

P1 pork barrel for each solon proposed

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

MANILA – A member of the House of Representatives on Monday proposed a P1 allocation for each lawmaker's pork barrel or Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) to ensure that the fund would not be used for the 2010 election campaign. The amount originally allotted to congressmen and senators as their PDAF in the 2010 budget proposal by Malacanang could be re-channeled to meet the shortages in teacher positions, classroom, textbooks,

chairs, and laboratories in public school, Representative Teddy Casino said at the minority's weekly news conference. Casino's proposal directly runs counter with the earlier proposal of Sorsogon Representative Jose Solis to increase the PDAF of each lawmaker by P30 million. Each congressman receives P70 million and each senator gets P200 million under the current budget. Casino said increasing lawmakers' pork barrel allocation increases the risk of government money being spent for the 2010

elections. He said lawmakers can instead propose projects under line items of departments under the proposed budget. "The threat of one-peso budget has always been used by Congress to get what it wants from an agency. Perhaps it is time congressmen get a taste of their own medicine," he said. "Let's allocate one peso for the pork barrel and let the various nominated projects of congressmen undergo line item budgeting and the public scrutiny it deserves," he added. ■

Extend new voters registration

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
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MANILA – Concerned about the low turnout of new registrants for the May 2010 election, a lawmaker on Monday urged the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to set up more satellite registration centers in schools, barangays (villages), and communities to encourage first-time voters to register. Speaking at the weekly minority news conference, Kabataan party list Representative Raymond Palatino also proposed to extend the deadline of registration from October 31 to December 15 this year. Quoting Comelec figures, Palatino said that only 841,200 new voters have so far registered out of the three million target of the poll body. "This is a far cry from Comelec's 3 million target come deadline, and even still an epic backlog from the estimated 5 million first-time voters in the country," he said. The congressman called on poll body to install more satellite registration sites in school and communities to allow people to have an easy access to the registration procedure. ■

Erap wants to put power back to the masses

IT SEEMS that Former President Joseph "Erap" Estrada has not lost his charm. Even though he has not formally declared his candidacy for the upcoming presidential elections in 2010 yet, the people are still clamoring for him. In fact, he has given current survey top notcher Senator Manny Villar tough competition. In an exclusive interview with the Asian Journal, Erap said that he has great plans for the nation if elected. "I will continue my platform to secure peace and order in the country," he said. He voiced out his opinions on what he thinks are the current problems in the country. "Even if we have great economists, we still don't have money because many businessmen don't want to invest in the country," he said. Only time will tell if it is part of Erap's destiny to have the opportunity to return the power to the masses. (AIPress)

Congressmen want to charge...

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es. Asked whether his colleagues paid for their expenses, Abante said, "If I did not pay, I supposed

that they, too, did not pay." He revealed that they were billed at the expensive Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City, where former First Lady Imelda Marcos used to stay, and at the Willard Inter-Continental Hotel in Washington. According to newspaper reports, Pres. Arroyo's party occupied at least 60 rooms at Waldorf and Willard. An ordinary room at Waldorf reportedly costs \$950 a night. Pres. Arroyo was said to have occupied a \$3,500-a-night suite. At the Serye forum, Abante urged Pres. Arroyo to account for all the expenses incurred in her US trip and not hide behind her spokesmen and election lawyer. "After all, she's the one accountable for this," he said. The President's US visit was overshadowed by the death of former President Corazon Aquino and has become controversial due to at least two expensive dinners Pres. Arroyo and her entourage enjoyed in New York and Washington. Her spokesman claimed it was Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez who paid \$20,000 for a dinner at the French restaurant Le Cirque in New York City, while Quezon Rep. Danilo Suarez professed he paid \$15,000 for steaks and lobsters at a Washington steakhouse. ■



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