

DOLE Kicks Off its “Kamustahan Series” with Bus Transport Industry

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), through the Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR) in coordination with the DOLE-National Capital Region (NCR), kicked off the first online industry consultation series with the with Bus Transport Industry Tripartite Council (ITC) on 18 August 2020 via zoom cloud. Dubbed as the *Kamustahan Series* with select industries, the online consultation was organized to discuss industry-specific concerns given the COVID-19 pandemic and to explore areas of collaboration to address the same.

Undersecretary Joji V. Aragon, who spearheaded the consultation, expressed her gratitude to the members of the Council and other industry representatives for participating in the activity. She encouraged the participants to raise their issues and concerns; especially that public transport is one of the hardest-hit industries by the pandemic.

The bus transport industry players shared that they are struggling financially because of the added cost to their operations due to compliance with safety and health protocols, coupled with low income brought about by the limitations in vehicle capacity. With the present situation, bus companies and/or operators resort to retrenchment, laying-off, or termination of some of their drivers, conductors, ticket sellers, and inspectors.

Meanwhile, a few bus companies and/or operators were able to prevent the retrenchment or termination of employees by implementing flexible and alternative work arrangements. One of the best practices shared during the consultation is the shift from passenger transport to cargo handling services for their employees to remain employed. There were also those that shifted to shuttle services catering to the essential workers.

On the government side, Assistant Secretary Dominique Tutay informed the participants that the proposed Bayanihan 2 Act includes provisions on assistance for critically impacted industries, which include the transportation industry, in the form of economic relief programs such as wage subsidy, loan, and/or loan-guarantees and other loan-related measures

In her closing statement, Undersecretary Aragon emphasized the importance of consultations in these trying times. "This a good start for us to know your issues and recommendations as well as how are you surviving amid the pandemic. The DOLE, through its mandate shall seek a solution, if not an intervention on the industry's concerns", she added.

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