

# Senate OKs more tests on Jocjoc

by AUREA CALICA  
Philstar.com

THE Senate is willing to give former agriculture undersecretary Jocelyn "Jocjoc" Bolante a few more days to finish all necessary medical tests at St. Luke's Medical Center (SLMC) in Quezon City.

Senate Sergeant-at-arms Jose Balajadia Jr. said Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. asked the SLMC last October 30 to provide a medical bulletin after conducting the examination on Bolante.

A Senate medical team will also be sent to St. Luke's to check on Bolante, Balajadia said, adding that he thought three days would be enough to finish the tests but realized it would be best to listen to the advise of the doctors.

He said there should be no reason to worry that Bolante might escape again because he was being guarded by Senate security personnel 24 hours a day.

He maintained that allowing Bolante to proceed to the hospital instead of the Senate was a judgment call on their part.

Bolante arrived last Tuesday night, October 28, from the United States after authorities there denied his request for political asylum.

He fled the country in 2006 after he was subpoenaed and ordered arrested by the Senate for failing to attend hearings.

Several senators urged Villar to call a caucus and immediately set the hearing on the fertilizer fund scam with Bolante as resource

person.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson said he could not understand why Villar was not calling a caucus and had also not been eager to find out the real condition of Bolante from the SLMC.

## 'Halloween protest'

On October 31, student activists haunted Bolante in a "Halloween protest" at the SLMC.

Members of Anakbayan and the League of Filipino Students (LFS) attempted to stage their protest in front of the hospital where Bolante is confined by climbing a fence as they urged Bolante to get out to face the public and tell the truth about the P728-million fertilizer fund scam.

"The fertilizer scam (is the) skeleton in Jocjoc's closet so he should tell the truth," pointed out Vencer Cisostomo, LFS national chairman.

One of the students wore a costume similar to that of a Grim Reaper, while others chanted and held placards that said "Liars go to hell."

Dr. Romeo Saavedra, Bolante's doctor for the last 15 years, earlier announced that his patient is now in "stable condition," although the hardening of the blood vessels to his heart needs further checkup.

Saavedra, a cardiologist who was part of the team that attended to First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo during his major heart surgery in April 2007, explained that it is normal for people after the age of 50 to have hardening of blood vessels, especially if he or she has a history of high cholesterol and

hypertension.

He said that over the years, 57-year-old Bolante has been complaining of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

He said Bolante's general body weakness could be due to his lack of sleep and weight loss. He said Bolante told him that he was not able to sleep for 34 hours before his arrival in the country last Oct. 28.

Saavedra claimed that Bolante's wife called him about an hour before the arrival of Bolante at the SLMC and told him about the condition of her husband.

Also yesterday, Vice President Noli De Castro showed up at the SLMC past 3 p.m. but only to visit his doctor and not Bolante.

In a chance interview with reporters, De Castro said he was at the hospital to have his regular check-up with his "doc-doc," instead of "Joc-joc".

"Sa doc-doc ako, papa-check up regular sa lalamunan," De Castro said in jest.

## 'Just malingering'

Former Armed Forces chief of staff Fortunato Abat said that Bolante is just "malingering" when he complained of chest pains upon his arrival at the airport.

He told reporters during the weekly Balitaan sa Rembrandt Hotel in Quezon City that in the military, "malingering" is an offense subject to punishment, depending on the commanding officer.

Abat also expressed concern that the Senate probe against Bolante was already overtaken by events because the Office of the Ombudsman had already taken over the case. ■

INSTEAD OF SOWING INSTABILITY

## Just pick 2010 bet, bishops told

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ  
Inquirer.net

MANILA - Instead of "sowing political instability" by calling for a change in government, the country's bishops should start grooming its presidential standard bearer in 2010, said Speaker Prospero Nograles.

Nograles offered this unsolicited advice to some leaders of the Catholic Church, who have called for a new form of government.

In a statement titled "Corruption: A Social and Moral Cancer," the bishops, led by Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines president Angel Lagdameo, said they were standing by their call "to form a new government now" because of the allegedly rampant corruption in the Arroyo administration.

But Nograles stressed that "the best way to establish the so-called new government is through an election."

"Election is just around the corner so I don't see the logic why some of our Church leaders are making such statements," he said.

"They can even campaign in

2010 for their favored presidential candidate."

Nograles lamented that while other countries were working to shield themselves from the financial crisis, some sectors "still find time to sow the seeds of political instability."

"This is the worst of times to be making such political statements, especially coming from the leaders of the Church. The global financial threat is already sending some nations into a near state of recession and the Philippines can become even more vulnerable because of relentless political bickering," he said.

He also branded as "mere speculation" claims that Charter change was being pushed in Congress to extend the term of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

The measures pending in the House of Representatives do not speak about term extension for the President, Nograles said.

"I'm really puzzled how and why they are insisting that we want to extend the term of the President. As far as the House is concerned there is no single proposal which pushes for the term extension of the President," he said. ■

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