

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Teachers come first – DepEd

As the Department of Education addresses myriad concerns in upgrading the quality of public education system, it remains focused in improving the teachers' living standard through monetary and non-monetary benefits. In 2007, DepEd settled almost P3.4 billion pesos in unpaid insurance and health premiums of its employees.

"Teachers' welfare and benefits are our paramount concern," said Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

In its year-end report, DepEd stated that in 2007 it paid some P1.7 billion in arrears representing government shares in GSIS contribution. The arrears were a result of the increase in GSIS premium from 9.5% to 12% for the period of July 1997 to December 1998.

Another P862 million was released to cover employees' compensation insurance premium adjustments when the government insurance agency increased the premium from P30 to P100.

Moreover, a joint DepEd-GSIS task force was organized by DepEd to address various GSIS-related issues and concerns. Members of the DepEd Task Force are senior finance, management, and field officials of the department, and representatives of various teacher organizations including the Alliance of Concerned Teachers and the Teachers Dignity Coalition.

In a recent meeting with teachers and GSIS presided by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself, the GSIS committed to provide DepEd dedicated servicing desks in its central and field offices. In addition, a GSIS monitoring office in DepEd will also be created. The President also instructed GSIS CEO Winston Garcia to appoint a vice president exclusively for the DepEd account which represents the biggest single contributor to GSIS.

Meanwhile, P400 million were released last year to partially settle unpaid loyalty pays, step increments and other entitlements of DepEd personnel especially teachers. DepEd field offices are already reconciling records for any other unpaid obligations.

DepEd has also released P388 million to cover PhilHealth premium adjustments. The government health insurance company increased its premium from P100 to P112.

"Since last year, we have successfully addressed decade's old unpaid obligations," Lapus stressed.

PRESS RELEASE

Just last November 2007, DepEd signed a memorandum of agreement with Gawad Kalinga, Pag-Ibig Fund, and some pioneering local government units to undertake an affordable housing program for its more than 90,000 teachers who do not have a home of their own.

GK offers low cost housing where the homeowners themselves are involved in the construction of their future homes in a 5 hectare land provided by the partner LGU. One hectare will serve as academic, recreation, and productivity areas while the remaining 4 hectares will be used for the more than 200 lots at 150 sq. m. per lot. A typical house will have a 46 sq. m. floor area with high ceiling and a 26 sq. m. loft. Each house will have finished walls and tiled kitchen and toilet when they are turned over.

Beyond the construction, GK also implements projects that help enhance community living like livelihood programs and sports activities. A building for pre-school education is also part of the community package of GK for teachers. Recipients will only need to pay a monthly amortization of P1,300 for 25 years through Pag-ibig.

In a related development, DepEd plans to organize pre-school programs by contracting the services of GK Sibol schools found in the communities the GK will establish. Furthermore, GK Sibol schools shall be integrated into the DepEd programs. They shall also be included as possible partners of the Adopt-A-School program. Also, the Batang Bayani program of GK will be reviewed for possible integration to DepEd's Basic Education curriculum.

DepEd takes up one third of the entire government bureaucracy. Of its 517,515 employees, 471,837 are teachers. Last year, DepEd was given 16,334 new teacher items – more than double the 7,237 items given in 2006.

Additionally, there are also about 37,000 teachers hired by local government units paid through the LGU's local funds.

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