

Number of displaced workers due to global crisis drops, says NEDA

by IRIS C. GONZALES
Philstar.com

THE number of displaced workers in the Philippines as a result of the global financial crisis went down in April, indicating that the country is slowly recovering from the difficult economic tide, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) director for policy and planning Dennis Arroyo said last May 7.

Arroyo said that the country is already on the road to a "mid recovery" this year.

He expressed optimism that there would be a steady decline in the number of workers displaced from their jobs as the economy starts to recover from the crisis.

Citing data from the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Arroyo said that from April 1 to 15, the number of displaced workers has gone down to 1,026 from 14,512 workers in March.

In February, the number of displaced workers stood at 10,288, slightly lower than the 10,333 workers who were displaced in January, data further showed.

When the crisis hit the Philippines last year, 4,454 workers were displaced, data showed. The number grew to 11,116 in November and then to 11,961 in December.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ralph Recto earlier revealed that the government is addressing the jobs displacement problem through the Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) which is part of the economic resiliency package.

Critics, however, said that the program is not enough to absorb the new labor force entrant estimated at 900,000.

"CLEEPS cannot absorb the more than 900,000 new labor force entrants, on top of the roughly 11,600 permanently retrenched and 38,800 temporarily laid off workers plus the 12,000 displaced overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) since October 2008 when the crisis erupted," IBON Foundation, a non-government think tank said.

Arroyo, nevertheless, is optimistic that jobs displacement would continue to slow down in the second half of the year.

He said the Philippine economy, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP), is likely to grow by four percent this year or within the revised GDP forecast of 3.1 percent to 4.1 percent.

Growth, he said, would come from the expected increase in domestic consumption. ■

NPC choice: Escudero or Legarda; Teodoro out

by LEILA SALAVERRIA & MICHAEL LIM UBAC
Inquirer.net

BLOOD relations do not matter to the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) when it comes to choosing its standard-bearer for the 2010 presidential election.

According to Pangasinan Rep. Mark Cojuangco, the party founded by his father, tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, will make its choice between Senators Francis Escudero and Loren Legarda, both party members.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Cojuangco's cousin and a former NPC member, is not being considered.

"The blood being thicker than water [adage] does not concern the choices for president of our party. Our party has a position. We have two viable candidates; we believe they are 'winnable,' and we will be pushing them," Cojuangco said at the *Serye* forum.

He said he respected Teodoro's dreams, but added that the NPC had a dream of its own—to field either of the two senators, who, he pointed out, were hardworking, capable, with no political baggage, and having the best intentions for the country.

Teodoro had earlier announced his intention to seek the presidency. The ruling Lakas political party is considering him as one of its possible standard-bearers.

In suspense
Cojuangco said the NPC was in

suspense because Senators Legarda and Escudero would have to make a hard decision when the deadline for filing the certificates of candidacy draws near.

The survey ratings will play a part in the party's own choice for president and vice president, he said.

Asked about Teodoro's departure from the NPC, Cojuangco said what he knew was only what he had heard or read in the media—that the defense secretary had resigned his membership or taken a leave of absence from the party.

Cojuangco said he was saddened by the departure of Teodoro, whom he described as a very capable person and an asset to the party.

But the NPC has other very capable members as well, he said.

He also said Teodoro could return to the party, "but not as a presidential candidate."

"We are sure that we only have two candidates," he said.

Teodoro, who also chairs the National Disaster Coordinating Council, was criticized for the lengthy infomercial on disaster preparedness that was aired during the widely watched boxing bout between Manny Pacquiao and Ricky Hatton.

To charges that he was trying to go high-profile in preparation for his 2010 campaign, Teodoro said public funds were not used



Senator Loren Legarda



Senator Francis Escudero

in the production of the infomercial.

Who'll slide down?

With Teodoro out of the picture, the NPC's two presidential aspirants can now settle among themselves who will become the party's standard-bearer.

Legarda told editors and reporters that she was open to talks with Escudero to prevent the NPC from being polarized.

"We haven't talked about who will slide down [to vice president]. We should talk among ourselves to spare the party from problems," she said.

Asked if she needed Danding Cojuangco's blessings to run for president, Legarda said: "Of course, that's greatly needed, but in the end, it's the whole party that will decide."

She said that while other presidential aspirants were so engrossed in politicking this early, she wanted to focus more on legislation and programs that would

uplift the lives of poor Filipinos.

"The presidency is a necessary platform to pursue my humanitarian work," said Legarda, whose advocacy includes the environment and the rights of women and children.

She said the failure of opposition leaders to come together and select a common standard-bearer was the only thing hindering her from announcing her candidacy.

Contenders

The administration has only one popular presidential aspirant—Vice President Noli de Castro, who has consistently topped recent surveys on presidential preferences.

The rest of the aspirants are in the opposition—Legarda, Escudero and Sen. Manuel Villar (whose ratings are statistically the same in most of the surveys), former President Joseph Estrada and Senators Panfilo Lacson and

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