

PGMA keeps government's focus on jobs creation

GEN. SANTOS CITY—President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo said here last May 19 her administration keeps its focus on jobs creation to address the immediate concerns of workers who lost their jobs or who remain unemployed because of the global economic meltdown. The President who visited

and held her Cabinet meeting in this “Tuna capital” today said the beneficiaries of her job creation and livelihood assistance initiatives include many workers from Central Mindanao, many of whom are fisherfolks and out-of-school youths. She said retrenched and jobless workers in Central Mindanao now benefit from Comprehensive

Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) administered by the Department of Labor and Employment. The beneficiaries, she said, have availed of emergency employment opportunities under the Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) and Integrated Services for Livelihood Advancement of the Fisherfolks (ISLA) projects.

In a regional media interview here, President Arroyo said jobs generation remains a special government focus and even the forthcoming 111th Independence Day celebration will be focused on assisting displaced workers.

The Independence Day rites will be highlighted by the conduct of a three-day job and livelihood fairs that will include the awarding of employment certificates, livelihood assistance packages and training scholarships.

On the Jobs Fair's first day, she said, job seekers may vie for a good number of government unfilled plantilla positions and vacancies for emergency or short term employment under the 1.5 percent MOOE fund based on E.O. No. 782.*

Emergency employment contracts and livelihood checks will also be awarded on June 12 to lucky job seekers. The rest of them may explore both overseas and local job opportunities on the second and third day.

During the interview, President Arroyo shared the good news with her listeners that DOLE, in its latest report said 14,021 employees earlier retrenched by their local employers got their jobs back as companies hit by the economic slump have started to rehire their workers with new product orders having started to come in.

DOLE also said business firms are slowly returning to their normal operations, even as the demand for OFWs continues with new hires narrowing the gap if not offsetting the number of those earlier displaced as the situation in many countries appear to have stabilized. (PNND)

Arroyo names 7 new envoys

WITH a little more than a year left in office, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has named seven new ambassadors—to Spain, the United Kingdom of Great Britain, the Vatican, the Netherlands, Finland, Brazil and Timor-Leste.

This was disclosed by Cebu Representative Eduardo Gullas, head of the House contingent to the bicameral Commission on Appointments (CA), in a statement to media outfits last May 19.

“We just received the nomination papers of Ana Ines de Sequera-Ugarte as the new ambassador to Spain and Andorra, vice Antonio Manuel Lagdameo, who has been designated chief emissary to the UK and Northern Ireland,” said Gullas, who is also CA vice chairman.

De Sequera-Ugarte is widow of Aboitiz scion and advertising executive Inaki Ugarte.

Lagdameo, who obtained the CA's consent as top envoy to Madrid only in June last year, replaces Edgardo Espiritu, the former finance secretary who

has been ambassador to the Court of St. James since 2003.

Gullas said the other ambassadors nominated by Malacañang were Mercedes Arrastia-Tuason, to the Holy See and Malta; Cardozo Luna, to the Netherlands; Evan Garcia, to Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, and Suriname; Ma. Angelina Sta. Catalina, to Finland; and Ma. Aniceta Aileen Bugarin, to Timor-Leste.

Arrastia-Tuason fills the post vacated by Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile's wife, Cristina Castañer-Ponce Enrile, who suddenly resigned last month for health reasons.

Like Lagdameo, Castañer-Ponce Enrile's obtained the CA's consent as ambassador to the Vatican only June last year.

Gullas said the seven new nominees join three other ambassadors pending CA confirmation—former Armed Forces chief of staff and retired Gen. Alexander Yano, to Brunei; Alejandro Del Rosario to Poland; and Ma. Corazon Yap-Buhain, to Bahrain. (Inquirer.net)



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Escudero: Do Pinoy expats have right to vote?

by MAILA AGER
 Inquirer.net

SHOULD “third generation Filipinos” or those born or who have practically lived abroad be given the right to participate in the national elections?

This question was raised by Senator Francis “Chiz” Escudero on Tuesday, May 19 during the hearing on various bills, proposing amendments to the Absentee Voting Law.

Escudero is chairman of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments conducting the hearing together with the committees on environment, foreign relations and finance.

“Just a point of information or advice, in so far as Filipinos who were born here, Filipinos who lived here for quite sometime before they left for greener pastures abroad, mostly sa United States of America, *silang po naaalala pa kaya nila ang Pilipinas? May nararamdaman pa kayang pagkamiss at pagkamahal nila sa ating bansa?* [Do they still remember our country? Do they still miss and love their country?] he said, directing his question to Ellene Sana, executive director of Center for Migrant Workers.

He urged her to address the issue with her group so the Senate committee can study the issue of second generation or third generation Filipinos who were born abroad or those who left the country at an early age to have no memory of the Philippines, citing those who spoke English better than Americans and, when asked about their nationality, would answer they were Americans.

