

# OPINION & FEATURES

## Beyond poll automation

**F**INALLY, a special budget has been signed into law for poll automation in 2010. Not a hybrid type—automated in most parts of the country, manual in a few areas... such as Maguindanao, perhaps? The greatest fear of those who opposed hybrid elections was that manual voting would be retained in selected areas so that those not yet familiar with manipulating automated voting could still cheat the old way. The fear went both ways, with some quarters believing that it would be easier to cheat using vote counting machines.

Regardless of where one stands on poll automation, concerns about electoral fraud in 2010 persist. That fear can be useful if it increases public vigilance against cheating. Public expectations are unusually high that the general elections next year will herald long-awaited reforms. The Commission on Elections, working with electoral watchdogs and other concerned groups, should do its best not to frustrate those expectations.

The other day President Arroyo signed into law the supplemental budget for poll automation. Palace officials said she wanted to make modern elections part of her legacy. The enactment of the supplemental budget lifts the last barrier to the holding of fully automated elections. The next step is to ensure that the new system lives up to its promise of clean and orderly elections and a quick vote count.

Problems can start right at the procurement of

vote counting machines. The nation is still stuck with P1.2 billion worth of automated counting machines, all delivered and fully paid for, that are deteriorating, unused, in a rented warehouse. For 2010, the bidding and awarding of the contract for the machines must be aboveboard. The machines must then be tested for glitches and protected against hacking and tampering.

It will take more than voting machines to make elections credible. The Comelec must clean up voters' lists. It must level the playing field for all candidates by enforcing elections laws on campaign spending and premature campaigning. Law enforcement authorities must also do their part by preventing poll-related violence and harassment of voters. There are many ways of undermining the true will of the electorate. Poll automation is just one step in making the 2010 elections credible. (Philstar.com)

### EDITORIAL



Photo courtesy of Philstar.com

## Why EDSA keeps coming back

**H**UNGARIAN Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany has stunned his country by announcing his resignation amid the tumbling popularity of his ruling socialist party battered by the worst financial crisis Hungary faced since the end of communism nearly 20 years ago.

In a rare moment of candor for any beleaguered national leader, Gyurcsany told his party congress last March 21 that he was stepping down because he had become an "obstacle" to reforms needed to pull Hungary out of its financial crisis.

"I'm being told that I myself am the obstacle to the cooperation and stable government majority needed to implement changes," Gyurcsany said. "If this is so, I will eliminate this obstacle."

He said he was keeping a pledge he made last year to change the leadership if the party's popularity failed to recover. He said a year had passed and "support for us has not grown. On the contrary, it has diminished." He is to officially notify parliament on March 23 of his decision.

Gyurcsany said his reputation was badly damaged when state radio in 2006 broadcast a speech he made at a party meeting in which he admitted lying about the state of the economy to win elections a few months earlier.

The broadcast sparked weeks of protests and riots that left hundreds injured.

Gyurcsany has been in power since 2004, winning reelection in 2006 to become the first Hungarian premier since the end of communism in 1989 to hold on to power.

#### Not in RP's tradition

The stand-down is not expected to touch off a contagious wave of resignations in other political systems, especially ours, where a sitting regime has been plagued by an irrevocable slump of negative public satisfaction ratings since 2005, a year after President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo was elected to a new term amid widespread charges that she had cheated the 2004 election.

Gyurcsany's resignation is not likely to shame the Arroyo administration into stepping down despite public mass protests demanding her resignation since 2005.

It is not in our political tradition to be sensitive to opinion polls showing appalling public disapproval. The opposite effect has been to cause the government to stonewall.

By contrast, the Hungarian prime minister owned responsibility for the troubles facing the ruling socialist-led coalition and their failure to pass economic reforms rather than to blame the political opposition and external forces driving the global recession.

The 45-year-old Gyurcsany successfully steered his coalition to become the first Hungarian government to be elected to a second term since democratic elections were restored in 1990.



ANALYSIS  
Amando Doronilla

#### Popularity rating

Hungary has been badly hit by the global financial crisis and has suffered more than most former Eastern bloc nations, despite having had one of the most dynamic socialist economies at the time of communism's collapse. The economy is expected to shrink by as much as 5 percent in 2009.

Gyurcsany has ruled a minority government since the Free Democrats quit the governing coalition last year.

He won a full term outright in April 2006 but was badly damaged by the revelations about his having lied about the state of the economy.

A poll released last week showed his popularity stood at 18 percent—the lowest ever for a prime minister since Hungary's return to democracy, but nothing compared with the negative net satisfaction ratings of the Arroyo administration since 2005.

Gyurcsany won a confidence vote in parliament in October 2006 amid turbulence over his admission that he lied to voters in the April 2006 election campaign.

In a *mea culpa*, he apologized for lying to them. As many as 50,000 people gathered in front of parliament to demand that he quit.

Gyurcsany apologized for not facing up to economic realities at the general election.

