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WITH the labor department's advocacy on safe and healthy workplaces, employers and workers are called upon to become occupational safety and health champions by formulating practical OSH programs at plant levels. P2

Stable employment situation seen

FOLLOWING the release of results of the Social Weather Stations survey on joblessness, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III assured the public that the employment situation is stable and that the labor department is steadfast in its employment facilitation services and the preservation and protection of employment.

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Fair treatment of seafarers sought

by Althea Louise D. Majan

EMPHASIZING the need for ethical treatment of Filipino seafarers around the world, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III called on stakeholders to uphold the Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers prescribed by the International Maritime Organization and International Labor Organization.

This after the Department of Labor and Employment, together with the Seafarer's Rights International, led a regional meeting with maritime industry stakeholders and came up with the Manila Statement on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of a Maritime Accident.

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photo by Jomar Lagmay, IPS

SECRETARY BELLO WITH SEN. VILLANUEVA AT OSH CONGRESS. Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III (right) shares a hearty laugh with Senator Joel Villanueva, chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor, Employment and Human Resources Development at the 16th National Occupational Safety and Health Congress at the Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City. Joining the Secretary are (from left) DOLE Regional Directors Henry John Jalbuena (RO IV-A), Sisinio Cano (RO XII), Cyril Ticao (RO VI), and Raymundo Agravante (RO XI).

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photo by Dodong Echavez, IPS

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photo by ashtec.ph

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NC II holders receive welding starter kits P8

Employers, workers told:

Be OSH champions

by Althea Louise D. Majan

IN LINE with the labor department's advocacy on safe and healthy workplaces, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III called on both employers and workers to become occupational safety and health champions by formulating practical OSH programs at plant levels.

"The call to be OSH champions is timely as we endeavor to inculcate the culture of safety and health in the daily tasks of both workers and employers. I call on you, however, to go beyond one million OSH champions. We must promote OSH as a way of life for all Filipinos," said Bello during the 16th National Occupational Safety and Health Congress at the Philippine

International Convention Center in Pasay City.

The labor chief noted that the number of those willing to partner with the government in ensuring the safety and health of workers is growing as demonstrated by the thousands of participants who attended the Congress.

To boost the government's campaign against violations of OSH standards, Bello highlighted the passage of Republic Act 11058 or An Act Strengthening Compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Standards.

"Our labor inspectors are under strict order to enforce our regulations. Stiff penalties shall be imposed upon employers who violate them. At the same time, however,

we must help them comply with the regulations," he also said, adding that the labor department is issuing the guidelines of the OSH law soon.

Attended by safety and health experts from different companies, professional groups, occupational safety and health networks, and workers' unions, as well as government representatives, the NOSH Congress is a biennial activity spearheaded by the Occupational Safety and Health Center, an attached agency of the DOLE.

Since 1990, the Congress served as a venue to generate and exchange essential information on workplace safety and health.

ASEAN tackles HIV, AIDS issues in migration

THE ASSOCIATION of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) strengthened its call to enhance the collaboration of its member states in addressing HIV and AIDS issues in migration.

In a forum organized by the Department of Labor and Employment through the Bureau of Working Conditions, the ASEAN member states also reviewed gaps and commonalities in the current practices on recruitment and mandatory drug testing in workplaces in the region.

The event brought together technical experts from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, People's Democratic

Republic of Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand.

The forum recommended to mainstream and expand the protection of the rights of migrant workers living with HIV and AIDS; strengthen the individual national health and labor policies of ASEAN member states; and conduct research on HIV and AIDS-related policies, programs, and services for migrant workers in the region.

It also suggested to develop ASEAN guidelines on the management, notification, and referral systems of migrant workers living with HIV and AIDS; train healthcare providers

to be culturally sensitive in handling HIV and AIDS among migrant workers and strengthen inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration among ASEAN member states.

The meeting recommendations will be transmitted to the Senior Labour Officials Meeting, Senior Officials Meeting on Health and Development, and other relevant ASEAN sectoral bodies for consideration.

The forum was funded by the Government of Japan through the ASEAN-Japan Fund for Building Social Safety Nets. *—Marco Antonio S. Valeros*

Basic day in NCR:

P10 COLA + P25/day

A PACKAGE of wage adjustments that included the integration of the P10 cost of living allowance into the basic pay of Metro Manila workers has been prescribed by the Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board in the National Capital Region.

This was announced by Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III following the effectivity of the new minimum wage rates in NCR at P537, reflecting an increase in daily basic pay of P25.

Non-agricultural workers in the national capital currently receive a P502 basic wage a day plus a P10 daily COLA.

In Wage Order No. NCR-22, the RTWPB also mandated that workers in the retail and service establishments employing 15 workers or less, and those in the manufacturing business that regularly employ less than 10 workers, shall receive a minimum wage of P500 a day.

Bello said the order was submitted to the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) for validation and affirmation.

"Upon the effectivity of the Wage Order No. NCR-22, the new minimum wage rates in Metro Manila shall be P500 to P537 across different sectors," Bello said. The new wage rates will take effect 15 days after the wage order is published in a newspaper of general circulation.

"This wage order is a product of the NCR Board's careful study and series of tripartite consultations and public hearings. This order is meant to provide minimum wage earners in the National Capital Region the capacity to cushion the impact of higher consumer prices. This has also taken into particular consideration the economic implications of wage adjustments and their effects on business and industry," Bello said.

NWPC Executive Director Maria Criselda Sy said that the decision considered the respective positions of labor and management representatives from different industries in the national capital.

"Our primary concern is the capacity of the economy to absorb the increases in consideration with the position of both labor and management. We must always consider the impact of raising wages in the economy and its capacity to absorb the increase," Sy said.

Sy also said the regional wage board also took into consideration the cost-push-inflationary effect wage adjustments, a situation in which the overall price levels go up due to increases in the cost of wages and raw materials.

