



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PRESS RELEASE

16 July 2009

PUNO BACK TO WORK AT DILG

Secretary Ronnie Puno of the Department of the Interior and Local Government yesterday hit the ground running upon his return to the DILG as he fired off a series of directives to key officials on the implementation of the agency's priority programs for the rest of the year, including the gun amnesty program prior to the 2010 elections.

Puno also announced in a press briefing that he will also meet with Secretary Gilbert Teodoro of the Department of Defense (DND) and, later, with Sulu Gov, Abdusakur Tan to discuss how the government will intensify its all-out campaign to wipe out kidnappings perpetrated by extremist groups in the South.

In a meeting with DILG officials prior to the media conference, he said the Department will step up the implementation of its programs meant to further empower local government units (LGUs) such as its road improvement project in tandem with the Australian government; the reorganization or revitalization of the regional, provincial, city, municipal and barangay Peace and Order Councils; and the gun amnesty program.

These projects also include, he said, the distribution of new patrol cars to the Philippine National Police (PNP), 100 firetrucks to the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and 150 prisoners' vans for the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP).

"The rumors of my physical and political demise have been greatly exaggerated," Puno said in jest in announcing his return to the Department after a two-week personal leave.

Puno had his schedule full on the first day of his return to the Department as he met with key DILG officials in the morning; held a press briefing; and graced the launching of the Department's Citizen's Charter in compliance with the Anti-Red Tape Law before proceeding to Ozamiz City, where he was scheduled to meet with its local chief executives and attend the City's 61st Charter Anniversary.

From Ozamiz City, Puno will proceed to Cotabato City to join the Cabinet meeting scheduled there today (Friday).

Puno told DILG officials and later the media that he went on a two-week leave to the United States to attend her youngest daughter Tami's wedding in San Francisco.

After the wedding, Puno said he proceeded to Washington to meet with his other daughter and drove two hours to West Virginia to meet with a new friend—Magnus Fortis—not the running back of the Washington Redskins football team—but a rare chocolate Labrador that he presented to the media during his press briefing.

.Puno made it clear that he knew about the appointment of Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane as officer-in-charge of the DILG while he was on leave, recalling that President Arroyo had called him up when he was in San Francisco to ask about his opinion about her appointment of Ebdane as OIC in the wake of the bombings that have been taking place in Mindanao and the discovery of an explosive device inside the premises of the Department of Agriculture central office in Quezon City.

“I told the President it was a good idea to appoint Secretary Ebdane,” Puno said.

Puno said he and Ebdane were “kindred spirits” insofar as national security and peace and order matters were concerned, and that unknown to many, they were the “two closest people” in the Cabinet.

Puno left for the US last June 27 and attended her daughter Tami's wedding on July 4.

He then proceeded to Washington and stayed there for five days before returning to Manila on July 13.