

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

'My term ends in 2010'...

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stronger despite the global recession while the country's democracy remained protected despite several destabilization attempts accompanied by allegations of massive corruption and efforts to amend the Constitution to purportedly prolong her stay in office. The Interna-

tional Monetary Fund and the World Bank expect the economy to contract this year. She said she never declared martial law and never expressed a desire to extend her term.

"A year is a long time. *Patuloy ang pamumuhunan sa tinatawag na three E's ng ekonomiya, environment at edukasyon.* (We will

continue to invest in the three E's of economy, environment and education). There are many perils that we must still guard against," she said.

"Some say that after this SONA, it will be all politics. Sorry, but there's more work." She thanked Filipinos for allowing her to serve as President.

She asked political candidates in the coming elections "to talk more about how they will build up the nation rather than tear down their opponents."

"Our candidates must understand the complexities of our government and what it takes to move the country forward. Give the electorate real choices and not just sweet talk," Pres. Arroyo said.

"Meanwhile, I will keep a steady hand on the tiller, keeping the ship of state away from the shallows some prefer, and steering it straight on the course I set in 2001," she said.

While not naming names, the President delivered heavy punches to some of her strongest critics, who were apparently former President Joseph Estrada, Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr., Sen. Mar Roxas, and critical business groups.

"I never expressed the desire to extend myself beyond my

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