"The new order is already 80 percent of the P667 Philippine Statistics Authority-prescribed average wage in NCR. We do not want to crowd out that 20 percent because we leave that to the collective negotiation at the enterprise level because we acknowledge the primacy of the collective negotiation or bargaining as the primary mode of setting better terms and condition at work," Sy added. *—Abegail V. De Vega*

Drive vs illegal recruitment intensified

by Abegail V. De Vega

THE LABOR department is intensifying its fight to curb illegal recruitment and human trafficking in all fronts, locally or overseas, to further safeguard the welfare of the Filipino workers from unscrupulous recruiters and syndicates.

In an administrative order, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III has created a new task force against illegal recruitment, recruitment of minor workers, and trafficking in persons to avert workers from being victimized by people who employ nefarious

means.

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) disclosed that there are 156 victims of illegal recruitment from June 18 to October 2018 alone, which is an alarming case, considering that the reported cases happened in a short period of time.

"Despite efforts to eliminate illegal recruitment, trafficking in persons, and recruitment of minor workers, reports indicate that these social menaces continue to proliferate and pose

continuing threats to Filipino workers," said Undersecretary Jacinto Paras in a press briefing.

Among the general functions of the new group is to develop and execute strategies and schemes against the modus operandi of illegal recruiters, as well as recommend their prosecution to the labor secretary.

The task force has also the power to conduct surveillance and entrapment operations of persons believed engaged in illegal recruitment, and cause or direct the immediate

investigation and speedy prosecution of cases involving the illegal recruitment.

For it to be effective, the task force will have the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG) to serve as its operational and law enforcement arm.

The group is headed by Undersecretary Jacinto Paras, with the Administrator of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration as vice chair and the Director of

Bureau of Local and Employment as member.

The other members of the task group include the heads of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, International Labor Affairs Bureau, and Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns.

The creation of the task force is in line with the agenda of the labor department to have a more focused, concerted, coordinated, and effective programs of action to stop and eliminate illegal recruitment.

DOLE, Jobstreet renew partnership

RECOGNIZING the role of the private sector in employment facilitation, the labor department renewed its partnership with Jobstreet.com on the provision of labor market information and facilitation of job fairs and other recruitment-related events.

"This partnership would definitely bolster and further the Department's mandate to provide decent, productive, and sustainable employment for our Filipino workforce, and create more areas of collaboration," said Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III after signing the memorandum of understanding with Jobstreet.com Country Manager Philip Gioca at the DOLE Central Office in Intramuros, Manila.

Through the MOU, Jobstreet

will support the labor department's provision and dissemination of labor market information by creating informational materials, and promoting these through electronic direct mail to their candidate/applicant database as well as its career resources pages and social networking accounts.

Likewise, Jobstreet will provide DOLE with timely and accurate labor market information via the Jobstreet.com system.

As to job fair support, Jobstreet shall promote DOLE and Public Employment Service Office (PESO) job fairs through electronic direct mail to its candidate/applicant database and through its social networking accounts.

During the signing of the agreement, Labor Secretary Bello also commended

Jobstreet's mobile-first web platform, JobXpress.

"There is great potential in JobXpress as it caters to jobseekers looking for employment opportunities, most especially technical-vocational jobs. Jobseekers with mobile data can now go job hunting quickly and easily just by a few taps on their cellphones," the Labor Secretary added.

Jobstreet.com is one of Asia's leading online employment marketplaces, which help facilitate the matching and communication of job opportunities between jobseekers and employers, in Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Jobstreet.com has a database of at least five million candidates/applicants in the Philippines. *-aldm/PNGBugayong*



photo by Jomar Lagmay, IPS

JOBXPRESS. Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III is oriented by Jobstreet Country Manager Philip Gioca about the JobXpress, a mobile application system that will provide jobseekers with free access to employment opportunities and other labor market information during the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between DOLE and Jobstreet at the DOLE Central Office in Intramuros, Manila.

Kabuhayan for rebel returnees

BINUANGAN, MISAMIS ORIENTAL – To facilitate their productive reintegration to the community, 25 rebel returnees were awarded with over P200,000 worth of goods for their sari-sari store business through the Department of Labor and Employment's Kabuhayan Program.

The assistance was coursed through the Kahugpungan sa Komonidad alang sa Panginabuhian (KKP), a DOLE registered workers' association composed of rebel returnees who opted to change their lives and rejoin the community.

The group was provided with livelihood opportunity for the members' potential source of income, thus meet their basic needs and improve their economic conditions.

The livelihood assistance of DOLE Regional Office No. X was delivered in partnership

with the local government unit of Binuangan, Misamis Oriental through Mayor Marcelo Abao, and its accredited co-partner,

the ABAG Kalambuan, Inc. – *Angelie Kate T. Sy/DOLE-X EMO PFO*

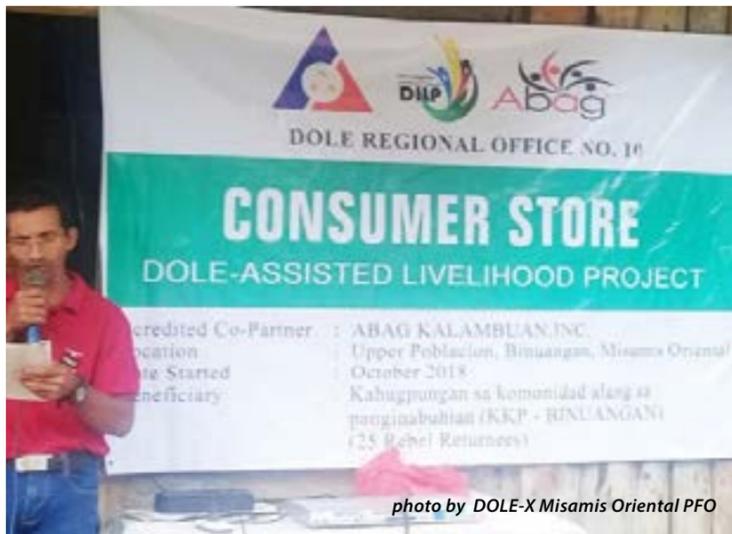


photo by DOLE-X Misamis Oriental PFO

LIVELIHOOD ASSISTANCE FOR REBEL RETURNES. KKP member-beneficiary Rito Amao expresses his gratitude to DOLE, on behalf of his group, Kahugpungan sa Komonidad alang sa Panginabuhian, for the consumer store livelihood they received from the DOLE Regional Office No. X-Misamis Oriental Provincial Field Office.

