the document where there's a note mentioning Bong Go, is it real?"* — In my mind, whether or not it's real... that piece of document is immaterial, because the President asked for an instance where Bong Go intervened. The note was not written by Bong Go, it was purportedly written by Secretary Lorenzana.

So, how would that note prove the involvement of Bong Go? In other words, that piece of document po, will not prove anything other than the existence of the note itself. But it will not prove the alleged intervention of Bong Go which I highlight, is impossible and improbable because the contract has already been bid and awarded to the winning bidder as of August of 2016. So, para que pa mag-i-intervene kahit sino to a contract that has already been awarded?

Let me see if there are other questions here... No further questions. Well, there is something here, not really from Malacañang, but from RG Cruz: “*Blind item that ABS na raw ang susunod na papasara.*” — Naku! That is purely speculative po. In the first place, hindi po puwedeng ipasara ang ABS-CBN ‘no, dahil they exist. And the issue of franchise renewal is with Congress, not with Malacañang.

Okay... mayroon pa ho kayong mga questions? From Malacañang, please text me your questions.

Q: Follow po. How far has the administration achieved in the fight against illegal drugs?

SEC. ROQUE: Well I don’t have the figures, but I think overall, the report has been—there’s been substantial decrease in all forms of crime – and we attribute this to intense effort to curtail criminalities, especially drugs.

Q: Another question. Secretary, I believe the uniformed men here are so happy this time because of the ‘dobleng’ salary, but how about the other sectors or public servants of the Philippines?

SEC. ROQUE: Mayroon din po kayong increase, kasi last tranche of salary standardization ilalabas na po ngayong taon, ‘di ba? So lahat po tayo mag-i-increase din, hindi lang ang mga Kapulisan.

Pero ang mga Kapulisan at Kasundaluhan, totoo po ‘yan, iyong mga kasama kong mga pulis eh kinonfirm (confirm) nila na doble na ang suweldo nila. Hindi po ibig sabihin niyan kumuha kayo ng pangalawang asawa ha... (laughs). Okay... bawal po ‘yan. Okay?

So ang ibig sabihin lang po niyan: ‘yan ay unang-una, katuparan sa ginawang pangako ng ating Presidente noong siya ay nangangampanya para maging presidente. Ang Presidente po is true to his words, by hook or by crook, ginawa po niya iyong gusto niya. At ang kaniyang pinangako;

At pangalawa, that comes with more responsibilities as well. With higher salaries, with double the salary, wala na pong dahilan para sa ating kapulisan at mga kasundaluhan na maging corrupt, kasi hindi na kayo naghihirap ngayon ‘no. Ang suweldo ninyo ngayon eh para na kayong propesyunal na doktor o abogado ‘no. So hindi na po—wala na pong dahilan

para kahit sinong men in uniform will be corrupt because of poverty. You're not in poverty anymore, and that's a fact.

Q: Thank you, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Wait, mayroon ding Chona Yu of Radyo Inquirer: “*Sir if they are bloggers, would they seek accreditation from Asec. Mocha’s office?*” — Well all bloggers, in order to have access to Malacañang will have to seek accreditation ‘no. But we will never prohibit them from exercising their protective freedom.

From Leila of Inquirer: “*Good AM. How does the Palace view the proposal in Congress that the new Consti should only protect responsible exercise of free speech? Does Malacañang agree with it? Who is to determine what is “responsible exercise of free speech”? Is this not a dangerous proposal, and won’t it give the state greater power to muzzle the press?*” — We will not comment on this, because this is just a proposal ‘no. We will await until the final proposal of Congress is submitted to the people.

So far I can assure you, the President is a lawyer, he honors the Bill of Right, he has no problem with the Bill of Right. What you are seeing from the President—or what you saw for instances from the President last night, is also the exercise of free speech on the part of a President who feels that he has not been getting the right kind of treatment from the media.

But the President does not prohibits anyone from reporting, in the manner that they want to do so. Don’t feel insulated though if the President reacts – that’s also his Constitutionally protected right. Patas lang po ‘yan.

Hindi, at baka mayroon pa. Malacañang Press Corps... last chance. We’re about to go up the air. Naku Mike Imbo: “*reaction daw on Rappler.*” Naku, tatlong araw na po tayong nagre-react diyan, okay. Okay, no more questions with me on my phone.

So kung wala na pong questions, I’d like to thank the local media of Region I. I’d like to thank one of my favorite, probably my favorite governor in this country, Governor Ortega and the people of San Fernando and the Province of La Union for your hospitality.

Thank you very much. Good morning, Pilipinas.

#END#

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