

Ramos says he'll never meet with Estrada

MANILA - There won't be any meeting between former Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Joseph Estrada after all. Ramos Wednesday flatly denied reports that he would sit down for a dialogue with his successor as both administration and the opposition camp prepare for the May 2010 presidential elections. "No such meeting is taking place," he tersely said in a statement. Ramos, now the chair emeritus of the new Lakas Kampi CMD administration party, declared that he would never meet with Estrada

despite constant overtures by some camps. "The meeting with Erap (Estrada's moniker) has been brought up to me by some people over the past years, but I neither entertained nor encouraged them to pursue the matter. That has always been my position and it remains the same to this date," he said. Ed Malay, coordinator for Ramos, had earlier told the Inquirer that a meeting between the two former leaders would happen anytime soon, and this would impact on the merged party. Ramos said he did not authorize Malay to issue the statement. (*Inquirer.net*)

House okays 5-year extension of CARP

MANILA - The House of Representatives approved on June 3 the five-year extension of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) until 2014, amid protests and lightning rallies staged by militant farmers who destroyed the north gate of the Batasan Complex in Quezon City. Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, one of the main authors of House Bill 4077, made numerous amendments to the original measure, which included, among others, the involvement of farmers who will have "greater control of farm gate prices and easier access to credit."

Joint Resolution 19 of the Senate and the House until June 30 this year. The joint resolution only extended the LAD (land acquisition and distribution) component of CARP until June 2009 without including the compulsory acquisition of the remaining 1.3 million hectares of private agricultural lands. Another amendment was that "prioritization of coverage shall not be necessary, and that the modes of acquisition shall be limited to voluntary offer to sell and compulsory acquisition." The compulsory acquisition provision was restored. Other salient features include the allocation of P100 billion for land acquisition and distribution and other funding requirements

of CARP and the allocation of "30 percent appropriations for support services to liberalized terms on agricultural credit facilities. Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman said his department still has about 1.3 million hectares to cover under the CARP, which is estimated to benefit around 700,000 farmers nationwide. "We have actually increased our annual LAD target" from 100,000 hectares to 130,000 hectares since 2005, he said. Pangandaman said as of June 3, the Department of Agrarian Reform has acquired and distributed around 7.2 million hectares of private and public agricultural lands. (*Philstar.com*)



DE LA SWINE. Posters about swine flu and how to prevent its spread is on display at De La Salle University as an employee walks by Thursday, June 4 in Manila, after classes were suspended when one of its student was tested positive of the said virus. A female exchange student was tested positive of swine flu, and becoming the 22nd confirmed case in the country. AP Photo by Pat Roque

MRT-3 stops 24-hour run

But will run until midnight

by ABIGAIL KWOK
Inquirer.net

MANILA - The Metro Rail Transit (MRT-3) on EDSA (Epifanio delos Santos Avenue) will stop its 24-hour operation on Wednesday, after just two days of implementing the scheme to service commuters working on the graveyard shift, a spokesperson for the rail system said. But the MRT-3 will be on extended operations. The last

south-bound train will leave the North Avenue station at 12:10 am, while the last north-bound train will leave the Taft Avenue station at 12:30am, said Lysa Blancaflor, MRT-3 public information officer. Train operations will start earlier, at 4 am, Blancaflor said. There will be a 30-minute interval between trains between 11 p.m. to 1 pm as only two trains per lane will run on those times, Blancaflor said.

Before the 24-hour scheme started last Monday, the MRT-3 operated from 5 am to 11 pm. "We also do not want to compromise the safety of our passengers because in our 24-hour operations, there was no maintenance period for our train tracks," Blancaflor said. The MRT-3 management reported around 6,000 passengers per night in its two-day 24-hour run. The majority of the passengers came between 11 pm to 1 am, most of whom were employees of call centers. ■

Campaign' spending to boost...

PAGE A9 ◀ sly 0.4-percent growth in the first three months, which fell below the government's projected growth of 2.8 to 3.8 percent for the period.

The below-forecast growth in the first quarter prompted some to worry the Philippines might fall into recession this year. The BSP, however, said several factors could help the economy escape a recession. Besides election spending, the BSP said still robust remittances from overseas Filipino workers, which have been supporting household consumption, and the gradual revival of investor confidence in emerging economies, would help accelerate growth in the coming quarters. The BSP also said that slowdown in inflation--expected to dip below one percent in the third quarter--would encourage people to spend more. ■

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