Fair treatment of seafarers . . .

According to SRI, an international pan-industry body researching maritime and seafarers' law, it is an inherent risk in the working lives of seafarers that they may be subjected to criminal charges either of a professional or a non-professional nature, simply from carrying out their duties. This was affirmed during the regional meeting.

The Manila Statement aims to raise awareness; develop further education, training, and human capacity; and extend and develop cooperation among stakeholders on the proper and effective implementation of the IMO and ILO guidelines.

The guidelines, which are voluntary, do not seek to interfere with any State's

domestic, criminal, or civil law. \ Instead, they balance the rights and obligations of stakeholders to whom the Guidelines are addressed, namely port and coastal states, flag states, the seafarers' states, ship-owners, and seafarers.

"Given the unique characteristics of the Philippines as a flag and a labor supplying State, and with the cooperation of all Asian nations through your representations, we can make the guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers as enshrined in the Manila Declaration on the Protection of Seafarers a success," said DOLE Secretary Bello.

Among the recommendations during the meeting are for member states to honor

and commit to enforce legal agreements and instruments, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), IMO Resolutions, among others; raise awareness on the fair treatment of seafarers at local, regional, and international levels; identify best practices that promote safety and well-being of seafarers; and better data management and information sharing.

Other recommendations are the amendment of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 and the enactment of the Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers.

Deirdre Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of SRI, said that the



announcement of the Manila Statement on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers is a crucial step in the fight to raise awareness over the fair treatment of seafarers.

Meanwhile, Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers Federation, welcomed the Manila Statement and called for the creation of an implementation plan to roll out the agreements and ensure that every seafarer feels the benefits of what has been discussed in the meeting.

Attended by delegates from

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Brunei and Indonesia, tripartite partners, shipping industry representatives, academe, international organizations, resident ambassadors, and Philippine government officials, the regional meeting is a follow-through to the Workshop on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers held at the International Maritime Organization last June 23, 2017 in London.



5k Boracay workers receive P45M aid

AS PART of its commitment to help reduce unemployment, particularly of the disadvantaged sector, the labor department has provided emergency employment to 5,000 informal sector workers who were affected by the closure of Boracay Island.

From April to October 2018, the labor department has released a total of P45 million livelihood assistance under the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) Program which benefitted 4,990 informal sector workers.

"TUPAD Program is just part of the Boracay Emergency Employment Program (BEEP), a comprehensive package of assistance of the DOLE for the

displaced workers in Boracay, to help them cope with the impact of Boracay Island rehabilitation," said Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III.

TUPAD is a community-based package of assistance that provides short term emergency employment to the underemployed and laid-off or terminated workers, for a minimum period of 10 days, but not to exceed a maximum of 30 days, depending on the nature of work to be performed.

Apart from wage, the workers are also provided with basic orientation on safety and health as well as social insurance.

Meanwhile, during the opening of Boracay Island on October 26, Secretary Bello

awarded two checks worth P1 million each to two cooperatives.

The recipients were Boracay Women Producers' Cooperative for its Community Mart and Heritage Hub Project, benefiting 68 beneficiaries and Caticlan Boracay Transport Multi-Purpose Cooperative for its Free Range Native Hog and Chicken Farm Project, benefiting 60 beneficiaries.

For the Government Internship Program (GIP), some 166 beneficiaries who are dependents of affected workers were hired as government interns; of which 33 GIP slots were already converted to Job Order status.

Meanwhile, for the Adjustment Measures Program (AMP), which provides

financial support to affected formal sector workers, out of the 31,362 applications received, a total of 17,119 applications were already paid while 14,243 applications are in process. The DOLE allocated P448 million for the implementation of the AMP.

Further, to facilitate employment of the affected workers and/or their

dependents, the DOLE, in coordination with the Public Employment Service Office (PESO) and the private sector, conducted Trabaho, Negosyo, Kabuhayan Job Fairs on April 26 in Kalibo and on May 18 in Malay, of which 107 applicants were hired on the spot. *-aldm/ndominguez with report from DOLE RO6*



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Renato L. Ebarle
 Undersecretary
 Employment, Migrant Workers Welfare
 and Administrative Services Cluster

"The Philippine employment situation is stable. On the average, employment grew annually by 2.1 percent for the period 2010-2017. The July 2018 round of the Labor Force Survey reflected the country's steady economic growth as the proportion of working persons in the labor force, or the employment rate, inched up to 94.6 percent, from 94.4 percent in July 2017. Over the last decade, the recent employment outturn is recorded as the highest among previous July rounds of the survey."

On survey results on joblessness

DOLE assures stable employment situation

FOLLOWING the release of results of the Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey on joblessness, Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III assured the public that the employment situation is stable and that the labor department is steadfast in its employment facilitation services and the preservation and protection of employment.

"We recognize the SWS survey result, but on the other hand, we need to see the larger picture. The Labor Force Survey conducted by the Philippine Statistics Authority says that the unemployment rate has decreased," said Labor Secretary Bello citing the unemployment rate of 5.4 percent (2.3 million Filipinos) in

the July 2018 round of the LFS. The third quarter survey of the SWS meanwhile, showed that adult joblessness is at 22 percent (9.8 million adults).

