

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 2, 2009**

DepEd: school opening went smoothly

In a special back-to-school press conference yesterday, Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Jesli Lapus thanked all Balik Eskwela Convergence Partners for their participation in this year's Oplan Balik Eskwela.

"Because of our excellent collaboration with our convergence partners, school opening yesterday went smoothly. The rains did not stop our school children from going back to schools safely," Lapus said.

Some 22 million elementary and high school students trooped back to public schools yesterday for the opening of classes.

The DepEd chief also thanked the parents for sending their children to school and for recognizing the value of their children's education.

"Parents should encourage their children to go to school, and the government has undertaken all efforts to ease their financial burden so that their children can get the education they need," Lapus said.

"We have continuously instilled in our parents the importance of education. And as we say *Edukasyon ang Solusyon*, we are indeed very happy that many parents responded to our call," he added.

Together with Lapus were Department of Health (DOH) Secretary Francisco Duque III, Mr. Nathaniel Cruz of Philippine Atmospheric Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), Chief Superintendent Roberto Rosales of National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO), Mr. Antonio Pagulayan of the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Assistant Director Elias Fernandez of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Assistant Regional Director Arturo Ramos of the Department of National Defense (DND) and Balik Eskwela Task Force Action Officer DepEd Undersecretary Ramon Bacani.

Atty. Ombra Benaning and Engr. Federico Mobo of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), Mr. Nestor Sarmiento of the Manila Electric Company (MERALCO), Mr. Jeric Sevilla of Manila Water, Ms. Risse Jose of Maynilad, Col. Mamerto Agudo of the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC), Assistant Secretary Ma. Theresa Pelayo of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) were also present to give their respective updates.

"Without their support, we would not have prepared for school opening as effectively as we had this year," Lapus noted.

PRESS RELEASE

The Education Secretary also reported that as of June 2, 12:22 pm, 435 out of 437 cases forwarded to the Balik Eskwela Command Center have been resolved.

“We thank the parents for having relayed to us their specific concerns. The public’s involvement enabled us to properly address all of these back-to-school concerns,” he said.

Lapus continues to encourage parents to forward their queries and complaints to DepEd through the Balik Eskwela Command Center, which will be open until June 5. The public may contact Hotlines 6361663, 6331942, 6340222, 6359817, 6363602, 6364880, 6366550, 6387529, 6387530, 6387531 and 7065332. This center at the DepEd Central Office in Pasig City is open from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm to handle walk-in queries and complaints.

The public may also contact DepEd through SMS by sending their name, address and query to 09194560027 or by texting DEPED FDBK name, address and query and sending it to 2622.

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