

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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PGMA leads gift-giving to selected public school children

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo leads the Department of Education (DepEd) officials in distributing packs of groceries, educational toys, school supplies and reading materials to over two million Grade 1 to Grade 6 pupils throughout the country during the Christmas season.

The gift distribution is part of the department's Tuloy ang Pasko ng Mga Bata program and will be done nationwide today. The chosen recipients include those who belong to the indigenous people, children with disabilities, street and working children, children of poor families in the 5th and 6th class municipalities and children in calamity-affected areas.

The Schools District Supervisor will be primarily responsible in determining who will be the recipients. The distribution will be done simultaneously in public schools in the locality.

Although the gift-giving program is partially funded by the DepEd units, canteen funds and PTCA, there will be support from the local government units and other private groups to benefit more students.

"This is the modest way the DepEd would like to bring the joy of the season to our disadvantaged school children" Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said.

Meanwhile, the recipients of the Christmas gifts will also benefit from the medical and dental missions, which will be held in schools located in the 5th and 6th class municipalities nationwide from December 17- 21, 2007.

In a related development, the DepEd will turn-over some 545 classrooms, some of which can be used as evacuation centers in times of calamity in Albay, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Catanduanes, Masbate and Sorsogon during the same period. This is expected to benefit about 50,000 teachers and pupils.

In addition, there is an ongoing fast-tracking of rice distribution to priority provinces which started November 28, 2007 and will continue until January 29, 2008. This will cover all the 9,721 schools in 48 priority provinces including the NCR. Some 2.6 million school children are the beneficiaries of the program.

"We intensify the call for the support of the private sector for these undertakings. We thank all those who have contributed thus far. They help ensure the welfare of our students," Lapus said.

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