The Labor Force Survey is the official source of employment information, the processes and criteria in the determination of which is adopted by the global economies, added Bello.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary Renato Ebarle said that factors that account for the difference in the SWS and PSA surveys include the sample population, age, reference period of the survey, and criteria used to define unemployment.

The July 2018 round of the LFS reflected the country's steady economic growth as

"Our aim is to secure employment, make employment more meaningful, more productive, and more beneficial to the workers, which in turn will provide productivity to our employers and business establishments,"

– Sec. Bello

the proportion of working persons in the labor force, or the employment rate inched up to 94.6 percent from 94.4 percent in July 2017.

Undersecretary Ebarle said that the number of employed persons exhibited a generally increasing trend.

On the average, employment grew annually by 2.1 percent for the period 2010-2017.

However, he added that these positive gains were also offset as underemployment rate marginally increased by 0.9 percentage points from 16.3 percent to 17.2 percent during the same round of the LFS.

Addressing these setbacks, Bello emphasized the need to attract more investments to the

country.

"Job creation is the effect of investment. If there are more investments in the country, they generate more jobs for the people. Our aim is to secure employment, make employment more meaningful, more productive, and more beneficial to the workers, which in turn will provide productivity to our employers and business establishments," Bello said.

He added that the government is on the right track when it comes to enabling policies such as the Ease-of-Doing Business, and the implementation of the Build Build program, among others. *-Althea Louise D. Majan*



OFWs in Qatar get workers' fund

by Teephania D. Laderas

FILIPINO workers in Qatar can expect a much caring and safer working environment after a new law that establishes workers' fund has been approved by the Qatar government.

Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said this after receiving a report from International Labor Affairs Bureau Director Alice Visperas about the issuance of the worker's support and insurance fund law by Qatar's highest official, Amir HH Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, of the said law.

"We welcome the issuance of Law No.17 series of 2018, by the Amir, as this will guarantee the protection of rights and ensure the welfare of Filipino domestic workers in the Arab state," said Bello.

The new law, which establishes a fund to be

named "Worker's Support and Insurance Fund," aims to ensure and provide care for both the private sector and domestic workers in Qatar, guarantee their rights, and provide them with a healthy and safe working environment.

As provided for in the law, the fund will be used for payment of worker's benefits as determined by dispute resolution committees; in the facilitation of worker's return to his or her home country; payment of financial benefits at the end of service contracts, and in providing decent housing and other amenities.

Around 230,000 Filipinos in Qatar, who are mostly employed as domestic helpers, based on the DOLE's January to June 2018 Report to Congress, are expected to benefit from the new law.

Migrant Filipino workers earn Ateneo certification

MACAU – Forty-one Filipino workers in Macau successfully completed the six-month Ateneo Leadership and Social Entrepreneurship (ALSE) Program, which aims to build their capacity to establish a financially rewarding and socially responsive and relevant business enterprise.

The Filipino workers, who

attended the learning sessions from March to August 2018, were the 5th batch of ALSE students in Macau.

At the end of the program, the students came up with their own business plans, which were evaluated by a board of panellists on a series of presentations.

As a result, four individual/

group awards were given to outstanding business plans of the year.

The ALSE is being offered by the Ateneo School of Government in cooperation with the Philippine Overseas Labor Office and the Philippine Consulate General-Macau. –*POLO Macau*



ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM FOR MACAU OFWS. Forty-one Filipino workers in Macau successfully complete the six-month ALSE Program, which aims to make them agents of social change when they retire or reintegrate in the Philippines. The program is being offered by the Ateneo School of Government in cooperation with the POLO and the Philippine Consulate General-Macau.

Immigration law seminar for Pinoy workers

TO EDUCATE the Filipino community on their rights and responsibilities as foreign workers in Macau, the

Philippine Overseas Labor Office-Macau, in coordination with the Philippine Consulate General, conducted a seminar

on labor and immigration laws for non-resident workers.

The learning session was attended by over a hundred Filipino workers, who showed their interest to learn and acknowledged the importance of being an informed foreign worker.

Important information on work permits, contracts, mandatory rest days, and annual leaves were discussed by the local officials. A short presentation on trafficking was also shown to the attendees.

–*POLO Macau*



SEMINAR ON LABOR AND IMMIGRATION LAWS. Consul General Lilybeth Deapera welcomes the attendees and thanks the organizers and resource persons during the seminar on labor and immigration laws to educate the Filipino community on their rights and responsibilities as foreign workers in Macau.

Mandatory health insurance for OFWs in Oman

THE Philippine Overseas Labor Office – Oman initiated a mandatory health insurance under Advisory No. 3 that was effected on March 18 for Filipino workers.

At the first stage of implementation, some employers dissented on providing the health insurance to their workers but nonetheless complied with the advisory.

The Oman government had an

after-thought of implementing the same to all residents of the country including workers in the private sector. It was recently published in the Times of Oman that the plan could be in place early next year.

Consequently, the Capital Market Authority is still working on it and currently on negotiations with different relevant bodies. –*ILAB/POLO Oman*

Language centers cannot advertise overseas jobs - POEA

SOUTH KOREA – Be wary of language training centers that promise "sure employment" at the end of the course.

This was the warning of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) which was reiterated to the Filipino Community by the Philippine Embassy in South Korea.

The POEA announcement reminded that these language training centers have no license or authority to recruit Filipino workers and are prohibited from advertising overseas job vacancies.

POEA has noted that some of these training centers have been posting advertisements in social media enticing enrollees with

supposed jobs in Korea, Japan, and Germany.

The POEA explained that factory workers bound for Korea are deployed under the Employment Permit System (EPS) and have to pass the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK).

Hurdling the TOPIK, however, is only one of the several steps before getting deployed to Korea, and is not a guarantee for employment.