He and his government campaigned on tax cuts but promptly put taxes up after being voted in, in an effort to reduce a budget deficit that had ballooned to 10 percent—the biggest in the European Union.

"We avoided facing up to reality, we lacked courage and we tried to bypass the most honest, simplest answers. If an apology is needed for anything, then it is for this. I apologize," he said.

#### EDSA keeps coming back

Gyurcsany made the admission after Hungarian radio played a tape of a meeting with the socialist MPs a few weeks after the election. He told the MPs his "boneheaded" government failed to introduce any real policies.

He said harsh economic reforms were needed.

"There is not much choice. There is not, because we screwed up. Not a little, a lot. No European country has done something as boneheaded as we have. Evidently, we lied throughout the last year-and-a-half, two years," he said.

"You cannot quote any significant government measure we can be proud of, other than at the end we managed to bring the government back from the brink. Nothing. If we have to give account to the country about what we did for four years, then what do we say?"

Gyurcsany paid a heavy price for his candor. He lost his office.

Have we ever heard of any Filipino politician of consequence making this kind of *mea culpa*? Or stepping down?

This is why we are stuck with them. This is why we need an EDSA to get rid of them—not elections. This is why EDSA keeps coming back. (Inquirer.net)

## Graduation—a time of soaring expectations and crushing realities

**O**UR graduates today are about to experience a new challenge in life.

As they are about to embark into a new world, they will also have to go through the harsh realities of what this economic crisis has brought about. In the Philippines, the recent data of 'job mismatch' have also added to the anxiety of these young adults.

To the Graduates: Our country needs you to be strong, determined and dedicated. Your idealism and energy should bring about new ideas to the development of our country. Having fear to take the first step or putting yourselves down right away without even trying will not help. If you have already given up and told yourselves that nothing good will happen to this country—what is the use? With such an attitude, you have already lost the battle.

You are the youth who will bring back that change to our motherland. You should be determined to do your best in whatever field you have chosen to help our country get out from the terrible struggle—be it political, social or economical.

All it will take is for all of us to understand what this country is and what this country must become. The Philippines is our country, there is still a lot to be done with it. We must endear it to our hearts and honor it. While all of us must continue to work toward the dawn of a new day, we should do our part in nation building. We should not leave everything to the politicians—they will continually corrupt our country and use up our taxes for personal gain. We must not allow them to continue their plight to exploit the Filipino people and this archipelago.

Building the Philippines is our duty. From this day forward, it is your challenge, as it will be so for all Filipinos.

The work ahead is difficult. The choices we will face are complex. But I am confident that within each Filipino is a warrior—brave and courageous. He will always "fight for the right without question or doubt." Let us change our ways and our direction. We should not be serving ourselves. It is about time we serve our country.

You are the new 'breed' of graduates who are about to take center stage this week. You belong to a 'privileged' generation whose parents have painstakingly paid for your college education. You have had the advantage of using all practical commodities in this hi-tech world and the comforts brought about by this day and age has helped you go through your educational career with ease.

It is sad however, that amidst the advantages you have, many have taken for granted the real essence of developing a good and strong work ethic. When the excitement and the glory of graduation end, you will begin to go through the harsh reality of the real world against the backdrop of a complicated and competitive work environment. That fever of high expectations and sense of entitlement may set in and end up with frustration, anxiety and disappointment. Do not lose hope. Be strong and courageous. Be persistent. Do not give up.

I recently conducted job interviews and noticed that there were many applicants who were over-

### AS A MATTER OF FACT

Sara Soliven De Guzman

confident of themselves. They carried a heavy baggage of false pride. When you start looking for a job, carry a bag of humility and patience.

Remember, it is one thing to be able to graduate and another thing to find a job. These are tough times. Getting a job is not as easy as you think it is—people are losing their jobs. There is no time for games. If you really want a job, buckle up. This is where reality should set in.

Employers are looking for people who exhibit quality. You have got to prove to the company that you are worth the buck in order to be hired. This is a period where companies are trying to get their penny's worth. Competition is very stiff. And once in, be careful, there are many out there who need to be employed. If you do not deliver, you may find yourself out of a job.

This generation, although 'spoiled' as it may seem has learned many tough lessons in the ills and spoils of society. One thing gained is their value to become righteous and selfless. Thanks to the comprehensive crash-course received this school year (from June to March) in our society: The NBN-ZTE Scandal and the Jun Lozada Story; The MV Princess Tragedy and Management of Sulpicio Lines; Joc-Joc Bolante's Medical Refuge and the Fertilizer Scam; The Euro Generals' Experience in Russia; The Ousters of House Speaker Joe De Venecia and Senate President Manny Villar; Abu Sayyaf's Plot for Ransom; The DOJ and Alabang Boys Hysteria; Celso de los Angeles' Legacy Escapade; The World Bank Report; The Mystery Behind the Presidential Pardons: The Release of Ninoy Aquino's Alleged Killers; Child Rapist, Jalosjos; and the Nicole-Smith Story. Clearly, these are true-to-life lessons learned by this generation. Hopefully, with this experience our youth can be able to make better judgments in choosing the good from the bad to bring about changes in our society.

