

Senate seeks measures to help workers, employers

PAGE A17 ◀

Philippines, the rights of labor groups continue to be abused by the government. These abuses range from acts to undermine the right to strike to outright discouragement of trade union activities, especially in export processing zones," Escudero said.

Revilla, for his part, filed Senate Bill 2869 seeking to oblige all employers to provide their employees and workers proper awareness on their benefits and rights.

He pointed out the government should pursue policies to provide benefits and uphold the rights of its workers and employees.

The country's largest labor group, the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP) said the workers are demanding unemployment insurance; moratorium in paying loans from government agencies; lower interest rates for housing loans, among others.

Workers are also asking government to provide scholarships for the children or dependents of laid off workers; moratorium in tuition increases and house rent, more livelihood and skills training among others, the TUCP said.

Still losing jobs

The government said it will offer more overseas and local employment opportunities as part of the celebration of Labor Day.

Labor Secretary Mariano Roque said DOLE and the TUCP would be jointly staging the country's biggest job fair, dubbed *Jobapalooza '09* that will offer 250,000 local and overseas jobs.

Roque said the job fair would be held at the SMX Convention Center at SM Mall of Asia Complex in Pasay City coinciding with similar jobs fair in key cities nationwide.

At the same time, some 10,000 workers nationwide are expected to take part in the Labor Day celebrations, particularly expressing the government's inability to help displaced workers nationwide.

Police meanwhile have been placed on alert to implement the "no permit, no rally" policy against wildcat protest actions.

"The PNP will respect the workers' right to peacefully assemble and express their grievances. Maximum tolerance will be exercised during the Labor Day celebrations," Philippine National Police (PNP) chief Director General Jesus Verzosa said.

Workers belonging to the Buklurang Manggagawang Pilipino (BMP) said they would hold a protest action today at the Liwasang Bonifacio monument in Manila to signify their protest over the government's failure to provide employment to thousands of jobseekers.

The BMP belied government claims that displacement of workers in the country has already tapered off.

The BMP said hundreds of workers still lose their jobs daily.

Striking a balance

The People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP), on the other hand, said mass layoffs of employees are not a viable solution.

PMAP, an organization of human resource managers (HRM) and industrial relations practitioners, claimed the employment situation in the country is not uniformly dismal. While there were layoffs, these are confined only to a few industries, mainly on the electronics and export sector.

According to PMAP, out of the 177 companies, layoffs were limited only to 10 percent.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) also said companies and labor must learn to strike a balance for just wages and business interests.

"The celebration of Labor Day would be more meaningful if our labor force will feel more concretely and tangibly the care and concern of the business sector, the government and the civil society," CBCP president Archbishop Angel Lagdameo said.

Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales also said the prevailing global economic crisis that led to mass layoffs should prompt big business to strike a balance between their interests and that of their workers. ■

THE Palace should make a pitch before the governments of Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia, to relax its policy of requiring overseas Filipino workers bound for the Middle East to undergo medical examinations in an exclusive group of clinics.

At the hearing of the committee on overseas workers affairs, Paranaque Rep. Roilo Golez asked the committee to "convey to the executive branch to work it out with the Saudi government" on how to resolve the problems encountered by the Filipino workers with regards to the "Gamca" system.

John Monterola, Middle East region coordinator of Migrante, said it was time for the government to intervene "to stop this practice."

The "referral decking system" is a centralized medical referral system established in 2001 by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states—Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain supposedly to stop the proliferation of fake medical certificates and the transfer of communicable diseases from foreign workers to citizens of the GCC-member countries.

Filipino workers leaving for these four countries are required to

get medical certificate from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Accredited Medical Clinics Association (Gamca), which only has 22 accredited clinics all over the country.

Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla questioned why only the Gamca-accredited clinics could issue medical certificates to the workers.

Gabriela party list Representative Luz Ilagan also criticized the monopoly of the decking system.

"There's a monopoly of the decking system and it is working against the migrant workers," she said. "Why don't we expand the clinics to cater to the thousands apply for jobs, because how can 22 clinics realistically, efficiently and competently issue certification to all of our workers going to Middle East."

Garry Martinez, Migrante chairperson, said OFWs are complaining of the exorbitant fees from the medical examination.

He also said that the system made it difficult for workers in the Visayas and Mindanao regions to undergo the medical exam since all Gamca clinics were in Metro Manila. ■

RP economy remains stable under Arroyo administration - VP De Castro

PAGE A17 ◀

dental Mindoro.

The Vice President explained that the information campaign aims to make the people more aware of the prevailing global economic crisis, the current economic situation of the Philippines that is far more better compared to other countries, and the measures being undertaken by the administration of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to keep the Philippine economy afloat and help mitigate the impact of the global economic crisis on the Filipino people, particularly the poor.

In his presentation, he said the Arroyo government has responded to the global economic crisis in observance of correct choices and economic reforms in the field of agriculture, protection of overseas Filipino worker (OFW), investments, trade and industry, energy and fiscal and monetary reforms.

