



# DOLE Good News

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

## Manggagawang nakakuha ng tax refund, back pay, nagpasalamat sa DOLE

**“Maraming salamat po. Hindi lang backpay ang natanggap ko, pati tax refund ibinigay din ng dati kong kumpanya, at lahat nang ginastos ko sa pamasaha, binayaran din.”**

Ito ang masayang ipinahayag ni Stuart Joseph dela Cruz, 24, binata at nakatira sa La Loma, Quezon City, matapos siyang mabayaran ng kaniyang backpay at tax refund ng dating pinagtatrabahuhan.

Si dela Cruz, isang information technology analyst, ay nagresign noong Mayo sa kaniyang trabaho sa Chase Technology sa Makati City. Ngunit mahigit nang isang buwan ang lumipas, hindi pa rin siya nababayaran ng kaniyang backpay. Noon niya naisipang tumawag sa DOLE Call Center.

Si Luz Rosas, na naka-duty nang araw na tumawag si dela Cruz, ang nakasagot sa kaniya. Matapos ilahad ni dela Cruz ang kaniyang hinaing, agad tinawagan ni Rosas si Agnes Althea, ang human resource manager ng Chase Technology, at inalam kung talagang dati nilang empleyado si dela Cruz, at kung totoong nag-resign nga ito. Bukod dito, itinanong din niya kay Althea kung totoo na kaya nagri-resign ang ilang em-

pleyado nang kanilang kumpanya ay dahil diumano sa napakaraming dokumento na hinihingi nito bago mabayaran ang reimbursement sa transportasyon ng mga empleyado. At bilang panghuli, itinanong ni Rosas sa opisyal ng kumpanya kung kailan nila babayaran ang backpay ni dela Cruz.

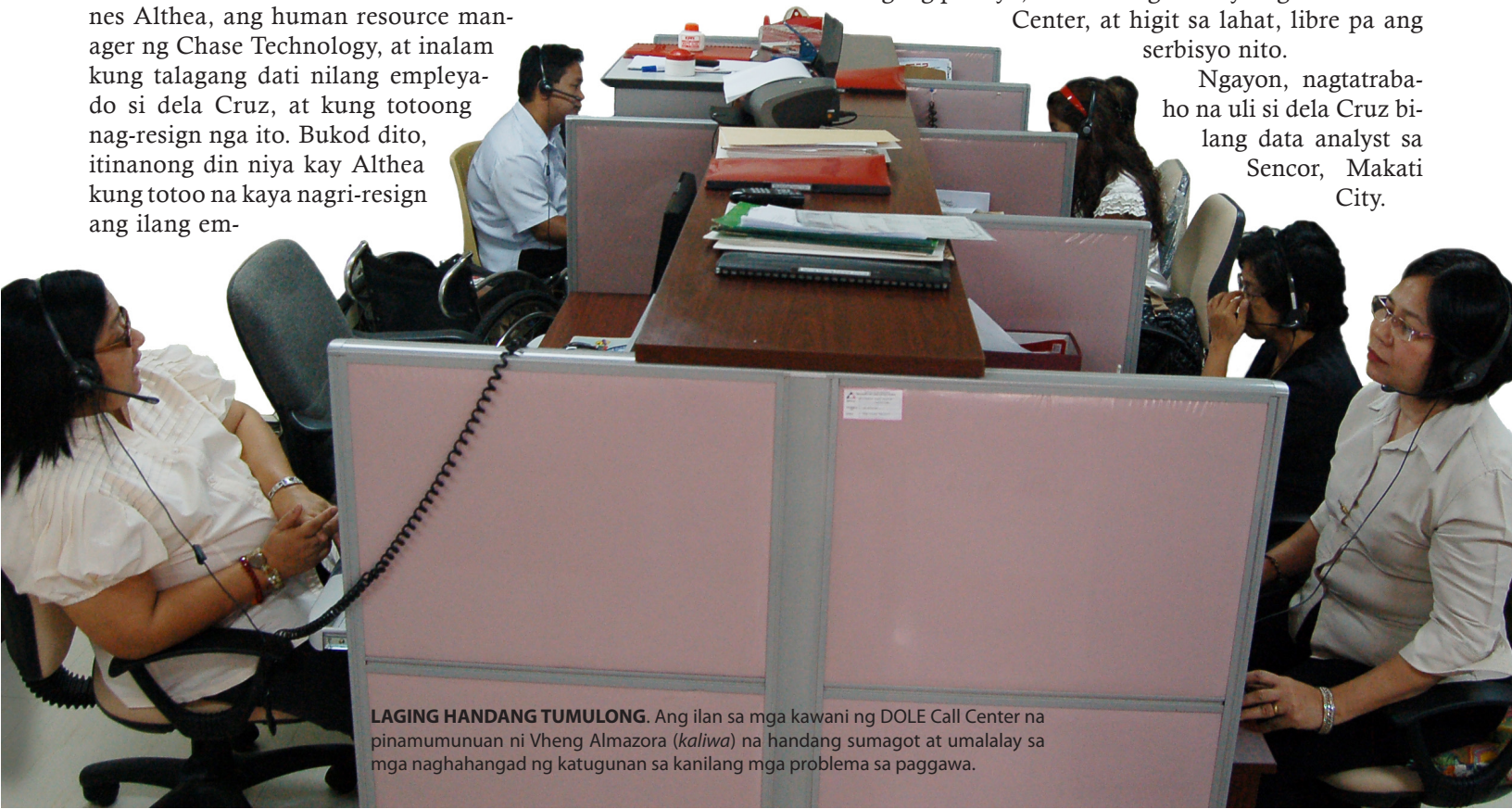
Nangako naman si Althea na babayaran na nila si dela Cruz sa huling linggo ng Hulyo.

