

# GMA orders release of P10,000 Christmas gift for workers

By PAOLO ROMERO

Government workers, including contractuales, will each receive a P10,000 productivity bonus this Christmas, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya announced yesterday.

Andaya said the bonus for the estimated 1.1 million government employees would cost the government a total of P11 billion.

The productivity bonus is

on top of the P5,000 Christmas gift released to them earlier this month.

"I have been authorized by the President to end all water

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cooler gossip, lunchtime talk, powder room chitchats, evening novenas on what will be this year's yearend productivity bonus. You can now tell your godchildren and neighborhood creditors that it could be up to P10,000," Andaya said in his speech at the Philippine Government Employees Association National Assembly in Malacañang.

He said of the P10,000, P7,000 will come from the national government while P3,000 will come from savings of the concerned agencies.

"I have been told that practically all national government agencies have a reservoir of savings it can dip into so the P10,000 is more or less assured," Andaya said.

To qualify for the performance bonus, the employee must be in service for at least four months. Recipients are permanent and temporary employees, contractals and casuals who are paid out of the personal services budget of the department or agency they are working in.

The budget chief also gave assurance that the Senate is expected to ratify Joint Congressional Resolution 24 earlier approved by the House of Representatives that would increase the pay of public servants under the Salary Standardization Law 3 (SSL3).

He said the measure is funded in the proposed P1.415-trillion national budget for 2009 that is still being deliberated in the Senate.

He allayed fears that Congress might pass the budget but would not act on the resolution when it is supposed to take effect in July.

"My friends, I don't want to telegraph our punches but let me assure you that we have prepared for that contingency. The long and short of which is that the executive has residual powers in its legal arsenal it can invoke in issuing an executive fiat authorizing the salary hikes," Andaya said.

"When it comes to ameliorating your pay, no one should question our resolve," he said.