In agriculture, he cited that the government has earmarked P43.7 billion for Fertilizers, Irrigation, Infrastructure, Extension/Capacity Building, Loans, Dryers and Seeds (FIELDS) to achieve 98 percent self-sufficiency by 2010 and 100 percent by 2013.

On protection of OFW investments, De Castro stressed that the growth of OFW remittances was attributed to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas's exerted efforts to lower OFW remittance fees and charges, improve remittance payments system and encourage OFWs to invest their earnings in the country.

He said the government is more focused on trade, investments and industry.

In energy, he said the government is working towards energy independence, promoting alternative fuels for the transport sector, attracting investment for renewal energy and allowing opportunities for oil, gas and coal ex-

plorations.

De Castro said that in fiscal and monetary reforms, it strengthened financial supervision and regulations, shielded banks from risks through conservative policies, passed laws to improve revenues generation, simplified Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and Bureau of Customs (BOC) procedures and plugged leakages and prosecuted tax evaders and smuggles.

He further reported that in an effort to address the impact of crisis, a P300-billion Economic Resiliency Plan (ERP) was drawn up to ensure sustainable economic growth, save and create as many jobs, protect the most vulnerable sectors (poorest of the poor, returning OFWs and workers in export industries) and ensure low and stable prices of commodities.

He also mentioned the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP), a program of the Arroyo administration that aims to generate close to 500,000 jobs worth P9.8 billion

Other government's programs tackled by De Castro included Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (Philhealth), Technical Education Skills and Development Authority (TESDA) vocational and employment programs, saving jobs and creating new employment opportunities, Department of Labor and Employment's assistance in support of affected local and overseas workers, among others.

Meanwhile, De Castro said the government has allocated billions of pesos for the implementation of development projects, which he said, "have been felt by the residents of Palawan".

He noted that a total of P9.2 billion has been allocated by the national government for

implementation of airport and road network projects in Palawan under the Super Regions scheme mentioned by President Arroyo in her state of the nation address in 2006.

He mentioned the upgrading and expansion of the existing Puerto Princesa airport of international standard at the cost of P3.117 billion, Busuanga Airport Development Project Phase II at the cost of P1.037 billion and San Vicente airport and Balabac airport with an allocation of P303 million each.

Busuanga airport has already been completed while the others are still ongoing.

The road projects, on the other hand, such as the Sto. Niño road (P.286 billion), Roxas-Taytay road (P.982 billion), Abo-abo-Bataraza-Rio Tuba road (P.880 billion) and other El Nido-Bataraza road networks are also still ongoing.

To date, these P8.16-billion road projects are already 33.37 percent complete and expected to be 100 percent finished by November 2010.

In the same dialogue, De Castro emphasized the global threat of swine flu and the importance of ensuring that the virus does not enter the country.

He encouraged the almost 150 participants to always wash their hands and avoid contact with people showing symptoms of influenza as a precautionary measure against the recent outbreak of swine flu virus in Mexico, the United States, Canada and some other countries.

For his part, Palawan Governor Joel Reyes, who led provincial officials in welcoming the Vice President, said he will convene the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) to institute measures to prevent swine flu from entering the island province. (PNA)

A HEALTHY BEAUTIFUL SMILE everytime at the



FERNANDEZ FAMILY DENTISTRY

Your search for a good family dentist is over.

WE'LL SHOW YOU WHY:

- TOTAL FAMILY DENTAL CARE** - Provided by a caring and friendly staff trained to provide YOU and your family with a personal touch.
- YOUR COMFORT IS OUR CONCERN** - Since ancient times, dentistry has been nearly synonymous with pain. Now there is new hope for the fearful. Computers and other high-tech tools are working together to make pain obsolete at the Fernandez Family Dentistry offices.
- FULL SERVICE FACILITY** - With our lab on premises, your family's dental needs can all be treated under one roof. Everything from Gum Treatment to Tooth Repairs, Cleaning, Bleaching, Bonding, Veneers and Dentures. Everything to make you look and feel great.
- STATE OF THE ART TECHNOLOGY** - Our staff is continually learning and updating their skills to provide care for your dental needs.
- LOTS OF WAYS TO PAY** - Everyone can afford care. Regular maintenance is not costly. We make every effort to accept most insurance plans and it's simple because we do all the paperwork for you!
- EMERGENCIES** - Your pain is our concern. Dental emergencies receive quick attention. We're on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. STOP YOUR SUFFERING NOW and call us.



Dr. Reynaldo Fernandez



Dr. Teresita Fernandez

If you have questions or would like to make an appointment for you or one of your family members, then call one of the offices most convenient for you.

1131 W. San Bernardino Road
COVINA
(626) 967-3599

2 CONVENIENT LOCATIONS

6660 W. Sunset Blvd., Suite "K"
LOS ANGELES
(323) 467-5717

visit South East Asia



Explore a world of wonders

Bali Adventure
\$850
8 days land package

Singapore, Malaysia, Bali
\$1265
10 days land package

Jewels of Cambodia
\$1360
8 days land & air



www.charmingasiatours.com

Toll Free 1.888.607.8555