Noong ika-28 ng kasalukuyang buwan, muling tumawag si dela Cruz sa DOLE Call Center, hindi upang muling humiling ng tulong, kundi upang ipaalam na binayaran na siya ng dating pinagtatrabahuhan ng P5,904, ang katumbas na halaga ng kanyang backpay. Binayaran din di-umano ng Chase Technology ang kaniyang tax refund.

“Hindi lang tumatanggap ng tawag-katanungan ang DOLE Call Center ukol sa labor and employment. Tumutulong din ito upang mabigyang lunas ang aming maliliit na problema ng manggagawang katulad ko,” ani dela Cruz.

Dagdag pa niya, mabilis ang serbisyo ng DOLE Call Center, at higit sa lahat, libre pa ang serbisyo nito.

Ngayon, nagtatrabaho na uli si dela Cruz bilang data analyst sa Sencor, Makati City.



**LAGING HANDANG TUMULONG.** Ang ilan sa mga kawani ng DOLE Call Center na pinamumunuan ni Vheng Almazora (*kaliwa*) na handang sumagot at umalalay sa mga naghahangad ng katugunan sa kanilang mga problema sa paggawa.

## EDITORIAL

# Why Good News?

**W**e have heard of the news about the unassuming taxi driver who returned a substantial amount of money left by his passenger. The act reaped through the different spheres of society and instantly became a street buzz. Translated: the country still has decent and honest citizens left. It was humility defeating avarice.

And there's the heroic exploit of a young boy who gallantly saved people from drowning at the height of typhoon Ondoy's onslaught, only to lose his own life in the aftermath. Translated: valor is not exclusively for adults only. The hero in us seeks release at a time when it matters most.

It may be that stories like these come like trickle of rain in a river of sensational crimes and political squabbling that sadly make it to the headlines with ease. Yet such stories present a great latitude of possibilities that even ordinary folks can derive inspiration from. Mainstream media are obviously consumed with the sensational and the absurd, much to the detriment of our need for news that could motivate us. As one DOLE official once remarked, "for the press, good news is not news".

