

## Defensor to drop perjury rap against Lozada

by TINA SANTOS  
Inquirer.net



Rodolfo 'Jun' Lozada Jr.

JUDGE Jorge Emmanuel Lorredo was so elated that Michael "Mike" Defensor was a no-show at a pretrial hearing last May 28 that he asked the people in his courtroom to say a thanksgiving prayer.

Charging that he is unlikely to get a fair judgment, Defensor, former chief of staff of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, ex-

pressed his intention to withdraw the perjury case he had filed against whistle-blower Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada Jr.

Defensor filed a perjury case against Lozada for claiming that Defensor had forced him to lie about being kidnapped upon his arrival at the Manila airport from Hong Kong in February 2008 to prevent him from testifying at a

Senate hearing on the aborted \$329-million NBN-ZTE deal.

"I am no longer interested in pursuing the case," Defensor said in a letter to the Manila Metropolitan Trial Court judge.

"While I am very much determined to seek relief for the criminal acts committed by Mr. Jun Lozada that caused serious injury upon my person, I feel that I may not be able to obtain impartial justice," he said.

### 'Bias' for accused

He said that a "cursory reading of the orders" issued by the court would show Lorredo's "bias in favor of the accused."

Defensor said he would not be able to attend hearings while his lawyers prepare to withdraw his complaint against Lozada.

He lamented that his perjury complaint was being misconstrued as a harassment suit just because of his "presumed close relationship" with Ms Arroyo.

"It is a plain, meritorious and legitimate action seeking relief for the wrong done upon me and my family," he said.

Lorredo said that since he could not dismiss the case merely on the basis of a letter, he set the trial proper for June 11.

### Personal confirmation

The judge hoped that Defensor would attend the hearing so he could personally confirm his intention not to pursue the case.

"Until he confirms that he is

indeed withdrawing the complaint, there is always the possibility that the case would continue or be revived. It's like a Damocles sword is always hanging over Lozada's head," he said.

Lozada regarded the withdrawal of the case as a "victory of the people."

However, Lozada's lawyers are not satisfied with Defensor's letter, which one of them even described as "very ambiguous" and "doublespeak."

"This case is not yet considered closed just because he sent a letter signifying his intention to withdraw the complaint. He should formally withdraw it under oath," one lawyer said.

### 'Let us pray'

Lorredo earlier issued an order asking Defensor and Lozada to amicably settle the case.

Upon receiving Defensor's letter, Lorredo asked those in the courtroom to say a thanksgiving prayer, saying Defensor seemed to have listened to his appeal to withdraw the perjury case against Lozada.

"Let us pray for Jun Lozada, his family and the father of Mike Defensor who advised him to withdraw the complaint," the judge said.

Lorredo earlier said that the Palace was trying to pressure him to inhibit himself from the perjury case. He, however, refused to name the supposed Malacañang emissary. ■

## President congratulates Director Mendoza



Filipino film director Brillante Mendoza, right, poses with his Best Director award for the film 'Kinatay,' with American director Terry Gilliam during the 62nd International Film Festival in Cannes, France, Sunday, May 24. AP photo

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has extended her heartfelt congratulations to Brillante Mendoza for having won the best Director Award at the 62nd Cannes Film Festivals for his movie *Kinatay*.

"Being the first Filipino to have won such an award obviously makes Director Mendoza one of the best filmmakers of our time," the President said.

"Director Mendoza's winning movie depicts social realities and serves as an eye-opener for moral recovery and social transformation which my Administration has been pursuing even early on my Presidency," she said.

The President stressed that Director Mendoza's extraordinary feat brings pride to every Filipino and will be an inspiration to our filmmakers to strive harder for global recognition.

"His accomplishment and those of our other artists in the various disciplines who have been raking in honors for the country attest to the our people's wealth of talents that enable us to withstand and overcome the challenges of our times," the President added. (PND)

## RP economy 'teetering toward recession'

Grows by only 0.4 percent in Q1

by RONNEL DOMINGO  
Inquirer.net

THE country's economy is "teetering toward a recession" with first quarter output pegged at 0.4 percent due to the global financial crisis, the National Statistical Coordination Board said last May 28.

Seasonally adjusted, the gross domestic product for the first quarter contracted by 2.3 percent, the country's lowest in 20 years.

"The threat of recession is all too real," NSCB Secretary General Romulo Virola said in a briefing last May 28.

"Historic declines in manufacturing and trade sent the economy into hiccups," added Virola, senior official of the economic planning ministry.

Industrial output fell 2.1 percent.

"The Philippine economy is now teetering into recession," he said.

He said the expected growth of 0.4 percent for the whole year is far below government's earlier revised forecast of up to 4.0 percent.

Socio-economic Planning Secretary Ralph Recto, for his part, said the government was now less confident of meeting a 2009 growth target of 3.1-4.1 percent, but did not give details.

He however said he expected the economy "to stay afloat" during the year.

Recto suggested an easier monetary policy will help support growth in the Philippine economy.

"Loosening monetary policy will help clearly," Recto told reporters.

The Philippine central bank will hold a policy meeting later on Thursday and the market expects a cut of at least 25 basis points to 4.25 percent for the overnight borrowing rate, a fresh 17-year low.

The policy announcement is expected shortly after 0800 GMT. ■

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