

# **PINATIBAY NA NLRC PARA SA MAUNLAD NA KALAKALAN AT PAGGAWA**

The National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) stands strong as the State's primary compulsory arbitration arm. The Commission is inspired by latest positive developments, particularly: the effectivity of RA 9347 otherwise known as the NLRC Rationalization Law; its performance which is highest ever in a ten year period (1997-2006); the affirmative response of its stakeholders and clients to preventive and mandatory conciliation and mediation; and, the active involvement of the National Association of Labor Arbiters, Inc. (NALAI) and the NLRC Employee's Association (NLRCEA) in the policy and decision making process of the Commission, in so far as it affects the welfare of NLRC staff and employees.

The NLRC is a quasi-judicial agency of the government, attached to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for program and policy coordination only. Its mandate is to promote and maintain industrial peace based on social justice by resolving labor and management disputes involving both local and overseas workers through compulsory arbitration and alternative modes of dispute resolution.

Republic Act No. 9347 which took about nine (9) years in the making has increased the tripartite composition of the Commission to one Chairman and twenty-three (23) members, eight each from the nominees of workers and employers group, respectively and the chairman and seven remaining members from the public sector preferably from the incumbent labor arbiters; created positions for commission attorneys who will assist the commissioners and the eight (8) Divisions in its adjudicatory functions; increased the qualification of labor arbiters to ten (10) years membership of the bar and practice of law with five (5) years exposure in labor-management relations; extended the public service of the commissioners and labor arbiters up to the maximum age of seventy (70) years upon recommendation of the commission en banc; and vested the Chairman, appointment of the NLRC staff and employees and the upgrading of current salaries, benefits and other emoluments in accordance with law.

In terms of accomplishments, as of June 2006, the Commission and the Regional Arbitration Branches had disposed of 20,941 cases, highest ever in a semester on semester ten year trend (1997-2006). The Commissioners had disposed of a total of 5,470 cases or an average of 61 cases per month per commissioner while the Labor Arbiters disposed of 15,471 cases or an average of 27 cases per month.

The Commission is challenged to improve on their affirmance rate of 89% or 409 out of 458 decisions brought before the Supreme Court and 88% or 336 out of 380 decisions elevated before the Court of Appeals on petitions for certiorari.

The NLRC's efforts of further strengthening conciliation and mediation as reinforcement mode to arbitration, resulted in the settlement of 7,634 cases or 46% of the total case disposition of the Labor Arbiters. Moreover, preventive or voluntary conciliation and mediation implemented by the NLRC Conciliation and Mediation Center (CMC) at the National Capital Region-Arbitration Branch effectively reduced potential cases with the amicable settlement of 1,299 requests for assistance which benefited 2,475 workers in the amount of P24,932,732.00.

The NLRC under its new leadership, Chairman Gerardo Benjamin C. Nograles is set to vigorously pursue its mission to promote and maintain industrial peace by resolving labor disputes in the fairest, quickest, least expensive and most effective manner, including resort to alternative modes of dispute resolution.

The NLRC will simultaneously celebrate on November 6-10, 2006 the Labor Relations Week, its 32<sup>nd</sup> Founding Anniversary and the opening activity of the month long celebration of Pagpapamagitan Festival which is facilitated by the NLRC-CMC in celebration of its two (2) years of operations in the Agency, and the formal turn-over by Acting Chairman Raul T. Aquino of the leadership of the NLRC to Chairman Nograles. The celebration will be highlighted by these activities: Booths showcasing the NLRC Services; photo exhibit on the NLRC leaders past and present and significant activities; NALAI, NLRCEA and other employees' meeting with the new Chairman; Initial can conference between NLRCEA and Management panels; soft launching of the NLRC ECMS and NLRC Conciliation and Mediation of Appealed cases and the NLRC Family day for work live balance which is scheduled on 10 November 2006. To join the NLRC in these celebration, the Committee headed by Commissioner Victoriano R. Calaycay have invited DOLE Officials, retired Commissioners and Labor Arbiters, Heads of Workers and Employers Organizations and Non-government organizations and local officials to grace the events.