

Philippines: Labor coalition rejects outright privatization of NAIA and Edsa Busway

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The NAGKAISA Labor Coalition expressed opposition to customized proposals to privatize everything like the Ninoy Aquino International Airport and the EDSA busway carousel.

“We believe that privatization is not a panacea or an all-out solution to our public transportation problems, and we don’t subscribe to the idea that a privatized transport system is a global standard,” emphasized Nagkaisa Chair Atty. Sonny Matula, saying the state of mass transport systems even in advanced economies remain publicly run and efficiently managed.

The labor leader said workers won’t simply accept the template of outright privatization as cure to mismanagement, corruption, and bad governance by those in power, and to counter reports that DOTR’s proposal to privatize the Edsa Busway has the support of both business groups and trade unions.

The government, he stressed, must retain control of our international airports, and may opt to consider other models like cooperatives for the operation of the EDSA busway carousel.

“There are many examples of successful public transportation systems and airports around the world that are owned and controlled by the state, such as those in Japan, Switzerland, Germany, Singapore, and Canada. Even the US hasn’t embraced privatization for running its 5,000 public airports, while our neighbor Hong Kong maintains the world’s best in mass transport system. These systems and airports provide affordable and efficient transportation options for the public, while also serving as a vital source of public income and employment,” said Matula.

As in the case of the Edsa Busway carousel, the group said the free ride was very beneficial to the working people in terms of saved income and travel time. “Transforming the system into a cooperative- run busway or tramway may create alternative economy, as well as synergy to both the coop workers and the commuting public than the typical ‘seller-buyer’ relationship under the privately-run utilities that we had over the past several decades,” added Matula.

Matula said the coalition is raising this point as regular dialogues with the government on important policies and programs is part of Nagkaisa’s 5-Point Labor Agenda. The others include wage hike and reforms in the country’s wage-fixing mechanisms, end to endo and the full exercise of trade union rights.

“We want the government to avoid fixation with privatization as there are other alternatives to it, especially when mechanisms for genuine people’s participation in policy decisions are activated. We believe that by working together, we can find a solution that benefits everyone, rather than just select tycoons,” said Matula.

NAGKAISA urges the government to listen to the concerns of the people and to prioritize the needs of the public over private interests.

“We stand with the working class and the people in calling for an efficient and equitable transportation system that serves the needs of all Filipinos. What the country needs is a strong, accountable, comprehensive, responsive, effective, and democratic public services,” concluded Matula.

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NAGKAISA LABOR COALITION

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<https://partidongmanggagawa2001.blogspot.com>