

Philippines: Northern Mindanao workers seek P413-increase in daily wages

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The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines's petition, if approved, will bring minimum wage in Northern Mindanao to more than P700 a day

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY, Philippines – Organized workers on Tuesday, March 29, submitted a petition for a P413-increase in the daily minimum wage in Northern Mindanao before the Regional Wages and Productivity Board (RTWPB).

The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines's petition, if approved, would bring minimum wages in the region to more than P700 a day.

The current minimum wage in Northern Mindanao is P365. The region covers the cities of Cagayan de Oro, Iligan, Malaybalay, Valencia, Gingoog, El Salvador, Ozamiz, Oroquieta, Tangub, and the provinces of Misamis Oriental, Misamis Occidental, Bukidnon, Lanao del Norte, and Camiguin.

"Our wages are ridiculously low and are now setting the stage for massive malnutrition and hunger," said TUCP president Raymond Democrito Mendoza in a statement.

TUCP said the daily minimum wage in the region was based on the costs of living nearly four years ago.

The daily minimum wage in the region saw its last increase in 2018 when the RTWPB approved a P27-increase.

The union found allies in the senatorial candidates of presidential bet Manila Mayor Isko Moreno who joined calls for wage increases not only in Northern Mindanao but throughout the country.

Aksyon Demokratiko senatorial bet and Maranao civic leader Samira Gutoc said wage increases were long overdue given how workers were badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Everybody wants that (wage increase). We need to know if the current minimum wage is a liveable wage. We need to know if people can still live with the current wage," said another candidate, Carl Balita.

Balita said the government should make sure that wages are "proportionate" and enough to make families survive, while his fellow senatorial candidate Jopet Singson added that any increase should be "across-the-board and the same" across the country.

Another, former Agrarian Reform secretary John Castriciones said, "This is a vicious cycle. It is a never-ending story. This should be a joint effort. There should be tripartite cooperation between the government, the private sectors, and the enterprise" to help the workers.

He said the prices of basic commodities should also be kept low at the same time.

“This problem cannot be solved by just raising one aspect (wage) because it will just create more problems,” Castriciones said.

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