Apart from passing the TOPIK, the prospective workers must also pass a skills test and must be selected by the Korean employer before they can successfully secure a position as an EPS worker in Korea. –*POEA*

Protection of Filipinos in Canada pushed

THE WELFARE and protection of Filipino workers in Canada will soon get a boost with a proposed law seeking to protect them from abuse.

In a report to Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III, Labor Attaché Margarita Eugenia Victorino of the Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO) in Vancouver said the proposed legislation, a registry of employers and recruiters of temporary foreign workers in Canada composed of OFWs, will be established.

"The establishment of a registry, as provided for in the proposed Temporary Foreign Workers Protection Act, or Bill 48-2018, aims to safeguard temporary foreign workers from abuse committed against them by their employer or recruiter," said Victorino in her report.

Under the proposed measure, the registration process of employers and workers' recruiters will be free and available online.

Also, based on the proposed bill, an employer or recruiter, who will be found violating their obligations, will face revocation of license and imprisonment for a year.

Canadian Labor Minister Harry Bains has announced recently that the proposed legislation has been submitted for first reading at the British Columbia Legislature.

Consultations with all stakeholders are also expected to be held and the POLO-Vancouver has been invited to take an active part in crafting the policies and guidelines for the implementation of the law. –*Teephania D. Laderas / ILAB*

SPIMS goes to Dubai

TO ACHIEVE its ultimate goal of bringing Overseas Filipino Workers-Licensure Examination for Teachers (OFW-LET) passers back to the country, the National Reintegration Center for OFWs (NRCO) organized the Sa 'Pinas, Ikaw ang Ma'am at Sir' (SPIMS) advocacy campaign in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

"Dubai is your city, but the Philippines remains to be your home," said Undersecretary Renato Ebarle as he addressed the hundreds of Filipino migrant workers who attended the event.

With support coming from

the Philippine Overseas Labor Office-Dubai headed by Labor Attaché Felicitas Bay, the advocacy campaign became a gathering of potential beneficiaries of the SPIMS program and an avenue for the attendees to learn more about the employment-reintegration program of the NRCO.

The Filipinos who attended the event came from various Philippine schools overseas such as the United International Private School, Al Alfiah Filipino Private School, Far Eastern Private School-Al Shahba and Al Azra Campuses, Philippine Emirates Private School, and The



photo by Kabayan Kamera Klub

SPIMS IN DUBAI. The National Reintegration Center for OFWs brings its advocacy of encouraging OFWs who are licensed teachers back to the country through the Sa 'Pinas, Ikaw ang Ma'am at Sir information campaign in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Philippine School Dubai.

Other organizations of teachers in Dubai and Abu Dhabi were also present during the whole day activity, such as the National Organization of Professional Teachers Inc. and Filipino

International Teachers Society-UAE and Dubai.

UAE is among the top host countries of the SPIMS beneficiaries, according to NRCO data.

NRCO OIC-Director Roel Martin introduced their reintegration programs and services, while Geronico Herrera discussed the SPIMS application process, eligibility, and requirements.

Directors Jennifer Lopez and Juliet Jeruta from the Department of Education spearheaded the discussion on the implementation

of the K-12 program and the challenges of becoming a public school teacher; while Dr. Serafin Arviola of the Philippine Normal University discussed the Online Refresher Course and how to avail the free online modules.

SPIMS aims to gain back the Filipino workers overseas, particularly the OFW-LET passers by enhancing their skills and providing them option to stay in the Philippines to work as public school teachers. -NRCO

POEA sets rules for vacationing Iraq OFWs

The Philippine Overseas Employment Administration has issued the guidelines implementing POEA Resolution No. 6 Series of 2018, which exempts certain returning workers from the current deployment ban imposed on Iraq under the Selective Balik-Manggagawa Exemption Program as proposed by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

In Memorandum Circular No. 17, the POEA allowed the return of vacationing OFWs, except household service workers, who are employed by companies with existing contracts with the government of Republic of Iraq, government of the United States, and the government of members of the International Coalition, United Nations, other international organizations and international non-government organizations.

Also exempted from the

deployment ban are those employed as private staff by foreign diplomats assigned in Baghdad and ranking officials of the Government of the Republic of Iraq provided that such employers have no pending cases as certified by the Philippine Embassy in Baghdad.

The POEA board also allowed the return of Filipinos working and living in secured compounds in the provinces of Babil, Baghdad, Basra, Dhiqar, Karbala, Maysan, Mathunna, Najaf, Qadisiyah, Saladin, Wasit, and other areas certified as safe by the Philippine Embassy in Baghdad.

The processing of documents and the deployment of domestic workers, whether new hire or returning worker, shall not be allowed.

The processing and deployment of new hires and returning

workers to "no-go" zones such as Salahuddin, Anbar, Nineveh and Kirkuk is also restricted.

The requirements for the documentation of the exempted OFWs are passport, valid at least six months from the date of intended departure; valid and appropriate visa of work permit; verified employment contract; certification of employment; certificate of exemption issued by the Philippine Embassy in Baghdad; and an undertaking from the employer on the protection and safety of the worker.

They are also required to report to the Philippine Embassy and/or Philippine Overseas Labor Office significant incidents affecting the employment, safety and welfare of the worker, and conduct immediate evacuation/repatriation of the worker as may be warranted. -POEA

OWWA launches OFW e-CARD

TO ENHANCE the delivery of government services to overseas Filipino workers, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), an attached agency of the labor department, launched the OFW e-CARD.

"The OWWA OFW e-CARD is a response to the directive of President Rodrigo Duterte to further serve our modern heroes-the OFWs," said Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III during the launching at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

The OWWA OFW e-CARD serves as proof of active OWWA membership and provides easy access to welfare services, scholarships, training programs, and social benefits from OWWA.

It may also serve as valid

government ID.

The OWWA OFW e-CARD allows instant verification of OWWA membership and reduces documentary requirements, said OWWA Administrator Hans Leo Caddac.