“Paki-address po sa inyong pagpupulong at talakayan natin pagdating sa komite yung second generation Filipinos o yung third generation Filipinos, *yung pinanganak na po doon o umalis dito nang isang taong gulang pa lamang, dalawa o tatlong taong gulang pa lamang na ni walang alaala ng Pilipinas, kung mag-ingles talo pa Amerikano at kung tanungin nyo sila ‘Are you American or Filipino?’ without batting an eyelash they will answer ‘I’m American.’” he said.*

Escudero said the issue was an “area of concern” and that the group should look into it.

“Dahil bakit po natin bibigyan ng karapatang bumoto ang mga tao ni wala namang halos koneksyon, ayaw namang tawaging Filipino



Sen. Francis “Chiz” Escudero takes a light moment while stressing a point during the ANC Leadership Forum held at the Ateneo de Manila University on May 11, 2009.

Photo courtesy of chizescudero.com
at bibigyan natin ng napakalawang na kakayahang at kapangyarihan magdikta kaugnay sa mga nangyayari sa ating bansa at kung sino-sino ang magiging lider ng ating bansa [Why give them the right to vote when they don't have any connection here, refusing to call themselves Filipinos, and we give them the right to dictate what happens in our country and who will rule it?] he further asked. ■

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Binay ready to explain infomercial

by ALLISON LOPEZ
 Inquirer.net

MAKATI Mayor Jejomar Binay on Wednesday, May 20 welcomed the petition asking the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to look into the “infomercials” of perceived presidential aspirants.

Binay, who has expressed his aspirations for the presidency in 2010, was among those cited by a partylist group as having come up with an infomercial way ahead of the campaign period to boost their stock in popularity surveys.

But the Makati City mayor defended his ad, saying “These infomercials celebrate Makati and the benefits received by its residents. These are benefits that they deserve as



Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay

residents of the

country's financial center and premier city.”

“We have always been communicating the benefits of being a Makati resident since we began celebrating our founding anniversary with the private sector seven years ago,” Binay said.

Two groups have asked the Comelec to stop the airing of “infomercials” of Binay, Senator Mar Roxas and Senator Manny Villar Jr.

But Comelec spokesperson James Jimenez said the poll body maintained that a person could not be charged with premature campaigning until the filing of a certificate of candidacy. ■

Estrada: De Castro toughest rival in 2010

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akong kasalanan.”

No-el
 De Castro also said all talk about a no-election (No-el) scenario in 2010 was lamentable, and that the people would not allow it. “Our government is a

government of laws. We continue to uphold our Constitution. A No-el scenario smacks of illegality and threatens a public outcry,” he said.

De Castro said the people should be vigilant in order to

preserve the democracy that they had fought to achieve.

“I will stand with the people to make sure that there will be elections and that the Constitution will be followed and upheld,” he said. ■

Estrada candidacy splits legal experts

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to “sitting presidents” and not to past leaders like him who wasn't even able to finish his term.

Driven out of Malacañang in a “people power” uprising in 2001, Estrada was convicted of plunder and later granted presidential pardon six years later.

The pardon, granted in October 2007, stated that Estrada “has publicly committed to no longer seek any elective position or office.” It also cited the state policy of releasing convicts who have reached the age of 70.

But Estrada on Tuesday noted that his political rights had been “restored” by the same executive clemency.

He also said “the [constitutional] ban was intended for sitting presidents, so they will not use the vast resources to stay in power. I am not a sitting president. I am not seeking reelection. I am running again.”

Ban is ‘lifetime’

But Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago Tuesday, May 19, disagreed, saying the Constitution imposes a “lifetime” ban on presidents who want to run again for the same office.

“The applicable rule is where the law doesn't distinguish, we should not distinguish,” she said.

“It didn't make any qualification. It uses the general word ‘President.’ Remember the rule: There is no distinction there, so you can't make a distinction,” she told reporters.

The matter of Estrada's qualifications to run for president again was already an “open and shut” case, Santiago said. “You bring it to the Supreme Court, it will be dismissed right away.”

Coming from outside

For former Justice Secretary Serafin Cuevas, Estrada may have a point.

“My postulation [is that] the

prohibition applies only to an incumbent in order to insulate the office from being utilized as a means of availing of all the facilities of the government, the finances, the military, the police ... to work in favor of the incumbent in that reelection,” Cuevas said.

“If one comes from the outside—meaning, if he's a former president—he is no longer an incumbent. Therefore, he is not running for a reelection. He is running anew,” Cuevas told reporters at the House of Representatives.

Under this interpretation of the Constitution, former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos could run for again for president, Cuevas said.

Though doubtful of Estrada's chances in 2010, Brillantes said “the Constitution should be construed liberally in favor of allowing him to run.” ■