To the graduating students: I wish you to be worthy citizens of this country. Be worthy representatives of our people with the courage of your convictions. Always remember to make sincere judgments of what is right, proper and patriotic, unbiased by any extraneous considerations, influence or pressure—in life.

Theodore Roosevelt once wrote: "It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better, the credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again because there is not effort without error and shortcomings; but who does actually strive to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion, who spends himself in a worthy cause, who at the best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat." (Philstar.com)



Main Office:  
1150 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90017-1904  
Tel: (213) 250-9797 • Fax: (213) 481-0854  
e-mail: info@asianjournalinc.com  
http://www.asianjournal.com

Manila Office:  
Suite 208, The Manila Bank Corp., Bldg.  
6772 Ayala Ave., Makati City 1226  
Tel.: (632) 893-1720 • Fax: (632) 813-8746

New York and New Jersey:  
5 Penn Plaza, Ste. 1932, New York, NY 10119  
Tel.: (212) 655-5426 • Fax: (212) 655-9241

2500 Plaza Five, Harborside Financial Center,  
Jersey City, NJ 07311  
Tel.: (201) 484-7249 • Fax: (201) 484-7201

Las Vegas Sales Office:  
3700 W. Desert Inn Road  
Las Vegas, NV 89102  
Tel.: (702) 792-6678 • Fax: (702) 792-6879

**ROGER LAGMAY ORIEL**  
Publisher & Chairman of the Board

**BELLE M. SISON**  
Executive Vice President  
Los Angeles Asian Journal

**MOMAR VISAYA**  
Editor-in-Chief

**SHARON ANN BATHAN**  
Features Editor

**DANTE SAMBLAY**  
Art Director

**CORA MACABAGDAL-ORIEL**  
President & Executive Editor

**MONETTE ADEVA MAGLAYA**  
Senior Vice President  
Los Angeles Asian Journal

**IVY MANALANG**  
Vice President - Marketing

**JOSEPH PERALTA**  
Associate Editor

**MARIA LOURDES HALILI**  
Advertising Editor

**ANDY TECSON / TED TALAG**  
Photographers

**BANDER LAW FIRM, LLP**  
Legal Counsel

### ADVERTISING AND ADVERTORIAL POLICIES

Asian Journal Publications, Inc. ("AJPI") reserves the right to refuse to publish, in its sole and absolute discretion, any advertising and advertorial material submitted for publication by client. ("Client's Material")  
Submission of an advertisement or advertorial to an AJPI sales representative does not constitute a commitment by AJPI to publish a Client's Material. AJPI has the option to correctly classify any Client's Material and to delete objectionable words or phrases.  
Client represents and warrants that a Client's Material does not and will not contain any language or material which is libelous, slanderous or defamatory or invades any rights of privacy or publicity; does not and will not violate or infringe upon, or give rise to any adverse claim with respect to any common law or other right whatsoever (including, without limitation, any copyright, trademark, service mark or contract right) of any person or entity, or violate any other applicable law; and is not the subject of any litigation or claim that might give rise to any litigation.  
Publication of a Client's Material does not constitute an agreement to continue publication.  
Client agrees and covenants to indemnify AJPI and its officers against any and all loss, liability, damage, expenses, cost, charges, claims, actions, causes of action, recoveries, judgments, penalties, including outside attorneys' fees (individually and collectively "Claims") which AJPI may suffer by reason of (1) Client's breach of any of the representations, warranties and agreements herein or (2) any Claims by any third party relating in any way to Client's Material.  
AJPI will not be liable for failure to publish any Client's Material as requested or for more than one incorrect insertion of a Client's Material. In the event of an error, or omission in printing or publication of a Client's Material, AJPI shall be limited to an adjustment for the space occupied by the error, with maximum liability being cancellation of the cost of the first incorrect advertisement or republication of the correct advertisement.  
Under no circumstances shall Asian Publications, Inc. be liable for consequential damages of any kind.

ASIAN JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS, INC. publishes the Los Angeles Asian Journal, published twice a week; the Orange County and Inland Empire Asian Journal, Northern California Asian Journal, Las Vegas Asian Journal and the New York / New Jersey Asian Journal which are published once a week and distributed to Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, Orange Counties, Northern California, Las Vegas and New York and New Jersey respectively.  
Articles published in this paper do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the publisher. Letters to the Editor are welcome. Letters must contain complete name and return address. The materials, however, are subject to editing and revisions.  
Contributions and advertising deadlines are every Mondays and Thursdays. For advertising rates and other information, please call the L.A. office at (213) 250-9797 or the Las Vegas Sales Office at (702) 792-6678 or send us an email at info@asianjournalinc.com