

Senate shelves federalism bid

by AUREA CALICA
Philstar.com

MANILA – Senators shelved on June 15 their plan for federalism to prevent President Arroyo's House allies from using it in their bid to change the Charter and extend their stay in office.

The Senate's federalism proposal was contained in Joint Resolution 10, which sought the convening of a constituent assembly to revise the Charter to allow the establishment of a federal form of government. Most of the senators signed the resolution.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., author of the resolution, said there was no need to withdraw his proposal because it had not yet been debated in the Senate. "It's not acted upon," Pimentel said.

Sen. Francis Escudero said over the weekend that while he was in favor of federalism, it must be done through a constitutional amendment and only after the 2010 elections.

"We have seen signs that the current administration has but one desire, and that is Charter change," Escudero said.

"I don't think any administration has the moral authority to change the Constitution, especially if its term is about to end, or if it concerns the extension of terms of other sitting officials," he said.

Pimentel also said the transition government being floated by Malacañang was another ploy to justify Mrs. Arroyo's continued stay in power after her term expires on June 30, 2010.

"Before you can have a transition government, you have to amend the Constitution

first. And when you speak of a transition government, that would mean allowing the outgoing President to stay in office in a holdover or temporary capacity until the succeeding head of government is elected into office," he said.

Pimentel said the proposal, broached by National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales, proved that Mrs. Arroyo did not intend to step down after June 2010.

He said the idea of Mrs. Arroyo becoming a transition president might be acceptable if she had been an effective, honest leader beloved by her countrymen.

"The sad truth is that Mrs. Arroyo is not widely regarded as a popular president of the republic. She is being hounded by allegations of abuse of power, corruption, electoral fraud, and extra-judicial killings. She has the dubious distinction of facing four impeachment attempts and a series of coup attempts," he said, adding that Mrs. Arroyo should have resigned long ago out of propriety.

Sen. Francis Pangilinan and Escudero warned the Palace and the House there would be more protests if they persist in their Cha-cha bid.

"Only those so out of touch with reality will say that there is time for Cha-cha less than six months before the start of the election period for 2010," Pangilinan said.

"I hope they find enough foresight and wisdom to see the consequences of their actions if they decide to hold their ground," Escudero said.

Hopeful
And just as senators decided to abandon federalism – at least under the incumbent administration – Speaker Prospero

Nogralas said the Senate's federalism plan could be merged with House measures on Cha-cha.

"Why don't we (House and Senate) meet together and have one version, if they (senators) are agreeable," he told reporters. House Resolution 1109 calls for the convening of a Senate-less con-ass, while HR 737 seeks to lift some economic restrictions in the Constitution.

Nogralas said the House convening as a constituent assembly may be held after President Arroyo delivers on July 27 her annual State of the Nation address, debunking speculations a special session may be called for purpose of Charter amendments.

"I don't think so (there will be a special session). Everybody is on vacation," he said.

Nogralas earlier said that the federalism bill of Pimentel is similar to HR 1109, since both measures call for amendments to the 1987 Constitution.

But Pimentel argued that their version does not have any provision on extending the term of the President or other elective officials.

Nogralas said he couldn't understand why the public is against many House initiatives.

"Is it because the House is an administration ally?"

"These personalities were eerily quiet and unconcerned when in fact, the Joint Congressional Resolution has the same purpose which is to amend the (1987) Constitution and it was overwhelmingly signed by 15 senators," Nogralas said.

Former Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pi

Ramos to Arroyo: Make your 2010 plans clear

by MAILA AGER
Inquirer.net

MANILA – Former President Fidel Ramos has urged President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to once and for all make a "clear and positive declaration" about her plans for 2010.

At the first leadership forum of the Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila on Thursday, Ramos

also urged Arroyo to disclose her position on Charter change now being pushed by her allies in the House of Representatives.

"With precious time fleeting, PGMA (Arroyo's initial) must now make a clear and positive declaration to our people that she, as President, will transform herself and the nation, and not anymore delude our people,

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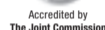
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