Arroyo wins top prize in Spain

MADRID—Philippine President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa were awarded last June 8 a top prize in Spain for their efforts to promote the Spanish language and culture.

Ms Arroyo was granted the Don Quixote of the Mancha Award for her administration's efforts to reintroduce Spanish language training in public schools in the Philippines, a former Spanish colony of around 90 million people.

The jury said Llosa, one of Latin America's best-known authors, was awarded the prize for his "mastery and creative use" of the Spanish language.

Ms Arroyo won the prize for "best institutional contribution," while Llosa won it for "outstanding individual career."

Ms Arroyo and Llose will officially receive the award in October at a ceremony in Toledo, Spain's picturesque former capital.

The award, which was given out last year for the first time, carries a cash prize of 25,000 euros ($35,000) for each winner. It is financed by the regional government of Castilla-La Mancha and the private Fundacion Santillana.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva won the award in 2008 for his decision to make Spanish language education mandatory in public schools in Brazil, the only Portuguese-speaking nation in Latin America, while Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes won it for boosting the heritage of Spanish.

In 1987, the Philippine Constitution abolished Spanish as one of its official languages as well as a requirement that college students had to learn it.

The language has since largely vanished from everyday use in the Southeast Asian nation, with English and Filipino now commonly used.

AWARDEE President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will receive the Don Quixote of the Mancha Award for her administration's effort to return the teaching of Spanish in public schools.

Photo by Edwin Bacasmas

Unlike in Madrid's colonies in Latin America, the Spanish language was never as widespread in the Philippines, mainly because of the small number of Spanish settlers in the archipelago.

English was introduced to the country when it passed from Spanish to American control after the Spanish-American War of 1898.

De Castro might go independent

Pangilinan eyed as VP bet

by CYNTHIA BALANA
Inquirer.net

VICE President Noli de Castro said he might run as an independent and would welcome Sen. Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan as a running mate should he decide to seek the presidency in 2010.

Speaking from New York City last June 9, De Castro noted that he had run and won without a political party in previous elections and that was always an option.

De Castro left Manila on Saturday to attend the Philippine Independence Day celebrations in New York. From there, he goes to Boston to speak at the Gawad Kalinga global summit.

"I have always been an independent candidate so I wouldn't mind being an independent if I run for President and I don't join a political party. That has always been an option," he said in a phone interview.

No need to rush

As such, he sees no need to rush his decision on whether to accept the invitation to join the administration Lakas-Kampi-CMD and submit himself for consideration as the ruling coalition's presidential standard-bearer.

De Castro, whose real name is Manuel Leuterio de Castro Jr., was a broadcast journalist at the ABS-CBN television network. His phenomenal popularity propelled him to the Senate in 2001, and to the vice presidency three years later. He ran as an independent in both instances, but as a guest candidate of the opposition coalition in the first and of the ruling party in the second.

Though a consistent front-runner in presidential preference surveys for 2010, De Castro has not announced whether or not he intends to run.

He received the highest approval rating in the latest Pulse Asia survey with 53 percent of respondents saying they approved his performance, 21 percent disapproved, and 26 percent undecided.

Money issue

Asked what was stopping him from seeking the presidency, De Castro admitted that the lack of money for waging a massive political campaign was a factor.

"I haven't got any money. I will need a huge amount of money to campaign, although money does not always count," he said.

Asked who among the possible contenders for vice president would be a good choice for a running mate if he decides to run as an independent, De Castro said Pangilinan would be "okay" since he is also an independent."

De Castro and Pangilinan were members of the so-called Wednesday Group of senators that also included Pangilinan, Sen. Manuel Villar Jr., Sen. Joker Arroyo and Economic Planning Secretary Ralph Recto when he was still senator.

De Castro earlier said he would announce his decision in November, the start of the filing of the certificates of candidacy for the 2010 election.

But he said last June 9 he might break this self-imposed deadline and announce his decision earlier.

Disruptions to affect economic policies—Bangko Sentral

by DES FERRIOLS
Philstar.com

WITH the global economy not even out of recession, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Amando Tetangco warned against the disruptive impact of political events that could affect the country's economic policies.

Tetangco noted last June 9 that markets have been increasingly spooked over plans to amend the Constitution leading to a possible change in the political system that critics said was an attempt to keep President Arroyo in power.

Tetangco downplayed the political developments but admitted the market could be very sensitive to how the political situation would unfold in the coming months.

"Situations like this usually affect market perception but this can be said of any event," he said.

Tetangco said it was natural for the market to be edgy and watchful of how these political developments would unfold and impact on the country's economic policies, particularly the reforms that were already in place and needed to be completed.

"If the market will look at this, whatever is happening or is about to happen would be assessed based on its impact on the economic policies and therefore the performance of the economy," Tetangco said.

The unfolding events apparently frightened the stock market and posted losses for two days in a row as various groups threatened to organize massive protest actions to oppose amendments of the country's 22-year-old Charter.

Analysts said the developing conflict between the Arroyo administration and the opposition made investors nervous and they ultimately decided to cash in on gains rather than be stuck in a brewing political maelstrom.

The benchmark 30-company stock market index dropped 29.47 points or 1.175 percent while the all-shares index fell 1.3 percent.

For the moment, analysts said investors are using the political tension as an excuse to cash in.

Eventually, analysts said, these tensions could develop into real disruption, especially given the country's history with street protests turning violent.

Before being sidetracked by the constituent assembly bill, Congress was in the middle of discussions on key economic reforms that the country's creditors and investors have been waiting for.

Primary among these economic legislative initiatives are the bill to rationalize the country's fiscal incentives for export industries, the indexation of the excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol to the inflation rate and the amendment of the BSP charter that would complement the amendment of the charter of the Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp.

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Attorney Malik W. Ahmad is admitted to practice in all the courts in the state of Nevada. He is a member of the state bar of Nevada. His areas of practice includes personal injury; bankruptcy, both Chapter 7 and Chapter 13; family laws; loan modification; labor and employments. Also, his area of practice includes criminal law. The Law Office of Malik Ahmad had helped innumerable people in their loan modifications, and in stopping their foreclosure and fighting wrongful foreclosure based on deceptive trade practices, violations of TILA and RESPA.

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