We, at the DOLE, have a cornucopia of positive news readily available for us that, for some reason, we fail to recognize and explore. A fisherfolk beneficiary who used to paddle his way to deep sea receiving a motorized banca from the DOLE is good news. Why? Because the fisherfolk's daily income increased by P500 since going motorized. A certain DOLE office utilizes the back portion of a used bond paper for printing draft correspondence. Again, that's good news. The practice brought down the office's paper requirement by half the volume it normally procures, saving the DOLE P3,000 a month or P36,000 annually. On a larger scale, it helps conserve our natural resources.

Good news is when our efforts translate to better lives for our clients. Good news is when we make a difference in the organization or in the lives of the people we are sworn to serve. Good news is not just performing our mandated duties, but in ensuring that in the delivery of our services, in the implementation of our programs, or in the enforcement of our policies, the public knows and feels that the government is working for them.

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The DOLE Good News is published by the Department of Labor and Employment with editorial office at the Labor Communications Office, 6th Floor, DOLE Building, Intramuros, Manila. The views expressed herein are those of the writers and/or their sources and do not necessarily reflect those of the DOLE's or the Philippine Government's.

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## DOLE RO3 intensifies Zero Accident Program (ZAP) through CLOSHNET

To underscore its continued commitment to workplace safety and realize its objective of zero workplace accident, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional Office No. 3, along with the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC) and the Central Luzon Occupational Safety and Health Network (CLOSHNET) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on 25 July 2011 at the DOLE Sugar Workers Livelihood Training Center (SWTLC) at the DOLE Regional Office in San Fernando City, Pampanga.

DOLE RO3 Regional Director Leopoldo B. De Jesus said the memorandum



will allow the CLOSHNET to conduct research, training and information dissemination, and provide technical services to workers on occupational safety and health (OSH).

CLOSHNET is comprised of accredited safety practitioners and consultants, both from labor and management, in different companies in Central Luzon

“This collaboration between the DOLE, OSHC, and the CLOSHNET will be a big boost to building the capability of OSH training professionals in the private sector. Forging partnerships with the private sector is part of the DOLE’s agenda for the effective implementation of its Zero

Accident Program (ZAP) in the regions,” said de Jesus.

De Jesus, Engineer Eduardo Dela Cruz, Chief DOLE RO 3 Technical Support and Services Division, and Wilmer S. Facundo, and Dr. Jeanne Tingha, CLOSH-NET president and vice president, respectively, signed the memorandum.

As a signatory to the memorandum, the CLOSHNET expressed its full support to OSHC and the DOLE-Regional Office 3 in the delivery of OSH training.

Under the MOA, the OSHC will provide the design for OSH training courses to be implemented by the CLOSH-NET. The DOLE Regional Office 3, on the other hand, will provide administrative and secretariat support, in the conduct of joint OSH training between the DOLE, OSHC, and CLOSHNET, which will utilize only DOLE-accredited safety practitioners and consultants as resource speakers on OSH.

Both jobseekers and employers in the Zamboanga Peninsula (ZamPen) region are now assured of a strong and skills-matched workforce as the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional Office 9 recently established and launched the DOLE ZamPen Testing and Job Coaching Center, with DOLE RO 9 Regional Director Ponciano Ligutom pledging to mitigate the perennial problem of job and skills mismatch in the region.

DOLE Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz said the establishment of the testing and job coaching center at the DOLE regional office in ZamPen has been part of DOLE’s campaign to establish a job-fit and productive labor force through the proactive measure of educating and steering jobseekers to the right place in the labor market towards a job-rich, inclusive growth in all regions.

“The center will serve as the ‘labor guide hub’ easily accessible to jobseekers and other entrants to the workforce in the region,” Baldoz said.

Ligutom reported to the labor and employment Secretary that as the region’s network of guidance counselors, coaches, and Public Employment Service Office (PESO) managers will provide free career

## To solve jobs and skills mismatch, DOLE ZamPen launches job coaching center to aid jobseekers

counseling, employment coaching, and psychological testing services to applicants of both private and government offices as aid in the hiring and selection process.

