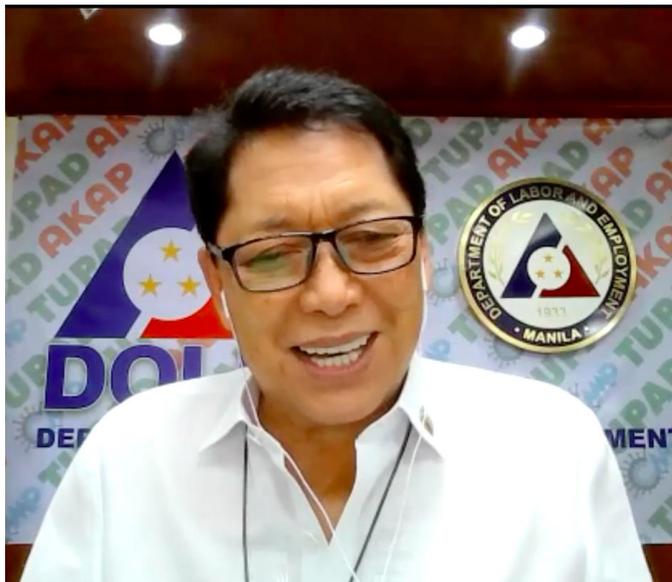


DOLE Meets with the Supreme Court to Tackle Labor Concerns

The Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR) hosted the first engagement of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) with the Supreme Court of the Philippines for the year 2021 in a dialogue held last 21 June 2021, via Zoom videoconference.

The dialogue was convened by DOLE Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III, Undersecretary Benjo Santos M. Benavidez, BLR Director Maria Consuelo S. Bacay, Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez of the Supreme Court-Office of the Court Administrator (SC-OCA), and 34 labor representatives.



The plan to revive and maintain close coordination with the judiciary arose from the concern expressed by several labor groups over the reported arrests and deaths of trade unionists as these pose threat to their persons and to the exercise of their basic rights and civil liberties, particularly of Freedom of Association. The dialogue aimed to take into account the alleged and perceived

violations in the issuance and implementation of search warrants or warrants of arrest, and to prevent the occurrence of incidents which reportedly defeat the fundamental rights of workers.

Discussions during the dialogue primarily revolves around the rampant issuance of warrants by particular courts targeting trade unionists and the expeditious resolution of labor-related cases pending before the courts.

As to the issuances of warrants to trade unionists, labor representatives expressed that said warrants were issued outside the jurisdiction of where the respondent was served.

Atty. Sonny Matula, Chairperson of the NAGKAISA! Labor Coalition, requested for the Supreme Court to review its policy that allows judges to issue warrants outside of their jurisdiction. Labor representatives recommended, for incorporation in the policy review, that prior to the issuance of a warrant, a clearance from the DOLE be secured first as specified in a previous Circular from the Department of Justice (DOJ).

Court Administrator Justice Marquez said, in response to the issuance of warrants, that when State agents apply for a search warrant, the general rule is that such warrants are applied for in the court having jurisdiction over the place sought to be searched. As exceptions to such rule – (1) executive judges in Quezon City and Manila may issue search warrants enforceable nationwide, or (2) when for compelling reasons, any judge within the region can issue a search warrant enforceable within such region.



According to Justice Marquez, the Rules on Criminal Procedure is currently on review. Said review began before the retirement of former Chief Justice Peralta, and at present, Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo has already called for the concerned committee to convene once again for the review.

Several labor-related cases were raised and discussed by the labor representatives as they have been pending before the Supreme Court for 5-8 years. In response, Justice Marquez committed that the Supreme Court will check on the cases submitted by the labor sector, through DOLE.

To formally close the meeting, Undersecretary Benavidez expressed his gratitude on behalf of DOLE and highlighted that the dialogue regarding labor issues is timely as the Rules on Criminal Procedure is currently being reviewed. This presents a unique opportunity to raise the concerns of the labor sector for consideration in the review especially with regard to the issuance of warrants by executive and local courts.



END/Diane Virtucio