

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY
News and Information Bureau

PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESS SECRETARY TRIXIE CRUZ-ANGELES
SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 (1:23 P.M. – 1:52 P.M.)

USEC. GREGGY EUGENIO: Magandang hapon po, Malacañang Press Corps, kasama po natin ngayong hapon si Press Secretary Attorney Trixie Cruz-Angeles, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office General Manager Mel Robles at PhilHealth Spokesperson Dr. Shirley 'Gigi' Domingo.

Good afternoon, Sec.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang tanghali, Malacañang Press Corps. Dalawang mahalagang ahensiya sa pagbangon natin galing sa pandemya – Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office at saka ang PhilHealth. May mahalaga po silang announcement ngayong araw na ito na makakatulong dito sa ating economic recovery. Boss Mel.

PCSO GM ROBLES: Magandang hapon po sa inyong lahat. Today, the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office is going to remit its share to the National Treasury and which will give the PhilHealth more funds to support the Universal Health Care Law.

This is just the first among the remittances that we will do because under the law, 40% of our charity fund will have to go to the Universal Health Care.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magkano po iyan?

PCSO GM ROBLES: I forgot the most important thing – it's P2.5-B to help finance the Universal Health Care and yeah this is over and above the taxes that we pay. So, apart from the taxes that we give to the Department of Finance, we still have to give this from our charity fund, P2.5-B.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: May idea kayo Boss Mel, kung ilan ang taxes na binabayaran? Pero you have income, your VAT and...

PCSO GM ROBLES: We have all the taxes including documentary taxes.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: So on top of that, mayroon tayong more than P2-B na niri-remit sa Universal Health Care through PhilHealth. Madam.

PHILHEALTH SPOKESPERSON DOMINGO: Yes. Thank you very much for inviting us here. In behalf of our OIC President, Attorney Eli Santos, who is now in Congress for a budget hearing,

we are very happy to be the recipient of these funds from PCSO. We have lined up several benefits for the use of these funds. These funds will be transmitted to the Treasury and will be remitted to PhilHealth through the national subsidy for benefit improvement. So, it is a different subsidy from the usual GAA subsidy for PhilHealth for the premiums of indirect contributors.

This fund is specifically for benefit improvement and will not in any way be used for any admin expense. So, we're very happy that we will be receiving these funds because it will translate to better financial protection of all our members. Thank you.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: May katanungan po ba kayo sa ating dalawang ahensiya?

Q: Hello. Good afternoon po. Sa PhilHealth po, iyon po bang P2.5-B ay gagamitin doon sa mga hindi pa nababayaran na mga COVID expenses po ng mga pasyente way back before pa?

PHILHEALTH SPOKESPERSON DOMINGO: Hindi po. As we said, funds from PCSO will be a special fund in the coffers of PhilHealth and it will be used only, specifically for benefit improvement. And in fact we'll be coming out with a medium-term expenditure plan for these funds from PAGCOR and PCSO with the coordination and approval also of the two agencies.

Q: Ano-anu pong mga benefits ito na pagkakagastusan po ng P2.5-B?

PHILHEALTH SPOKESPERSON DOMINGO: Some of them are review of our existing case rate para mapataas ang case rate at mas ma-improve iyong ating support value; doon din sa ating dialysis para ma-increase ang sessions ng dialysis for our dialysis patients; mayroon din tayong mga orthopedic benefits, that's planned for that; and our Z Benefits or iyong catastrophic benefits namin. Iri-review po rin natin iyon and try to increase the support value also of these conditions. These conditions were identified, because most of the assistance that PCSO were giving were in the area of these benefits and therefore, we agreed to look at all these case rates and Z benefits for use of that funds.

Q: So, hindi po kasama ang COVID ano dito, iyong mga COVID patients, ganiyan?

PHILHEALTH SPOKESPERSON DOMINGO: We are paying for COVID benefits through our existing funds.

Q: Thank you po.

PHILHEALTH SPOKESPERSON DOMINGO: Salamat din po.

Q: For GM Robles. First time po itong P2.5-B na remittance ninyo since umupo po kayo sa PCSO?

PCSO GM ROBLES: Yes. This is the first time under my watch.

Q: So ito po ba, iyong P2.5-B, is part of the remittance po ng mga STL operators, iyong mga franchise holders natin sa buong Pilipinas?