The OFW e-CARD is available for free to all Balik-Manggagawa OFWs with active OWWA membership, valid Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC) or Exemption Number, and a valid passport.

"This is just Phase 1 and we expect to cover around 250,000 Balik-Manggagawa," added Secretary Bello, who also serves as OWWA Board of Trustees chair.

To prevent data breach, the OFW e-CARD contains a unique OFW membership number and QR code as security features.

OWWA members may visit the OWWA website at www.owwa.gov.ph to apply for an OFW e-CARD. They may claim their card upon return to the Philippines or through their family member, provided that they present an authorization letter and a copy of the OFW's passport identification page.

OFWs may present the OFW e-CARD at any OWWA Regional Welfare Office in the country or at the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices and Embassies/Consulates in their jobsites when availing OWWA programs and services.

OWWA has also set up OFW e-CARD Help Desks in all its regional offices in the country and overseas posts across the globe, to cater to queries and concerns of OFWs. -OWWA/aldm

ECC partners with SSS on info campaign

ILIGAN CITY – The Employees' Compensation Commission Regional Extension Unit 10, in partnership with the SSS Quezon City and Iligan branches, conducted a seminar on the social security benefits of employees in the private sector.

Held at the Plaza Alemania Hotel in Iligan City, the three-day seminar was participated by 92 employees and employers from 84 companies in Lanao del Norte and Lanao del Sur.

The seminar tackled the various social benefits that employees may avail under the programs of the SSS and the importance of knowing the Employees' Compensation Program.

ECC Northern Mindanao Regional Officer Stella Obice explained the salient features of the ECP and other services that workers may get in the event of a work-related accident.

Obice also discussed Executive

Order No. 54, which was signed by President Rodrigo Duterte in May 2018, increasing the Temporary Total Disability, Permanent Partial Disability, Permanent Total Disability benefits, carer's allowance and reimbursement rates for professional fees of physicians and physical therapy sessions of persons with work-related disabilities.

According to SSS Iligan Medical Officer Roy Doctolero, SSS is now in the process of enhancing its computer systems for the implementation of the new increases.

"It is very important that both employees and employers are aware of the existence of the Employees' Compensation Program. Seminars like this are of great help in making sure that the public is aware of the benefits and services of the ECP," said Doctolero. -Stella Obice

Suspected illegal recruiters nabbed

MEMBERS of Criminal Investigation and Detection Group Anti-Transnational Crime Unit (CIDG-ATCU) of the Philippine National Police arrested two suspected illegal recruiters in an entrapment operation in Paco, Manila.

The CIDG-ATCU operatives apprehended suspects Eladio Cabrera y Bendanillo and Melissa Cardona y Cruz after they received boodle money worth P50,000 from their alleged victims.

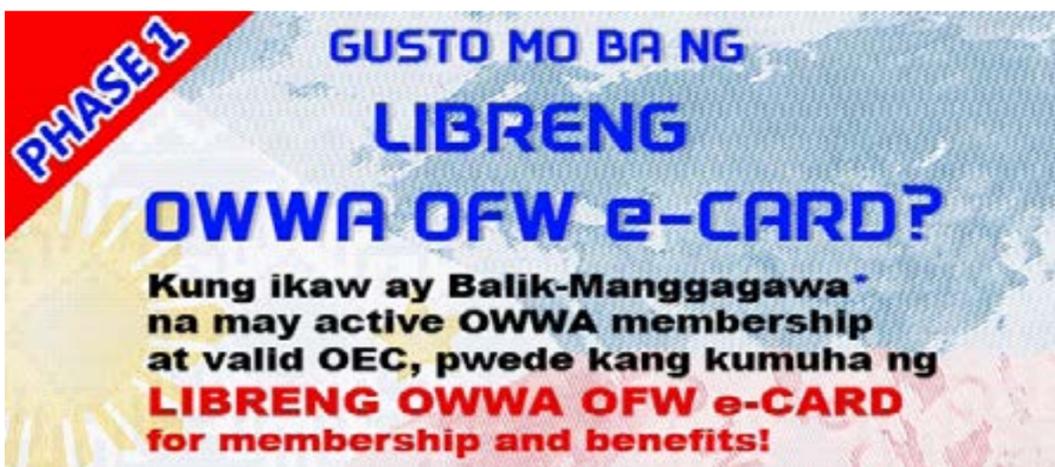
The complainants said they were enticed by the suspects to work as cleaners and domestic helpers in Dubai and Qatar and were asked to pay supposedly for processing of travel documents and pre-departure seminar fee.

The CIDG-ATCU believe the suspects are members of an organized group engaged in trafficking of persons to Middle East countries under tourist visa scheme and are responsible for falsification of public documents.

The operatives found in their possession some consulate documents with red ribbon and bearing the official seal of different Philippine Consulates in the Middle East.

Cabrera and Cardona were brought to CIDG-ATCU office for investigation and processing.

Complaints for illegal recruitment, swindling and falsification of public documents will be charged against the suspects. -POEA



Career guidance for Agusan senior HS

AGUSAN DEL SUR—To enable the youth to make sound decisions about learning and work, the Department of Labor and Employment-Agusan del Sur Provincial Office conducted its Career Guidance Advocacy Program at Bayugan National Comprehensive High School and Agusan del Sur National High School.

Around 1,400 Grade 12 students which came from the Humanities and Social Sciences strand; Accountancy, Business and Management strand; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics strand attended the activity.

Anchoring on the theme, PH 4.0: Preparing for a Digital Ready Workforce, DOLE-Agusan del Sur Provincial Office Head Jocelyn Bastareche presented the Labor Market Information and the National Skills Registry Program; and conducted career coaching and labor education to the graduating senior high school students.

“It is important for us to know this kind of information to get a glimpse of what we should expect and to consider in choosing our career,” one of the students said.

