

Arroyo daughter proud of mom's rule

by EDSON C. TANDOC JR.
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FIRST Daughter Evangelina Lourdes "Luli" Arroyo said that she was proud of what her mother had so far accomplished as President whose term under the Constitution will end in 2010.

She said that her mother's presidency had "its ups and downs." But she added: "I think overall my mother did quite well so we are proud of that."

She said: "We know that when she (President Macapagal-Arroyo) leaves office, she is leaving the Philippines in a better state than when she first got it."

Members of the political opposition speculating that her mother would cling to her post even after end of her term next year should "just concentrate on their platforms," Luli said.

She laughed when asked about her married life. "It's normal," she said. "It's just that

now I need to ask permission if I am going out."

She said her mother had been asking her for a grandchild. "But they let us to (decide) on our own. If it comes, then that will be great."

The young Arroyo spoke at the 2nd eSkwela Conference in Lian, Batangas, where she talked about the importance of integrating information and communication technologies in education. It was her first public appearance since her private wedding last year.

The eSkwela, a project spearheaded by the Commission on Information and Communications Technology, is a modified version of the Alternative Learning System (ALS) handled by the Department of Education (DepEd).

"It makes more sense for us because we are an archipelago. It is the easiest way to communicate," she said.

The ALS uses printed modules

to teach students who cannot go to regular grade or high schools to get formal education. The program, usually composed of once-a-week sessions, depends on the student's own pace and needs.

The eSkwela takes off from the ALS and uses online modules instead. There are 10 eSkwela centers all over the country.

After completing their modules, students usually take DepEd's Accreditation and Equivalency Test, which gives them the equivalent of a high school diploma if they pass the exam. This allows them to get work or pursue college.

Delegates to the conference, composed of volunteers, teachers and local government officials involved in existing as well as proposed alternative learning centers in the country, took turns in posing for photos with her.

Some of the delegates expressed amazement at her

"simplicity." She neither showed up with security escorts, nor put on make up.

"That's how we were brought up," she said. "I mean my brothers are the same. It's just that they are men so people don't notice it."

She expressed disappointment, however, at how other people "twist it badly." She noted that her brother, Pampanaga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo, had one time been described by some politicians as sounding "uneducated."

"But actually it's because we live our lives simply," she said.

Luli admitted that being the children of the country's president was not easy, but she said: "We learned from her experience when she was the daughter of the President (Diosdado Macapagal)."

"Our grandmother (former First Lady Eva Macapagal) had told us before that once your mother enters politics, it is

really going to be a sacrifice," forward to returning to private she said. life next year, she said: "Yes. Asked if she was looking Definitely."

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GMA signs RA 9547 for student employees

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on Wednesday, March 31, signed into law an amendment to an existing act that expands the employment opportunities of poor students to the mainstream workforce.

President Arroyo signed Republic Act 9547, or the Strengthening and Expanding the Coverage of the Special Program for Employment of Students, an amendment of Republic Act 7323, also known as the Special Program for Employment of Students.

Under RA 9547, poor but deserving students between 15 to 25 years old should be paid a salary not lower than the minimum wage for private employers and the hiring rate for national and local government agencies.

The law also stated that students enrolled in the secondary level should be employed during summer and Christmas vacations while those enrolled in tertiary level, vocational or technical education programs may be employed anytime.

"For purposes of this act, poor but deserving students refer to those whose parents' combined income, together with their own, if any, does not exceed the annual regional poverty threshold level for a family of six," it said.



It also said 60 percent of the salary shall be paid by the employer in cash and 40 percent by the government in the form of voucher, applicable in the payment

of the students' tuition and books in any educational institution.

"The amount of the education voucher shall be paid by the government to the educational institution concerned within 30 days from its presentation to the officer or agency designated by the Secretary of Finance," it said.

Kiko Pangilinan on Tsao's apology: Mabuhay ang Manggagawang Pilipino

"MABUTI naman at nag-sorry siya." This was what Independent Senator Francis 'Kiko' Pangilinan said after Chip Tsao made his public apology.

In his article *The War At Home*, Tsao mentioned that the Philippines is 'a nation of servants' and that he lectured his Filipina household helper 'that if she wants her wages increased next year, she had better tell everyone of her compatriots in Statue Square on Sunday that the entirety of the Spratly Islands belong to China.'

The article's author earned the ire of Filipinos around the world, calling Tsao a racist. "*Kahit na domestic helper ang ating mga kababayan, marunong pa rin sila manindigan at kumilos para sa kanilang karapatan,*" said Pangilinan.

"Saludo tayo sa ating mga kababayan sa Hong Kong na tinutulan at nanindigan sa pang-



aapi ni Tsao. Tagumpay ito ng ating mga kababayan overseas." ■

5,000 public nurses sought; 11,000 apply

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as necessary," she said.

They will not only fill the shortfall in medical workers in rural areas but also get to serve the people, particularly those with poor access to medical services, Pineda said.

Training module

The training module, which covers both clinical and public health functions, was designed by the Department of Health, in coordination with the Professional Regulatory Commission's Board of Nurses.

While this is a government project, the Philippine Nurses Association and other groups are offering services to guide the nurses, according to Pineda.

"This gives them employment and at the same time, helps them gain experience for eventual

employment in government and private hospitals," she said.

The training will be considered a substitute for the work experience requirement of hospitals and other health facilities in the country and abroad, and completion will entitle a nurse to a certificate, according to the labor department.

"We're hoping that after the training they will be absorbed by government hospitals," Pineda said.

500 in Bicol

In the Bicol region, the NARS program has hired more than 500 nurses.

Ernesto Bihis, DoLE regional director, said the nurses, who were unemployed for several years and have relatives who went jobless abroad, were given priority under

the program.

Bihis said some P5.3 million had been allocated for Bicol under the program.

A total of 555 nurses will be assigned to cover its six provinces.

Camarines Sur will get the biggest number of nurses at 170 for 34 municipalities; Masbate, 105 nurses for all 20 municipalities and one city; Sorsogon, 80 nurses for 14 towns and one city; Catanduanes, 45 nurses for nine municipalities; and Albay, five nurses to serve the poorest barangays in Legazpi City.

The newly hired nurses will be deployed at an average of five per town in the third- (annual income: P30 million-P40 million) and sixth-class municipalities (below P60 million) for a six-month tour-of-duty.

Bihis said the second batch would be deployed in October. ■

Proposal to peg SMS at 50 centavos

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which would be collected by the National Telecommunications Commission, was included in the 50 centavos charge, Suarez said.

When the resolution is approved, software would be installed to monitor the number of calls and text messages of each telecommunications providers.

Suarez said he believes the companies have not been declaring their true revenues to the government.

He said that for 2007, the three telecoms have declared only a combined income of P150 billion pesos.

He said he believed this was way below what the telecoms earned considering that there were at least two billion text messages sent every day. ■

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