

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

'Cha-cha is all noise'

by PAOLO ROMERO
Philstar.com

DAVAO CITY—Sen. Francis Escudero said last April 26 the debate on Charter change (Cha-cha) at the House of Representatives is “all noise” and that there is no chance it would ever be possible before next year’s elections.

“Cha-cha is dead,” he said. “*Ingay na lang iyang ginagawa nila* Louie Villafuerte. It is all noise that they (Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte) are making.”

He said when members of the House resume debates on Cha-cha today, they could face an impasse because of lack of time and lack of numbers.

Escudero said Congress must cope with the increase in the number of votes required to propose amendments to the Constitution, as well as lack of time to introduce those amendments.

“They were short of at least 21 votes before, and now that the number of congressmen has increased, it also means an increase in the required number for Cha-cha,” he said.

Escudero said the Supreme Court decision increasing the number of party-list seats in Congress has brought about the dilemma of lack of numbers.

“If before they failed to reach

the three-fourths of all, the more that there is no reason for them to push Cha-cha because they would have a hard time getting the required number,” he said.

Escudero said Cha-cha Escudero said the Supreme Court would consider two very basic limitations once the issue on Charter change is brought before it.

“The Supreme Court has to also adhere to the limitations—one of which is that there must be a real case of controversy and a real party in interest, one who must stand to lose something,” he said.

Escudero said the Supreme Court is also bound by another limitation that there has to be due process in hearing cases.

It would require so much time for the proponents of Cha-cha, he added.

When debates resume today, sponsors of Resolution 737 led by La Union Rep. Victor Ortega, constitutional amendments committee chairman, are scheduled to answer questions from their peers about the proposed amendments contained in the measure.

The resolution seeks to amend Article XII Sections 2 and 3 of the Constitution to allow 100-

percent foreign participation in the exploitation of natural resources and foreign ownership of land.

At present, foreigners are limited to 40-percent participation and land ownership.

Speaker Prospero Nograles is the principal author of the resolution.

When the House started plenary consideration of the Nograles proposal April 20, the debates centered on whether they can tackle specific amendments without convening Congress into a constituent assembly.

Militant representatives, including Risa Hontiveros-Baraquel of Akbayan and Liza Maza of Gabriela, questioned the legislative process route that Nograles prefers.

There is no such mode for Cha-cha under the Constitution, the two lawmakers said.

Last April 22, at about 7pm, House leaders tried to start the



Sen. Chiz Escudero

debates on the Nograles proposal, but lack of quorum prevented them from doing so.

When a second roll call was made, only 94 members responded, 26 short of the needed quorum.

The 28 newly proclaimed party-list representatives are expected to attend today’s session and witness the Cha-cha debates.

Most of the new House members are administration allies.

GMA urges completion of priority projects

by LEILA SALAVERRIA
Inquirer.net

PRESIDENT Arroyo reiterated her directive to all agencies to speed up completion of priority government programs and projects to ensure the timely and efficient delivery of public services to the people.

Mrs. Arroyo earlier issued Executive Order 789 enhancing project performance, monitoring and evaluation system and reinforcing public-private partnership and collaboration in the monitoring of government projects.

The EO provides a “private sector representative,” heading the steering committee of the Project Performance Monitoring and

Evaluation (Pro-Performance) System (PPS), and the head of the Presidential Management Staff (PMS) as co-chair.

EO 789 also tasks all government television and radio networks to “allot air time for purposes of communicating the status of all projects, including the televised bidding of all departments.”

The PPS is an “integrated monitoring system established to facilitate, evaluate and advocate, and to strategically monitor the implementation of the President’s priority programs and projects.”

“As such, this (PPS) function shall form

part of the mandate of the PMS,” the EO said.

Under Mrs. Arroyo’s directive, the PPS would “provide independent and up-to-date constructive information on the status of project implementation based on physical development performance and quality, financial performance and timeliness; and identify areas, issues and concerns that need to be addressed by lead implementing agencies and/or project management offices.”

Mrs. Arroyo also tasked the PPS to provide the Presidential Anti-Graft Commis-

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Resolution 1109, Villafuerte’s proposal for the House to convene itself into a constituent assembly without the Senate, was filed last week. Aside from Villafuerte, who heads President Arroyo’s Kabalikat ng Malay-

ang Pilipino party, 174 other House members led by Speaker Nograles signed the resolution.

It was sent to the rules committee chaired by Majority Leader Arthur Defensor for further study. ■

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