“In the advent of Philippine 4.0, the job market becomes highly competitive and demanding. It is a necessity for all to be updated, informed, and equipped with knowledge on the trends in the world of work, updates on the labor market, and processes involved in choosing one’s career,” said Minda Teposo, the school principal of Bayugan National Comprehensive High School.

The Career Guidance Advocacy Program is one of the flagship programs being implemented by the labor department to provide the youth with relevant information that could guide them in making informed career choices.

—DOLE Caraga



photo by BNCHS-Guidance and Counseling Office

CAREER GUIDANCE FOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS. Grade 12 students who came from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strands; Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM) strands; and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) strand attend the Career Guidance Advocacy Program conducted by the DOLE-Agusan del Sur Provincial Office.

Livelihood projects awarded to Antique drug surrenderees

HAMTIC, ANTIQUE – Seventy-six drug dependents who surrendered to the Philippine National Police of Hamtic, Antique received livelihood assistance from the labor department amounting to P1,520,000.

DOLE Regional Director Cyril Ticao released the check to Mayor Julius Ronald Pacificador.

The drug surrenderees, who have undergone rehabilitation and counseling services, are marginalized and self-employed residents of the different barangays in Hamtic.

They will be provided individually managed projects

under the DOLE Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program or Kabuhayan Program.

Among the chosen ventures of the 76 beneficiaries are cattle fattening, swine fattening, sari-sari store, goat raising, rice trading, fishing, batchoyan, photocopying business, welding, vulcanizing, and motorcycle and small engine repair business.

The projects intend to augment the income of the beneficiaries and their families in order to meet their basic needs and send their children to school.

Director Ticao expressed hope that the livelihood

projects will also pave the way for the beneficiaries to live a better and more productive life, and away from detrimental vices.

Hamtic is one of the municipalities in the Province of Antique with a high number of drug reformists. —DOLE RO 6

DOLE CLINICS AT LAGUNA INDUSTRIAL PARKS. DOLE Laguna Provincial Office brings labor and employment education services across industrial parks in the province through the DOLE Clinics to better promote compliance with labor laws. The standard modules include regularization and security of tenure, grievance handling, wages and productivity, employees’ compensation benefits, and other DOLE programs and activities.



photo by DOLE RO 8

LIVELIHOOD FOR MARAWI SOLDIER BENEFICIARY. Gemma Aban, wife of Corporal Edgie Aban who was wounded-in-action during the Marawi Siege, receives the DOLE Kabuhayan Livelihood Project certificate amounting to P19,600 which she will use for her agri-business.

Marawi siege soldiers receive Kabuhayan Starter Kits

CATBALOGAN CITY – The Department of Labor and Employment-Regional Office No. 8 led the awarding of DOLE Kabuhayan Starter Kits amounting to P58,618 to beneficiaries of three soldiers who were wounded in action during the Marawi Siege.

Held at the headquarters of the 63rd Infantry Battalion of the Philippine Army, the awarding

of the assistance was led by DOLE Eastern Visayas Regional Director Yahya Centi.

The beneficiaries Jessa Jean Noguit, wife of Private First Class Jerson Noguit; Norma Nablo, wife of Corporal Maximo Nablo Jr.; and Gemma Aban, wife of Corporal Edgie Aban were granted a livelihood of agri-feeds worth over P19,000 each. —DOLE RO 8

DOLE Clinics at industrial parks

CALAMBA, LAGUNA – To better promote compliance with labor laws, DOLE Laguna Provincial Office brought labor and employment education services across the industrial parks in the province.

Under the leadership of Provincial Director Guido Recio, DOLE Laguna forged partnership with the Regional Mediation and Conciliation Board IV-A, Regional Wages and Productivity Board IV-A, and the Employees Compensation Commission to strengthen awareness on employment regularization, grievance handling, wages and productivity, and employees’ compensation benefits through the DOLE Clinics.

As a result of the partnership, the DOLE Clinics has been brought to the Laguna Technopark Association, Inc., Light Industry and Science

Park of the Philippines Administration, and the Laguna International Industrial Park Association, Inc.

DOLE Laguna intends to bring its programs and services to other industrial zones including Carmelray Industrial Park I, Carmelray Industrial Park II, and Calamba Premier Industrial Park.

As of September, DOLE Laguna has conducted 75 labor and employment education services covering over 500 establishments and over 2,000 labor and management representatives.

The standard modules for DOLE Clinics include Regularization and Security of Tenure, Grievance Handling, Wages and Productivity, Employees’ Compensation Benefits, and other DOLE programs and activities.

—Rudyboy Sinay



photo by DOLE Calabarzon

Seafarer kidnapped in Nigeria now home in Cebu

by Luchel Senarlo-Taniza

A SEAFARER who requested for immediate repatriation after being kidnapped by pirates in Nigeria has safely arrived in Pondol, Balamban, Cebu.

According to Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA-7) OIC-Regional Director Mae Codilla, their office received an electronic mail from Magdaleno Sangre, Jr., asking for immediate repatriation, which they formally endorsed right away to the Overseas Operations Coordination Service in Manila and to the office of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) for appropriate action.

Sangre was among the 12 crew members of the Swiss-owned MV Glarus who were abducted by armed pirates on September 22, 2018. He was also one of the seven Filipino

seafarers who were released on October 28 after captivity. MV Glarus was making its way from the Nigerian capital of Lagos to the Southeastern city of Port Harcourt when the incident happened.

The seafarer, in an electronic mail, extended his appreciation and gratitude to the Department of Labor and Employment especially to OWWA-7 for taking immediate action on his request for assistance.

In a phone interview, Sangre's mother, Estrelita, narrated how traumatic the incident was for her son.

She said that it was the third time for the 23 year-old seafarer to be on board overseas, but it was the very first time for him to experience such a nightmare, adding that her son was able to escape after being forced to

jump off the pirate's boat after it got overloaded.

