# GMA defines her desired legacy for Filipinos

LAPU-LAPU CITY—What legacy would President Gloria Macapagal- Arroyo want to leave behind for the country and the Filipino people when she bows out of office?

The President was asked this question during a media interview Tuesday, May 12 at the brand new Imperial Palace Waterpark Resort here shortly before she addressed the *One Visayas Climate Change Summit* and the Cabinet meeting in the same venue.

Her answer: the continuity and completion of the many programs she has initiated in the economic and fiscal fronts.

The President also wants to see the continuation of what she has invested in the three E's—education, economy and the environment.

In her inaugural address in 2004, the Chief Executive stressed that her principal responsibility was to keep the country on track and to focus on her vision of transforming the Philippines into a First World country in 20 years.

Her vision of a modern Philippines revolves around the components of free enterprise, modern agriculture, a social bias to balance the country's economic development, and enhancing the rule of law and standards of governance.

It was apparently in accordance with this vision that her government focused on efforts to strengthen the country's macroeconomic fundamentals, strictly observed fiscal discipline, launched an aggressive campaign to re-engage with the world, and assiduously worked on the fulfillment of her ten-point agenda that puts premium on investing in the Filipino.

It may also be accordance with her governance orientation that she dared to sacrifice much of her political capital several times, making unpopular reform decisions that happily proved correct and beneficial for the long-term welfare of the Filipino people.

One indication of her success in economic governance is the country's unprecedented record of 36 quarters of uninterrupted growth and a record-breaking 8 percent gross national product (GNP) growth in 2007. *(OPI)*

# House panel exploring Charter change without Senate

*by* JESS DIAZ
*Philstar.com*

THE House committee on constitutional amendments is expected to take up today a resolution that provides for what constitutionalist Fr. Joaquin Bernas describes as an nonexistent "fifth mode" for Charter change (Cha-cha).

The committee is scheduled to tackle Resolution 1109 in its weekly Tuesday meeting.

Some 175 allies of President Arroyo led by Speaker Prospero Nograles signed the measure.

Though Nograles and Majority Leader Arthur Defensor are the lead signatories of Resolution 1109, the measure is clearly the handiwork of Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte, who is president of Mrs. Arroyo's Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

It contains all of Villafuerte's arguments for convening "members of Congress," even if they are all congressmen, and not the "institutions" of the Senate and the House, for the purpose of proposing constitutional amendments, and for bypassing the Senate on Cha-cha.

The Kampi boss originally wanted members of Congress to convene into a constituent assembly or con-ass, but since con-ass has become controversial, he has removed the term from his resolution.

Nograles is the principal author of another resolution, numbered 737, on which the House has started floor debates.

His proposal seeks to amend Sections 2 and 3 of Article XII of the Constitution to allow 100-percent foreign participation in the exploitation of natural resources and foreign ownership of agricultural land.

According to the Speaker, his Resolution 737 would go through the legislative process route, which means that it would be sent to the Senate for its own consideration after the House approves it.

The legislative process route is what has come to be known as the "fourth mode" for Cha-cha, which Fr. Bernas said is sanctioned by the Constitution.

He said Villafuerte's House-only con-ass is a fifth mode that does not exist in the Charter.

He said congressmen cannot bypass senators on Cha-cha.

The other three modes are people's initiative, a constitutional convention and con-ass with both the House and the Senate participating.

In filing Resolution 1109, Nograles and his colleagues parroted Villafuerte's arguments for convening lawmakers into a con-ass.

They said the House should first resolve what Cha-cha mode to use before tackling specific

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# Senate amends ethics rules to tackle Villar case

*by* CHRISTINA MENDEZ
*Philstar.com*

THE Senate has amended three rules of the Ethics Committee which it had adopted when it convened into a Committee of the Whole last week to tackle the alleged conflict of interest case of Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

Villar's case stemmed from the allegations that he exerted effort for the budget insertion of a road extension project.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile has directed the secretariat and the general counsel to notify Villar that the Senate will start its preliminary inquiry on Thursday, May 14.

"It is the position of this chair that the agenda for this is preliminary inquiry," Enrile said at the end of the five-hour meeting of the Committee of the Whole.

Enrile said Villar may appear or not during the preliminary inquiry.

"Well, that's his prerogative. There's a next stage where he will be required to submit his pleadings," he said.

In an interview before the Senate went into session, Villar said he is not sure yet if he will attend the preliminary proceedings.

He expressed disappointment over the move of the majority not to allow an amendment that would limit the jurisdiction of the ethics committee to "acts and/or omissions committed by any member of the Senate during the term of the present Congress."

Villar's colleagues in the minority believe that the complaint against the former senate president covered even his past acts before his new term in 2007, and should not be covered by any ethics complaint in the present 14th Congress.

Villar said this would mean that a senator can be held responsible even for acts committed when he was a teenager.

He then retaliated against one of his accusers—Sen. Panfilo Lacson—whom he alluded to when he said that the cases of the controversial Kuratong Baleleng and the double murder of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito should also be investigated by the Senate or the Ethics committee.

Villar maintained that he can explain fully the allegations that he exerted influence for the double release of some P200 million for the C5 Road extension project which would benefit millions who are living in the Southern part of Metro Manila and Cavite, Laguna and Batangas provinces.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, disgusted over the railroading of the rules of the majority, still believes that the case against Villar is politically motivated and that it is related to Villar's high approval ratings as presidential bet for next year's election.

At the start of the meeting, Sen. Joker Arroyo asked if a senator elected by the people can be removed by 23 senators as the debates focus on what quorum should be followed in the Senate Committee of the Whole.

The present Ethics rules provides that at least two members of the committee shall constitute a quorum, a provision which the minority wanted to amend to have one third of the entire 23 senators as basis for quorum.

Prior to this, the Senate amended only three out of about eight rules proposed by the minority senators who were represented by Sen. Cayetano in the third meeting of the entire Senate committee.

The Senate minority failed to muster enough votes when 11 senators voted down the proposal of the minority on jurisdiction of the committee that will tackle the ethics complaint.

Enrile said Villar has the right to respond or even call for the dismissal of the complaint once he received the complaint.

Arroyo made the statement after majority of the senators also junked the proposal that provides that the "respondent shall have the right to cross-examine the witness even at the stage of the preliminary hearing."

Citing the rules, Enrile explained that the committee shall promptly commence preliminary inquiry whenever there is a sworn statement or a verified complaint that the committee has determined to have complied with the requirements of Rule 2.

He said the Senate, during the hearing proper, will deal with the issue of substance and form, as well as evidence of the complaint filed by Sen. Jamby Madrigal against Villar over the C5 Road Extension project that supposedly passed by a number of properties of Villar and his real-estate companies.

However, Villar hit back by tagging Madrigal as a "queen of lies" after the woman-senator said he met with President Arroyo abroad and even called him the "king of corruption."

Madrigal disclosed last week that Villar was set to have a meeting with the President to address the C-5 issue.

Villar is an opposition member and a meeting with the administration will be perceived as dancing with the enemy for political convenience.

"First of all, I would like to clarify that I did not meet with (the President). And I have no plans to meet her," Villar told reporters.

"That's why I was surprised when that news came out. It's funny but there is no truth to that. And whoever said that is a liar," Villar said.

When told that it was Madrigal who said it and even called him the corruption king, Villar said: "If I am corruption king, she is *sinungaling* (liar) queen." ■