

Escudero fears 'automated cheating' in 2010

by ROY GERSALIA
Inquirer.net

SORSOGON CITY—Senator Francis Escudero raised fears that the Commission on Elections (Comelec) would end up wasting the P11.3-billion budget for the planned computerization of elections in 2010 since it had not fully explained how it would use

the funds.

Escudero, who is being touted as a contender for the presidential race in 2010, said here on Thursday, April 17 that the Comelec has not given the public a clear picture of how the next elections would be held.

"It may be vulnerable. The automated elections may possibly become automated

cheating," he said.

The Bicolano senator also said he got information from the Comelec that data related to the process of counting the votes would first be transmitted to the United States via Internet before the results could get back to the Philippines.

He said this route could be vulnerable to cheating.

Asked if he would really run for president, Escudero was his

usual coy self and said he would first study the political climate and focus first on serving the people as senator.

Escudero will turn 40 in October. Under the Constitution, a presidential candidate must be at least 40 years old.

"I am not saying I won't [run], I'm not saying I will. All I am saying is that the decision will have to be made when I'm fully qualified," Escudero added. ■

National Bureau of Investigation summons Failon helpers

by EDU PUNAY
Philstar.com

THE National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) has summoned the house helpers of news anchor Ted Failon to appear last April 20 at the bureau for questioning regarding the fatal shooting of the broadcaster's wife at their home in Quezon City.

Head agent Arnel Dalumpines, chief of the NBI-Special Task Force, said Failon's driver Glen Polan, houseboy Pacifico Apacible, nanny Wilfreda Bollester and housemaid Carlita Morbos have been invited for questioning.

Dalumpines said the four house helpers would be subjected to polygraph as part of the bureau's joint investigation with the Quezon City Police District (QCPD) of the death of Failon's wife Trinidad Arteche-Etong who was found with a gunshot wound to her head inside a bathroom of their house on No. 27 General Aquino Street, Tierra Pura Subdivision in Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

The QCPD had filed charges of obstruction of justice against Failon, the house helpers, and Trinidad's sister Pamela Arteche.

Police said the house helpers cleaned the bathroom where Trinidad was found while the driver cleaned the Mitsubishi Pajero that was used to transport the victim to hospital. The house helpers claimed that they cleaned the crime scene on their own initiative.

Investigators said Failon might have obstructed justice when he gave limited details to the authorities and refused to surrender his mobile phone.

"We already evaluated their (house helpers) sworn affidavits. We want to talk to them because we need to ask more questions," said Dalumpines.

The NBI official assured the people that the bureau has the capability to reconstruct the crime scene and retrieve physical evidence through the use of high-tech equipment.

"The crime scene is very important. We want to know why was it tampered. Was it intentional or was it done so as not to scare the kid (younger child of the Failons) there as they claimed? We will look into that," said Dalumpines.

"We will invite Ted and the others in the family but at a later date. We have to respect them," Dalumpines explained.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez earlier commented that he believes the cleanup of the crime scene "was not a lapse but could be an intentional act of tampering evidence."

Dalumpines however assured the Failon family that the NBI would look at all possible angles.

"There is no priority in our investigation. In its course, we will pursue angles based on information we gather," he added.

The NBI team visited the house of the Failons at Tierra Pura and the New Era Hospital last Thursday afternoon. Dalumpines has already talked to Failon.

Dalumpines said businessman Delfin Lee, a friend of Failon, would be also invited for questioning. ■

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