Sangre would have finished his contract by next year in time for his wedding. He worked as a deck/engine trainee for Mare Management S.A. under Bright Maritime Corporation, his local agency.

Bright Maritime Corporation, meanwhile, furnished the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) with copy of their letter stating the assistance they extended to Sangre, such as providing him with airline ticket back to the Philippines.

DOLE-7 Regional Director Atty. Johnson Cañete lauded the efforts extended by the OWWA, POEA, and the DFA, as well as the cooperation demonstrated by Bright Maritime Corporation.

We are FOI champion

FOR ITS exceptional and significant contribution to the Freedom of Information Program's progress and development, the Department of Labor and Employment was declared 2018 Freedom of Information (FOI) Champion during the 2018 Open Government Partnership (OGP)-FOI Summit at the National Museum of Fine Arts, Padre Burgos Avenue in Ermita, Manila on 28 November.

DOLE was also recognized as one of the Top Requested and Performing Agencies in the eFOI Portal in the same Summit for its efforts in providing the public convenience in requesting truthful data from the government.

The event, which was co-organized by the Department of Budget and Management and the Presidential Communications Operations Office, awarded government offices for their significant contributions to the successful implementation of the FOI Program.

The Department won the 2018 FOI Champion Award for implementing best practices in processing FOI requests with an average of 3.64 days; as well as in complying with the Presidential Communications Operations Office requirements; and in issuing appropriate advisory.

DOLE was also commended for its dissemination of the revised FOI manuals which manifested the Department's strong adherence to the provisions of Executive Order No. 2, or the FOI guidelines, as well as the quality, timeliness, and efficiency of the overall implementation of the program.

—Michelle A. Domingo



Life after teaching

A story of an AMP beneficiary

"ANG MAHIRAP dun, yung ini-imagine mo na every time na dadating yung akinse at katapusan, may natatanggap kang sweldo then suddenly wala. Yun yung mahirap na adjustment for us."

This was the sentiment of Ana Luz Ong from Pasig City, after she was laid off from her work as a teacher at the Far Eastern University.

Ong was one of the displaced Higher Education Institution (HEI) personnel due to the K to 12 program implementation in the country.

Ong's employer encouraged her to apply for the K to 12 Adjustment Measures Program (AMP) of the Department of Labor and Employment.

Also known as Department Order No. 177-17, the K to 12 DOLE AMP aims to provide assistance and interventions to displaced HEI personnel.

Applicants may avail any or all three of the K to 12 DOLE AMP components, which are financial support, employment facilitation, and livelihood opportunities.

Ong chose the program's Financial Support component.

Prior to receiving the monetary aid on a monthly basis, Ong needed to submit a proof of active job application every month—a DOLE conditional requirement intended to help beneficiaries in their daily expenses while they look for subsequent employment.

While seeking for jobs, Ong

had been contemplating on a childhood hobby that she wanted to turn into small business which is crocheting

"Bata pa lang ako, nag ko-crochet na ako. Dream ko na sana kahit hobby ko s'ya ay maka-earn din ako. Buti na lang I can freely use some part of the [DOLE] financial support to buy the materials kasi hindi ko kailangang humugot sa ibang part ng budget ko," said Ong.

Fortunately, the childhood pastime served Ong well in creating intricate patterns that were noticeable in her sample blouses, sling bags, bonnets, scarves, and even accessories.

Some of the major challenges that Ong had to face was idleness.

In her 30 years of being a full-time professor, she got used to waking-up early and working on

a to-do list for students on a daily basis.

"It's God's way of telling me na 'ako naman ang i-serve mo. Sa akin ka naman maging busy para yung time mo, magamit mo ng tama." Ong was referring to her bible study ministry in Pasig—another activity that she is currently involved with apart from her crocheting business.

Nevertheless Ong was able to coincide her bible studies and crocheting business.

Ong considers her separation from employment a blessing in disguise and a doorway that led to many opportunities.

Ong also advised similarly laid-off HEI workers to remain hopeful and stressed on maximizing one's strengths and abilities to survive and succeed.

—Hershey Aquino



LIFE AFTER TEACHING. Ana Luz Ong (left), who was laid-off from work as a teaching personnel, found alternative livelihood, through the financial assistance component of the K to 12 DOLE Adjustment Measures Program. The assistance allowed her to rediscover her childhood hobby, which is crocheting, and turn it into a small business.



photo by FOI Philippines

NC II holders receive welding starter kits

AGUSAN DEL SUR—Seventy-five unemployed youth who are NC-II holders received from the Department of Labor and Employment—Agusan del Sur Provincial Office P1 million worth of Shielded Metal Arc Welding Project Starter Kits, including welding machine and accessories.

The project was conceptualized through the collaboration of the Department of Labor and Employment, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority and the Provincial Public Employment Service Office of Agusan del Sur.

"As unemployed youth, we are very much grateful to be recipients of this project. This will immensely help us to establish a welding shop business. Now, we can make profit from what we have learned as Shielded Metal Arc welding graduates of TESDA. We do not have to work abroad because we now have our own welding shop," said Valent

Lopez, one of the beneficiaries.

The turn over ceremony was attended by DOLE Regional Director Chona Mantilla, Chief LEO/DOLE Provincial Head Jocelyn Bastareche, DILP Focal Maximo Magallen, Jr., Sangguniang Panlalawigan Member Santiago Cane, Jr., TESDA Provincial Director Braulio Dela Peña, Jr., and Provincial PESO Manager Divina Lagumbay.

On May 1, 2018, the labor department inked a Memorandum of Understanding with TESDA to provide training for the youth as well as starter kits in the form of tools and jigs for the graduates.

Under the DOLE-Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program, around 550 TESDA graduates from different provinces, cities and municipalities in the Caraga region has been assisted by DOLE. —DOLE Caraga