

Dar's Visayas leg visit concludes with "Pasasalamat" in Region 8

TACLOBAN CITY, LEYTE— Secretary William D. Dar, one of the hardworking and perhaps, undisputed top performing cabinet members of the Duterte Administration concluded his 3-day visit in the Visayas Regions thru a special gathering dubbed as "Pasasalamat" (thanksgiving) with agency's development partners and stakeholders held yesterday (Dec.9) at The Oriental Leyte in Palo, this province.

The DA Chief, who is internationally renowned as a Filipino horticulturist and servant leader, crossed the borders of Regions 6, 7 and 8 to complete his 3-day Visayas leg visit.

DA-8 Regional Executive Director Angel C. Enriquez said that in this recent Visayas-wide barnstorming of the Secretary, the DA-8 Family feted him with a unique kind of event as an expression of our gratitude to his brand of leadership. "We initiated the event to primarily honor and recognize the role of all stakeholders in ensuring food security amidst the Covid-19 pandemic," RED Enriquez further stated.

An expeditious implementation of the ALPAS Kontra Covid-19 or the AGRI-4Ps commonly known as Plant, Plant, Plant Program was vigorously pursued to ensure a food-secure Philippines in this crucial time of health emergency. This is in line with his basic tenets that if no action is done, "the threat of hunger is as real as the threat of the virus."

Inspired by the Secretary's principle, the Covid-19 pandemic was never considered a hindrance by the key development partners and stakeholders who faced the problems head on. This created a synergical effect enabling the agri-fishery sector to remarkably overcome the challenges, thereby spurring the region's GVA growth of 2.1% as cited by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

Verily, the Plant, Plant, Plant Program has gained traction and for the past 9 months, became a buzzword not only at the grassroots level, but also in many areas where Urban Agriculture became widespread.

Hence, with Secretary Dar's visit to Eastern Visayas, a selected number of program partners and beneficiaries were treated with a rare kind of celebration

Aside from awarding various agri-fishery interventions to the 6 provinces under the Bayanihan 2 amounting to more than Php402 million this year, Secretary Dar also committed more than half a billion-peso worth of projects for 2021.

Also, he spearheaded the turn-over of millions worth of cash and food subsidies to an initial 15 invited marginalized coconut and corn farmers, including fisherfolk. More of similar distribution will follow in the succeeding days with PCA, BFAR, DA in coordination with DBP and conduit financing entities.

In all 3 regions in the Visayas, a series of consultation-dialogues with representatives from the academe, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, religious organizations and LGUs were conducted.

Dar said he is grateful that the solid collaboration between the DA, PLGUs, MLGUs, public and private sectors in implementing the AGRI-4Ps is bearing fruitful results in Eastern Visayas.

"Hunger and poverty elimination are priorities of the Duterte administration. Hence, a strong and sustained partnership with you as our valued stakeholders, shld continue and we should make it even better in 2021 " he added.

The event practically served as the launching pad for the following projects:

- Cash and Food Subsidy for marginal farmers and fisherfolk;
- Milk Feeding Program of Southern Leyte Schools Division;
- Chicken and Goat Multiplier Farm with UEP and BIPSU.

Among the local luminaries who graced the event include: RDC 8 Chair and Leyte Governor Dominico Leopoldo Petilla; Biliran Governor Rogelio Espina; Southern Leyte Governor Damian Mercado; Congressman Florencio "Bem" Noel of An Waray Partylist, and representatives of the 3 Samar Provinces; Tacloban City Mayor, as well as heads of DA's attached agencies and bureaus. Development partners such as PIA8 under Regional Director Olive Tiu and the religious sector represented by I-konek Klesia under Rev. Pastor Noli Opiniano were also cited and given due recognition during the program.

It also highlighted the awarding of Php 1million cash prize to Culaba, Biliran as Outstanding Municipality for the 2019 Rice Achievers Awards (RAA).