“The job coaching center is the DOLE’s channel in reinforcing the employability, utilization, and productivity of the country’s pool of human resources down to the grassroots level, driven by the mission to lessen the problem of

job mismatch and disparity of employment opportunities, so as to also alleviate the brain drain phenomenon,” Baldoz stressed.

DOLE Undersecretary Danilo P. Cruz graced the center’s launching, together with vice chairmen Engr. George Ledesma, representing the management sector, and Jose Suan for the labor sector, respectively, of the ZamPen Tripartite Industrial Peace Council.

The DOLE has established the center in partnership with the ZamPen Guidance Counselors’ and Career Coaches Network (ZGCCNet) headed by president Ermah Roble, TESDA Region 9, headed by Regional director Buen Mondejar, together with the



DOLE RO 9 Regional Director Ponciano Ligutom (right) explains to jobseekers and employers the center’s important role in solving jobs and skills mismatch.

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## Increased wage allowances for Regions VI and X to help more minimum wage earners vs. price increases

**T**he Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Boards in Western Visayas and Northern Mindanao have issued wage orders increasing the daily minimum wage rate of workers in the private sector in their respective regions, bringing to six the number of regions that have ordered minimum wage rate increases since January this year.

“The increased allowances in these regions will give minimum wage earners enough elbow room to cushion the impact of basic commodity price increases,” said Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz.

Minimum wage earners in Region X will get a P17 increase in their daily rate

in the form of a Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) under Wage Order RBX-16 which took effect on 24 July 2011, while minimum wage earners in Western Visayas will get a P12.00 Emergency Cost of Living Allowance (ECOLA) in their daily wage rate under Wage Order No. RBVI-19.

Based on the new wage order in Northern Mindanao, the COLA under Wage Order RBX-16 shall be integrated into their basic pay after six months, or on 24 January 2012, bringing up the minimum wage level from P242.00-P269.00 to P259.00-P286.00.

For agricultural workers in the sugar industry in the region, Supplemental

Wage Order No. RX-15A, issued on 17 February 2011, remains in effect with the “pakyaw” rates indicated in said issuance still applicable.

The new wage hike was published on 04 July 2011 in Mindanao Gold Star Daily, a local newspaper circulated in the provinces of Bukidnon, Camiguin, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Occidental, and Misamis Oriental, as well as in two highly urbanized cities, namely, Cagayan de Oro and Iligan.

The COLA is generally not included in computing wage-related benefits, such as 13th month pay, overtime pay, night shift differential, and premium pay.

Meanwhile, RTWPB VI granted the wage increase for minimum wage earners in Western Visayas after the issuance of Board Resolution No. 02, series of 2011, declaring the existence of a supervening condition in the region. A supervening condition is characterized by extra-ordinary, sharp, and continuous increases in the prices of basic commodities and services for a prolonged period of time, that is, from three to six months.

The ECOLA is effective for 90 calendar days only from 15 July to 13 October 2011, after which the Board will determine whether or not to continue its grant depending on its evaluation of the economic conditions in the region.

Wage Order No. RBVI-19 was published on 30 June 2011 in Panay News, a local newspaper circulated in the provinces of Aklan, Antique, Capiz, Guimaras, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental.

In order to sustain rising levels of wages and enhance business competitiveness, the National Wages and Productivity Commission encouraged labor and management to adopt productivity improvement schemes, such as time and motion studies, good housekeeping, quality circles, labor and management cooperation as well as implement gain-sharing and other performance incentive programs, that will improve the quality of life of workers and in turn enable them to produce more and earn more.

## More student-workers in the regions assured of job training, gainful employment through SPES

**T**ranslating into action the mandate of implementing an inclusive ‘bridging employment’ program and enhancing the employability of young student-workers in the regions, Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz has called for a strengthened Special Program for the Employment of Students (SPES) implementation to bring education further down to the poor but deserving students across all regions.