PCSO GM ROBLES: Yes. Combined na ito with the lotto and STL funds. We have a charity fund. Mayroon kasing allocation from the gross income; we have about 35% sa charity and from there 40% of that goes to the Universal Health Care Law.

Q: So ito pong fund na ito, since na-mention ninyo from STL operations, mayroon po ba kayong report na natanggap na may mga STL franchise holders po na hindi pa nakakapag-operate sa bansa?

PCSO GM ROBLES: Yeah, mayroon. Mayroon iyan, it's a normal occurrences.

Q: So, ano po iyong direktiba dito ng PCSO. Kasi po kung ligal pong franchise holders sila ay makakapag-operate po sila at the same time mari-remit po nila iyong inaasahan nating remittance.

PCSO GM ROBLES: Medyo mahabang kuwento lang 'no, but the short and long of it, if you apply for an STL franchise, you give a feasibility study and we assume, we presume that the applicant can operate. So, upon given the permit to operate, we will give you certain number of days for you to operate and remit. Kapag hindi, it shows na hindi ka ready and you are not qualified to be an agent. Actually, we call them agents.

Q: Thank you, sir.

Q: [unclear] PCSO, sir, have you looked on these mga illegal STL or mga jueteng na illegal under your watch now?

PCSO GM ROBLES: Yeah. I will answer this, but if you could direct also your question sana on the assistance because this is really, but I will answer this. Yes, it is a fact that we have a lot of illegal operations and we are doing our best to contain them. Because, yes, they directly affect our contribution to the Universal Health Care, but rest assured we are working, because we don't have police powers but we are using a lot of persuasion and legal moves to curtail the operations of the illegal jueteng. Among them iyong bookies, mayroong peryahan ng bayan 'no, there are a lot. Alam ninyo naman sa Pilipinas kahit basketball ay tinatayaan. So, there is a proliferation and we are doing our best to have this prevented para naman the legal STL, who are paying their taxes and in fact contributing to the coffers of PhilHealth, can operate and proliferate.

Q: Sir, on another issue. Sabi ninyo iyong mga assistance, have you looked on these medical assistance and financial assistance you have given? Mga ilan na po ito? How much?

PCSO GM ROBLES: I don't have the figures now, but I will tell you they have been reduced dramatically because of the imposition of, for example, docs stamps 'no. Just to put it in context:

Prior to 2019 our budget for charity is P9-B. Now, our budget for the whole year is only P900-M. So, it has dropped dramatically. It is one tenth, including what we give 'no. Kaya iyong tira lang sa amin for charity is less than a billion.

Q: Sir, may mga nagrereklamo, sir sa mga online. Kasi they are asking for some medical assistance. Puwede silang, let say pumunta ng personal sa inyong office?

PCSO GENERAL MANAGER: They can email me, because right now talagang dine-discourage natin iyong face-to-face, iyong pila and then they can complain and yes, they have a lot of reason to complain, because we used to give us highest P200,000, even P500,000 during the times na wala pa kaming taxes.

Now, you will be lucky to get p50,000, P20,000 to P50, 000 iyong maximum.

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Relevant questions, please.

Q: Sir, nabanggit po ninyo na P900 million iyong fund na lang iyong charity, Bakit po bumaba, sir from P9 billion?

PCSO GENERAL MANAGER: Well, as I have said, we have the taxes that weren't there before. Iyong documentary stamps, VAT. We have the earmarking, Malasakit, also the Universal Health Care Law, although they are the same, pareho naman ang ginagawa nila. Iyong mga like National Book Development Board. Things that have nothing to do with our mandate, naka-automatic iyong marking boost sa amin, may sports din. So, we are working on it, para iyong wala naming relationship po sa charity ay matanggal, because ang laki po na nawawala na sa amin for the taxes that we pay. So, not only do we give charity, we also, a revenue generation for the government.

USEC. GREGGY EUGENIO: Okay, thank you and now we will proceed to the handing over of the 2.5 million checks of PCSO to Philhealth.

Okay, thank you po PCSO General manager Mel Robles at sa atin pong Philhealth Spokesperson Dra. Shirley "Gigi" Domingo. Maraming salamat po. And now, we will proceed to Press Secretary Trixie Angeles for some announcements.

