

Atalig Says Transpac Is 'Dead'; Employees Unpaid

SAIPAN (COM) - Rep. Felipe Q. Atalig of the Marianas called attention this weekend to the plight of employees of the Trust Territory's exclusive shipping company, Transpacific Lines Inc., which was declared bankrupt last week.

"It is a fact that financially speaking, the company is dead," he said. "It is also another fact that our government and the administering authority have the obligation to protect the rights and welfare of our citizens."

Atalig said in a speech in the

house of representatives that Transpac employees were informed by the government and by the receiver for the company that there were no assurances they would be paid.

"Not only does this affect those employees of Transpac who work here on Saipan and other districts, but it also affects those crewmembers presently aboard the M/V Lotte Reith, on her way to the western districts of Yap and Palau," he said.

Reminding the congress that its report on Transpac by the

resources and development committees urged the High Commissioner to take positive steps to protect and find employment for all Micronesian employees of the company, Atalig said it does not matter if, technically speaking, the franchise agreement has not yet been terminated.

While he said he appreciates the government's action of providing financial assistance to cover back debts owed by Transpac so the owners of the Lotte Reith would not auction off the ship's \$2 million in cargo, Atalig said he hopes the administration would act quickly to help Transpac's employees.