Private sector participation, she said, is important in reinforcing the sustainability of the SPES program to benefit student-beneficiaries.

The labor chief also called on the private sector to employ poor students and out-of-school youth who deserve to go to school under the SPES program as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Baldoz issued the call after receiving a report from RO10 Regional Director Alan Macaraya, who said the DOLE Regional Office (RO10) recently paid

the DOLE’s share of over P1.7 million in the wages of 937 SPES beneficiaries, in collaboration with the local government units (LGUs) of Bukidnon, Camiguin, Misamis Oriental, Lanao del Norte, and Misamis Occidental.

“The 937 student-workers in Northern Mindanao finally reaped the fruits of their labor last summer as they were promptly paid with the 40% share of their salaries, just in time for the enrollment,” Macaraya said in his report.

SPES, a bridging mechanism that enables student-beneficiaries to gain skills and workplace experience, was created under Republic Act 7323.

Under the SPES program, students get paid a minimum wage, 40 percent of which is in the form of a voucher applicable for the payment of tuition fees and books in any secondary, tertiary, vocational or technical educational institution. The 60 percent is paid in cash by the employers. They are also

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**E**lated by the result of the second quarter survey of the Social Weather Stations showing a record-high 41 percent good net satisfaction rating of the national government relative to promoting the welfare of overseas Filipino workers, Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz yesterday said the survey result only challenges more the DOLE and its family of agencies to work harder and to be more caring and responsive to the needs of all OFWs.

“Last week, even without seeing yet the results of the SWS survey, my marching orders to our officials during our mid-year planning and assessment activity was already for them to put more people in our frontline offices, especially at the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices, POEA, OWWA, and the National Reintegration Center for OFWs; people who act fast and are knowledgeable about our programs, so that we can deliver our services promptly and efficiently to all OFWs,” Baldoz said. “We need our officials and employees to be committed, thus, cheerful, in serving our clients,” she added.

She admitted seeing the results of the survey only over the weekend.

Baldoz said that while some quarters made an issue of the alleged non-mention by President Aquino III of OFWs in his State of the Nation Address last week, she knew that the President has a very soft heart for them as demonstrated by the present actions of the administration.

“We are proud to enumerate the programs and services for our OFWs that we are pursuing with intense focus and commitment,” she said, citing as example the successful response of the government to the Middle East and North African crisis early this year that led to the displacement of thousands of OFWs, particularly from Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

Baldoz also mentioned the array of programs and services that the government continues to provide to OFWs, such as legal assistance to nationals of the Department of Foreign Affairs; the repatriation program of the DOLE, DFA, and OWWA in partnership with licensed recruitment agencies; the anti-illegal recruitment and anti-human traffick-

## On OFW welfare, good survey result challenges DOLE more - Baldoz



***“The SWS survey result showing a good net satisfaction rating for the government on OFW welfare attests to our focused approach.”***

ing work of the DOLE and the POEA; the welfare program and services of the OWWA, such as education, healthcare, training, psychosocial counseling.

“We have now in place a comprehensive reintegration program for OFWs, highlighted by the P2-billion credit fund for the small business undertakings of returning OFWs jointly administered by the OWWA, Land Bank of the Philippines, and the Development Bank of the Philippines.

Under the said credit program, OFWs with new or existing business can borrow between P300,000 to P2 million for start-up or additional capital at no collateral, only 7.5 percent annual interest, and a longer repayment scheme.”

“We also have now the Balik-Pinay, Balik Hanapbuhay project for distressed women OFWs, under which we provide business starter kits for such small home businesses, as hairstyling, manicure-pedicure, and therapeutic massage,” said Baldoz. The project has since been expanded to include distressed male OFWs.

Over the next five months of 2011, Baldoz said the DOLE, through its appropriate agencies, will continue to expand the OFW Family Circles and intensify the pre-employment, pre-departure, and post-arrival orientation seminars for OFWs.