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang tanghali uli. Happy birthday kay boss, bukas na. Naglabas po tayo today ng Executive Order Number 3, allowing the voluntary wearing of face masks in outdoor settings, and we reiterate the continued implementation of minimum public health standards during the state of public health emergency relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, ito na po iyong ina-announce ng DOH ng voluntary wearing of face mask outdoors in non-crowded places provided kung kayo ay immunocompromised, seniors or hindi kumpleto ang bakuna, kailangan pa rin pong mag-face mask or strongly encouraged ang face mask.

Basahin ko na lang po precisely iyong provision. The voluntary wearing of face masks in open spaces and non-crowded outdoor areas with good ventilation is hereby allowed provided that not fully vaccinated individuals, senior citizens, and immunocompromised individuals are highly encouraged to wear their masks and physical distancing will be observed at all times, so mayroon pa rin tayong physical distancing.

Face masks shall continue to be worn in indoor, private, or public establishments, including in public transportation by land, air, and sea and in outdoor settings where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Tuloy pa rin po ang other minimum public health standards intended to effectively prevent and minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the country, which shall continue to be implemented, consistent with the principles of shared accountability, evidence-based decision-making, socio-economic equity, and rights-based approach. In this regard, the DOH is directed to update the MPHS guidelines with the issuance of this order.

In addition to that, we are happy to announce that we are 6% away from the wall of immunity, that is why we are malakas na loob natin for face masks. Now, congruent to that as well, the state of calamity is extended for possibly three months, but only for the purpose of preserving the benefits under it, such as but not limited to the indemnification, hold on, para mas precise tayo., Okay, here we go, indemnification, emergency procurement, special risk allowance for health care workers.

We will transition out of the state of calamity after further review. So good news all around.

On the next topic, nagkaroon tayo ng cabinet meeting today and we discussed primarily food security were identifying the factors that hinder our food security and several agencies were there to report. Among them are the DOTr, NEDA, of course, the Department of Agriculture, the DILG, and among others. So those that were identified for possible policy review and legislation are the barriers to efficient transportation, red tape, iyong permit systems natin to make it more efficient. Also, the crossing of boundaries between LGUs.

In addition to it, we are also looking at the review of policy ang possible legislation to balance importation with local production and to address the issues of over and under production. So, all the departments made their reports today, and there are quite many overlaps. So, all departments will be working together on the policy review assessment and proposals.

Q: Hi Ma'am, magandang hapon po. Ma'am, just a clarification on the face mask EO. When will it be implemented?

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: It's immediately, hold on, let me just get you the précised term. This order shall take effect immediately upon its publication in the OG or newspaper of general circulation, nasa OG na po siya.

Q: Okay, Ma'am, what made the President approve the recommendation for the voluntary wearing of face masks?

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: He had imposed the condition and one of them is the establishment of the wall of immunity, since we are 6% away from that, then it's time. So, we are doing this in stages, in phases so that we can have feedback on whether or not these new policies are working and how to make them more efficient, so that hopefully, by the end of the year, we might be able to voluntarily mask indoors as well.

Q: Last na lang po, naging consideration din po ba iyong Ber months na kasi, baka mamaya mas dumami iyong mga taong nasa labas?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: That's why we're doing this in stages. We'll read the feedback; if the voluntary mask outdoors is going to contribute to something then of course the policy will again be reviewed.

Q: Secretary, kasi mayroong conditions na si-net iyong EO, there should be good ventilation. So, who will set the standards, who will determine what is 'good ventilation'? Mayroon bang mga ganoong mga rules na isi-set?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: We assume so, because there is some discretion of the local government to establish minimum standards for the imposition. However, in general, what does good ventilation mean? May opportunities for instance na crowded, so even if it is outdoors hindi good ventilation iyon and you're in each other's faces. So, without the possibility of social distancing then this would be considered also as part of not of the requirement kasi iyong requirement is it shouldn't be too crowded.

So, there are also instances na we would consider outdoors; what do we consider as outdoors? In some instances you consider outdoors na okay lang roof, pero walang walls. In other instances, some people place the ano...like for example under the No Smoking Law, in some instances kapag sinabi mong outdoors kailangan walang bubong. So, it will be determined. Normally things like this are determined by the local government kasi sila po ang enforcement in these instances.

Q: So, the local governments will play a key role in implementing this executive order especially with standards sa mga spaces na ganoon?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: That's usually the case. Even in all of the laws or legislation that we created pursuant to COVID, it was always the local government that has set the standards except for those benefits that were given by the national agencies.

