

25M voters may have to...

PAGE A9 ◀

Tuesday also urged the Comelec to see to it that local government officials were not depriving would-be voters in rival political camps of the chance to register.

Padilla and Magsaysay said that Comelec officials tended to ask for assistance from local government units (LGUs) in handling voter registration because of their lack of manpower.

Because of these ties with the LGUs, registration in some areas has become "seasonal," depending on whom the people who want to register support.

There have been instances when computers to be used were broken whenever the supporters of the rivals would try to register, according to the two lawmakers.

"Usually, the Comelec asks for help from LGUs to implement the registration, and there were complaints that if the supporters of [the incumbent's] rival ask for help, the Comelec officer will say that the machine is broken," Magsaysay told a hearing of the

House oversight committee.

Padilla also said that people in his district had to travel three to four hours across mountains just to be able to get to the Comelec office in town.

"Imagine after four hours of an ordeal, only to be told the machine broke down? He will not return [to register] anymore," Padilla said.

He suggested that the Comelec write to the local officials to remind them that this practice had been noticed and should be stopped.

Additional budget

Magsaysay also suggested that the Comelec request for additional budget in case more election officers were needed so that they would not have to ask for help from local officials.

Sarmiento said the concerns had already been brought to the Comelec en banc, and it has already passed a resolution prohibiting its personnel from seeking assistance from local politicians.

"Registration should be non-

partisan," Sarmiento said.

Charter change

Sarmiento also said that while it may be feasible to include a plebiscite or the election of constitutional convention delegates in the 2010 polls, he said it may be "messy."

"This is an issue that is complex because this involves the fundamental law. Before the plebiscite, there must be massive information drive and discussions among our people because we are tinkering with the Constitution. For me, this complicates the whole matter," he said.

Sarmiento added that amending the fundamental law of the land involved more than just a plebiscite to get the people's approval.

"We can add one section [to the ballot] but what about the significance, the import of this activity? For the information drive for poll automation, we need sufficient time. So how much more if you add plebiscite?" Sarmiento said. ■

Filipino sells P25,000 MJ shirt on eBay

by ALEXANDER VILLAFANIA
Inquirer.net

MANILA - Trying to cash in on the current Michael Jackson craze worldwide, Filipinos are also selling or auctioning off items related to the deceased pop legend on the Internet.

Using several local online auction services, various items from CDs, DVDs, commemorative magazines, vinyl records, among others are being auctioned off with prices ranging from a few hundred to tens of thousands of pesos.

One item in particular is a P25,000 T-shirt, manufactured in 1984 by MJJ Productions in California. The gray shirt carries an image of a young Michael Jackson in his signature red jacket with the words "Beat It".

Selling an exorbitantly priced item like this usually invites jeers from buyers and other sell-

ers but the T-shirt's seller, who wishes not to be named, said the item was already sold to a man from the United Kingdom at its current price.

In an interview, the online seller, a 55-year old man from Quezon City, said he bought the shirt in 1984 while in the US during the time when Jackson's fame was peaking.

"My wife wore that shirt once. We kept it for years until now when we looked for it in our closet. I can't remember how much we bought it. It was a long time ago," the seller said.

The seller said that they are looking for a second Michael Jackson shirt, which could be lying around the house. "The UK buyer said he'll be buying that other shirt for the same price."

Incidentally, he said he has received dozens of angry emails and comments since he posted the item.

"There have also been positive inquiries about it and it was only this one person in the UK who was really serious about buying the shirt," the seller said.

The seller said that he was a small-time collector in his younger days who knew that some of the items he owned would draw higher prices. One item he sold was a P45,000 statue of the Virgin Mary which he claimed was once owned by former First Lady Imelda Marcos.

The seller said many collectors are willing to pay hundreds to thousands of dollars for collectible items. Indeed, one seller in eBay.com is selling an entire set of mint condition Michael Jackson albums for \$7,000.

"I'm growing old and I want to sell items that I don't use anymore. I might as well earn from them," this Filipino online seller said. ■

RP to see partial eclipse of the sun

by ALCUIN PAPA
Inquirer.net

MANILA - A partial solar eclipse will be visible in the Philippines on July 22, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) said Thursday.

According to the agency's

website, the partial eclipse—which means the moon will only cover part of the sun—could be seen from Metro Manila, Cagayan Island, the cities of Laoag, Tuguegarao, Baguio, Angeles, Puerto Princesa, Lucena, Naga and General Santos, and the provinces of Iloilo, Cebu, Zam-

boanga, Sulu and Davao.

The eclipse will start in Metro Manila at exactly 8:33:01 a.m. and will achieve maximum visibility at 9:43 am. It will end at 11:01:51 am.

The path of the moon's umbral shadow will pass through areas of eastern Asia and the Pacific Ocean, particularly the countries of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar (Burma), regions of central China including Shanghai, Ryukyu and Marshall Islands and Kiribati.

Pagasa warned observers not to look directly at the sun during the eclipse without eye protection. They can use sunglasses, smoked glass, X-ray film, photographic film or negatives.

For further safety, Pagasa suggested viewing the eclipse "indirectly," like by projecting the image of the sun onto a piece of white paper using binoculars (with one of the lenses covered), a telescope or a piece of cardboard with a small hole in it of about one millimeter. This is called a pinhole camera.

A partial solar eclipse occurs when the sun and moon are not exactly in line with each other. Thus, the moon only partially obscures the sun. ■

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