She also said that through the TESDA, the DOLE is providing more training as the country move up higher in the category of skills in the overseas labor market.

Baldoz also reiterated that eleven (11) of the items under the 22-point labor and employment agenda of President Aquino are focused on OFWs, among which direct the DOLE to (1) create an efficient “one-stop shop” for processing applications for overseas work and seeking redress for grievances; (2) work with the DFA to transform the Philippine embassies, consular offices, and POLOs into centers of care and service for overseas workers by assigning more foreign service officers to posts where there are many OFWs and training them in the needs of the communities and families of the OFWs to provide effective social welfare services such as counseling and pre-departure orientation seminars; (4) assist OFWs in achieving financial stability through training, investment and savings program; (5) complete a global trading master plan that aims to establish worldwide trading posts that rely on labor, knowledge and entrepreneurial spirit of the Overseas Filipino Workers; (6) facilitate the reintegration of OFWs by favorable terms of investment, tax incentives, access to government financial institutions and other benefits that are offered to foreign investors.

“We at the DOLE are very focused on implementing the President’s reform agenda concerning OFWs and I believe the SWS survey result showing a good net satisfaction rating for the government on OFW welfare attests to our focused approach,” she finally said.

“Therefore, we need to work harder,” she added.

## 52,789 workers enjoyed “non-wage” benefits from Diskwento Caravan

To ease the burden of high and rising prices of basic consumer products on wage earners’ purchasing power, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) through its attached agency, the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC), in cooperation with the Department of Trade Industry, rolled out

eight Diskwento Caravans from January to June 2011.

The Diskwento Caravans benefitted 52, 789 workers and their families recently from all over the National Capital Region.

NWPC Executive Director Ciriaco A. Lagunzad III, in a report to Labor and

Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, said that the Diskwento Caravans, which were aimed at improving workers’ access to basic and prime commodities through the mobilization of retail outlets selling basic food and non-food consumer items at discounted prices, were conducted in Manila, Pateros, Malabon, Taguig, Quezon City, Valenzuela, and Mandaluyong.

The Diskwento Caravan offered basic products such as generic medicines, bread, sardines, cooking oil, processed meat, fruits, vegetables, detergent bars, and school supplies that their manufacturers sell at discounted prices.

The Diskwento Caravan, which also involved the private sector in delivering affordable basic and prime commodities to minimum wage earners, were hosted at city or municipal halls, under the supervision of the local chief executives.

Lagunzad said that as part of the government’s package of non-wage benefits, the NWPC, DTI, and other cooperating agencies will continue to conduct the Diskwento Caravans, even in the regions. He said one region that has already conducted a series of caravans is DOLE Region IV-A.



DOLE officials led by Usec. Lourdes M. Trasmonte (2nd from left) inspect vegetables sold at a Diskwento Caravan.

Labor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz yesterday hailed the DOLE Regional Office No. 5’s novel approach in responding to the perennial wage and other general labor standards problems of security guards.

“Oplan Sikyu”, a DOLE initiative, is a fresh approach in dealing with labor complaints of security guards against security agencies,” Baldoz said.

Baldoz added that Oplan Sikyu is aimed at increasing voluntary compliance rate of security agencies with general labor standards and in providing social welfare and protection to security guards.

“Our goal is to trim down by at least 30 percent the labor cases being filed by security guards at DOLE and NLRC,” said Baldoz, adding that Oplan Sikyu is also a tool in professionalizing the security services industry.

The DOLE regional office in Bicol has reported that 90 percent of cases filed at DOLE and at the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) in Region V involve security guards and their agencies.

## In Bicol, DOLE’s “Oplan Sikyu” responds to wage problems of security guards



DOLE RO 5 Regional Director Alvin M. Villamor said that under “Oplan Sikyu” DOLE-Bicol will implement a ‘standardized wage ceiling’ (SWC) which will be used as the baseline and lowest possible rate in any security services bidding, be it a government or a non-government client. It also intends to address the long-time issue of cut-throat competition among security agencies by giving the ‘lowest bid’ to a client which is being pinpointed as the root cause of underpayment of wages and the commission of other labor violations by the agency to the security guards.