Q: Pero do you see the need for a unified standard? Kasi baka mamaya iyong sa isang lugar iyong outdoor nila ay iba. So, do you think kailangan po ng national government na mag-set sila ng iisa?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: I agree. Well, let's see how it works 'di ba. That's the reason we're doing it in phases so that we have a feedback mechanism, we continue to listen to the people, what their needs are, and particularly also to understand that local needs also differ. So, we have to balance the creation of a uniformed standard with the needs of the locals

Q: Salamat, Sec.

Q: Hi, ma'am. Ma'am, can we clarify doon sa EO, kasi nabanggit po ni Usec. Vergeire kanina doon sa Congress that they agreed to make masking to be optional only for those who are non-vulnerable.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Let's [read] what it says here, who are vulnerable: The senior citizens, immunocompromised, those with no complete immunization.

Q: So, ibig sabihin, ma'am, it's still mandatory for them to wear mask outdoors?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: The executive order says highly encouraged. So, it will be, well, that's what it says there. So, I think we may have to work that out with the Undersecretary.

Q: Thank you po.

Q: Ma'am, regarding lang po doon sa UN General Assembly na dadaluhan ni PBBM this September, ano po iyong ginagawang paghahanda ng Pangulo regarding this, and siyempre tomorrow ay birthday po niya, mayroon po bang plano ang ating Pangulo for his birthday?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: I-announce po namin later on. With regard to the trip, there will be a special briefing for that one, possibly I think first day 'no before we leave. So, as for his birthday celebration, siyempre mahirap mag-discuss.

Q: Kahit iyong, mayroon bang party, any special gathering po dito sa Malacañang?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: I have no instructions to announce anything. You know minsan, sensitive iyong mga ganiyan. Wait, let's just clarify baka may mag ano na naman sa akin. No, I have no information as to whether or not there is going to be a birthday celebration. However, we can safely assume that the President is going to mark it. That's the official statement. Mark it, remember it.

It's like, okay, when I have a birthday, hey, happy birthday to me. Sometimes, we have cake, so how it's going to be celebrated will be a matter to announce at a later date.

Q: Good afternoon, Ma'am. Reaksiyon lang po ng Palace regarding the call of human rights watch for UNHRC member states to adopt a strong resolution, kasi they expressed concern po na EJK still continued under the Marcos administration. Any comments lang po from Palace?

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: None, no comment, no reaction.

Q: Ma'am, at the cabinet meeting. Were there specific crops or kinds of meat or fish that the government will prioritize?

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: No, we are looking at food security in general. So, of course, while there are certain things, certain crops that we discussed such as, but not limited to rice. We are looking at things that cross what kind of crops we are looking at, it's not just even crops. We talked about pork, we talked about fish, rice, and vegetables in general. So, there are several proposals, any of which we will be happy to announce at a later date, once we have all of the details.

But the recognition of the problem is step 1, as well as the proposals by our various cabinet officials regarding policy review and legislation. So, these are what we are going to set either, if it's for legislation, priority legislation and if we are going to look at policies that do not require legislation. We are going to that immediately. We just need all of, the various agencies, just need to work out the standards between themselves.

Q: Hi Ma'am. May naka-schedule po ba na courtesy call iyong si Miss Alex Eala after winning the US Open Youth, kay President BBM. May coordination na po ba?

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Wala pa po tayong information on that. She is not a resident eh. So, we have to--if there was an opportunity, I'm sure the President would love to have her over. But let's see, we don't have any details or if she even has time, so let's find out first.

Q: Sec., follow up lang doon sa question ni Kat. May progress report po ba ang Cabinet Secretary specifically or the officials of the DA tungkol doon sa ibang mga bagay o ilang mga crops o mga products na may kakulangan tayo previously, sugar, white onions, salt for example? Are we making progress in those particular areas?

PRESS SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: The DA has never been remiss in bringing out the information. You really should check out their website tuluy-tuloy iyong pagbibigay on those ongoing programs. Today's Cabinet meeting was primarily to address the issues of the efficiency of our --for instance transport of food, getting from the farm to the market, balancing our imports with local production and so on. So, in relation to very particular, such as but not limited to sugar, these are already, we have constant updates from the DA. So, we just need to check out their website. Magaling iyong Spox nila.

USEC. GREGGY EUGENIO: Okay, maraming salamat po, Press Secretary Atty. Trixie Cruz-Angeles. Maraming salamat Malacañang Press Corps.

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