It will also draft a ‘Suggested Minimum Bid Contract’ (SMBC) that must be adhered upon by security agencies and principal, and improve its ‘No pending Case Clearance Certificate’ to include Social Security System (SSS) and Pag-IBIG Fund as signatories.

Villamor said that security agency owners and operators in Bicol are willing to follow the suggestion, saying that those who will not follow these ‘DOLE Supplied Rates’ must be penalized. The penalties, they (agencies) suggested include dropping violators from PADPAO membership and revocation of the PNP license to operate.

“Looking at the records of filed labor cases here with us, I can see that seven out of 10 complaints are coming from security guards. The ratio at the NLRC is not far from this figure also,” Villamor said.

## In MIMAROPA, convergence programs under DOLE to create 10,458 jobs

**L**abor and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz yesterday said that ten (10) priority projects under the Department of Labor and Employment's Project GRACE, or Generating Resources of Agencies for Community Enterprises, are expected to create 10,458 direct jobs in 904 small and medium enterprises and seven (7) people's organizations in the MIMAROPA Region (Region IV-B) this year.

The MIMAROPA region is composed of the provinces of Oriental and Occidental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan.

"These 10,458 direct jobs would require a total investment of P16 million," said Baldoz, adding that the jobs will boost the family income of the workers to be employed, as well as the economies of the beneficiary-provinces.

The identified projects and the number of jobs these projects are expected to create are, in Occidental Mindoro: (1) upgrading of the salt production, 1,500 jobs; (2) support to high value of crop production, 5,000 jobs; in Oriental Mindoro: (1) integrated coconut production, 58 jobs and (2) Toll Packaging Center, 500 jobs; in Marinduque: (1) arrow root-based production, 100 jobs and (2) promotion and development of coco-based products, 1,000 jobs; in Romblon: (1) arrow root, cassava, peanuts, and turmeric production, 880 jobs and (2) establishment of GMP-compliant food (peanuts, fish, arrow root, turmeric, ginger, mango) processing facility, 120 jobs; and in Palawan: (1) integrated food processing and packaging center, 1,000 jobs and (2) community-based agri-ecotourism, 300 jobs.

Baldoz said the action plans of these community livelihood projects have already been formulated.

Under Project GRACE, the DOLE, Department of Trade and Industry, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Agriculture and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority have agreed and committed to pool their resources and expertise in support of the above-mentioned community-based livelihood projects.



**PROJECT GRACE.** DOLE Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz (3rd from left) accompanied by DOLE RO 4-B OIC-Director Zenaida A. Angara (4th from left) visits a fertilizer production plant in Mindoro.

"This unprecedented convergence of these government agencies will ensure the success of these projects, maximize the use of limited government funds, and impact more clearly on the lives of our people in terms of sustainable incomes," said Baldoz.

"The convergence will be of complementation and no duplication of resource provision and services," she added.

Project GRACE, a convergence agreement, was signed on 02 June 2011 in the presence of Secretary Baldoz in Calapan City during the launching of the DOLE's

Integrated Livelihood Program Toward Community Enterprise Development.

The agencies under the convergence projects are to perform specific roles and responsibilities, with the DOST providing research and development services, as well as the shelf life test of each processed products; the DTI, technical assistance in label design and marketing; the DA, technical assistance on planting and maintenance of product quality; and the TESDA, on training.

The DOLE on the other hand, will provide seed capital and, together with the DTI, enterprise development training.

### DOLE ZamPen . . . from page 3

regional heads of the Civil Service Commission and ZamPen Association of PESO Managers, who all have pledged to commit towards the holistic operation of the job coaching center.

Ligutom said that the center's operation is fueled by DOLE's strengthened linkages with the Local Government Units (LGUs), tripartite partners, and other essential government departments, and reflects an all-out effort to achieve the twin goal of equipping jobseekers with the suitable skills and cultivating

productive employment in a competitive environment in the ZamPen region.

"The testing and job coaching center will ensure impartiality in the selection and hiring system of employers; eliminate the 'palakasan system', and develop workers' aptitude and appropriate attitude and competitiveness," Ligutom said.

The center, which cost P250,000.00 including equipment and other facilities, provides free tests and services to workers and jobseekers them as they enter the world of work.



**FOR A HARMONIOUS WORK ENVIRONMENT.** DOLE RO 11 conducted an organizational meeting to establish an Academe ITC to address the region's jobs and skills mismatch.

## DOLE RO 11 establishes Academe ITC to address mismatch

**T**he Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional Office 11 has organized and established the Academe Industry Tripartite Council (ITC) in Davao City to bolster the participative role of academic institutions in addressing the jobs and skills mismatch and cultivating harmonious work environment in the region, that will ultimately result to increased employment generation.

DOLE Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz, in announcing the establishment of the Davao Academe ITC, said that its creation unites the region's roster of universities, colleges, and other academic institutions towards the goal of reinforcing the education sector as one of the key employment generators and emerging industries in the region.

"Establishing or revitalizing the ITCs is one of the DOLE's concrete measures to mitigate brain drain of academic professionals and address the problem of jobs and skills mismatch in the country," she said.

"With the creation of the Academe ITC, the region's education sector will

now have an expanded role, in partnership with the DOLE, in enhancing labor-management relations and labor policy formulation," she added.

The establishment of the region's Academe ITC was a product of a series of dialogues and consultations with stakeholders and concerned government partner agencies, including social partners from the labor and management sectors coming from the Davao Association of Guidance Counselors (DAGCO); Davao Colleges and Universities' Network (DACUN); and Asian Association of School Human Resource Management and Development (AASHPI).

During the organizational meeting, ITC members elected the members for the following committees; social dialogue, employment opportunities, rights at work, and social protection. They also discussed the ITC's Social Accord for Industrial Peace and Stability for the Academe which commits the members to the promotion of industrial peace.

tion of the country's workforce. More than giving the students gainful experience while earning some cash they can use when they go back to school, we want a long-term result of the SPES program by means of increased employment opportunities to the beneficiaries," Baldoz said.

"The SPES has definitely made a difference in the lives of millions of Filipino students who have no means but have the ability to pursue college education. The program has provided short-term yet gainful employment to deserving students in the regions," she added.

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entitled to other benefits and privileges under the Labor Code.

The law empowers Public Employment Service Offices (PESOs) to deliver employment facilitation services for the program, and local government units to assume greater responsibility in its implementation, particularly in the payment of the wages or salaries of the beneficiaries.

"The SPES is an opportunity to enhance the employability of the youth, who will eventually be the next genera-

One of the first major tasks of the Academe ITC is the crafting of its Voluntary Code of Good Practices, which is expected to be signed this August.

"It is good to see the Academe ITC already gearing up for the adoption of its voluntary code of good practices. This reflects its long-term commitment to ensure the education sector's sustainability to operate outside the framework of government regulation, and to resolve among themselves issues that they know best," said Baldoz.

"The Academe ITC's voluntary code of good practices shall play a significant role in providing the educational system with the latest labor market information to prepare students, our future jobseekers and workforce entrants, for courses and careers that will match the right skills demanded by the labor market," Baldoz added.

On his part, RO 11 Regional Director Joffrey Suyao said that the organization of the Academe ITC reflects the DOLE tripartite partners' willingness to work with the government in addressing jobs skills mismatch.

"With teachers and educators as our partners, career decision-making will be given proper emphasis before students choose their college courses," said Suyao, who added that the network of guidance counselors and academe members in the Davao regions are actively doing their part in the extensive implementation of the DOLE career coaching program, which is part of the Academe ITC's advocacy in the region.