

'GMA running for Congress an ethical issue'

by EVELYN MACAIRAN
Philstar.com

WHILE there might not be any legal impediment that could prevent President Arroyo from seeking a seat in Congress, an official of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) last June 16 said the Chief Executive might be hounded by moral and ethical issues.

Comelec spokesman James Arthur Jimenez said in a forum

held at the Ilustrado Restaurant in Manila that he does not see any legal problems if Mrs. Arroyo decides to run for Congress in Pampanga.

"Is it okay for the President to run for a lower position? Absolutely, why not. There is no legal impediment to a president seeking any other position. She can run for

municipal councilor if that is her pleasure or as barangay captain if she wants," Jimenez said.

As to the question of whether the Chief Executive would be required to tender her resignation when she files her certificate of candidacy (COC) in November in order to run, Jimenez said that this was a "novel question" that has yet to be answered by the poll body.

"We will have to look more deeply into that but my sense of it is that no, she will not be required to resign and if she still had some time on her term left over then she could come back," he said.

He admitted that this is a serious issue with questions such as "will she be able to use the awesome powers of the presidency to overwhelm her local opponents" that would have to be addressed.

"My suspicion is that it might be more of an ethical, rather than a legal, issue," the Comelec official added.

Jimenez said the public should also consider if the rules regarding incumbent senators would apply to the President.

Right now, if a senator decides to run for president and loses, he can return to the Senate.

"The same rules apply, if she is President and she runs for a lower position, except that she

might have nothing to return to because her term might already be over," he added.

The official said that in the case of former President Joseph Estrada, if he wants to represent his constituents in San Juan as their congressman, he also does not see any impediment.

"It is the ministerial duty of the Comelec to accept all COCs. If anyone files a COC then yes, we will have to accept it. After we accept it, that is when you will have a little bit of complication. You can either give it due course in which the name ends up on a ballot or you can refuse to give it due course," Jimenez said.

He clarified that they only deny petitions of those considered to be nuisance candidates and Estrada does not belong to this category. "No one in his right mind would probably be stupid enough to call former President Estrada a nuisance candidate. So obviously it would not be as simple as that," he said.

BCBP spokesperson Monsignor Pedro Quitorio III added that apart from the moral issues, Mrs. Arroyo's reported plans to run for Congress might have propriety considerations.

"We should look into the propriety aspect. It is not really proper.



Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

Official Photo

If you really want to serve, if the agenda is to serve the common good, serve the public, then this has no logic," he said.

He added that people would certainly ask whose interest Mrs. Arroyo is trying to protect—is it the public's interest or somebody else's.

Some people believe that if she becomes a member of the House of Representatives, it might be used as a jumping board to promote constituent assembly (con-ass).

The Church official also believes that the President should listen to the advice given by Speaker Prospero Nograles, who discouraged her from running for a congressional seat in the May 2010 elections.

"That is a nice advice," he said, citing CBCP president and Jaro, Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo's unsolicited advice to former President Estrada not to run for president.

Meanwhile, Pampanga Bishop Pablo David yesterday dissuaded Mrs. Arroyo from running for a congressional seat in her home province, saying she should give way to others.

"She should not run anymore after her term ends. She should give others a chance," David told the Church-run Radio Veritas.

Meantime, Secretary to the Cabinet Silvestre Bello III said President Arroyo listens to the advice being given to her by her allies but this does not mean that she would heed them. ■



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Mikey may give way to ma Arroyo son to run for gov vs Panlilio

by GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.
Inquirer.net

MANILA—With his mother rumored to be casting a moist eye on his congressional seat, Pampanga Representative Juan Miguel Arroyo is considering challenging the province's reformist governor, Father Ed Panlilio.

"If I follow my heart, I want a third term. But of course I won't deny the fact that many of the political leaders there, even the clergy and those supporting, who support Governor Panlilio, are egging me on to run because he's

a nonperforming asset," Arroyo said in an interview yesterday, a day after his arrival from a US visit.

"At the end of the day, who are we to stop her? It is the people of the district who decide, and only them."

Arroyo also had pointed remarks against Speaker Prospero Nograles, who on Tuesday advised the President not to run for Congress after reaching the pinnacle of power.

"Instead of advising the President publicly on what she should do with her life, he should first make sure that he will implement his promised reforms in Congress," Arroyo's son said.

Arroyo and Panlilio have locked horns in the past with the governor openly accusing the President's son of coddling jueteng (an illegal numbers' game) operators in the province, a charge that both Arroyo and Malacañang have steadfastly denied.

Last November, Arroyo said that his mother would go back to teaching, or become a full-time grandmother, or hop on the lecture circuit after she would have stepped down in 2010 to dispel talk that she would cling on to power.

But with her Cabinet men openly stating the President's desire to run for Congress in 2010 last week, Arroyo's indecision on whether to run for a third term as congressman or shoot for the provincial capitol has only added fuel to his mother's supposed congressional bid.

The Pampanga congressman had an active hand in gathering 176 signatures in the House of Representatives. ■

Remittance, ERP to help boost RP economy this year—BSP

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. believes the domestic economy can withstand the global slowdown and continue to post growth this year.

"The government is still forecasting positive growth this

year, albeit slower than previous forecast," he said.

Last week, the inter-agency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) again slashed the government's 2009 growth target to 0.8-1.8 percent from the 3.1-4.1 percent previ-

ously in line with the global developments.

Economic managers said they remain positive on the domestic economy's output, as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) this year but they expect the impact of the global economic meltdown to be larger particularly on consumption and investments.

The economy grew by a mere 0.4 percent in the first quarter this year against year-ago's 3.9 percent after domestic consumption declined on back of lower spending particularly by beneficiaries of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) despite the continued strong remittance inflows.

Economic managers, however, noted larger portion of the remittances went to savings.

A BSP survey in the second quarter this year showed that consumers remain bullish on their buying intentions in the rest of the year, thus, monetary officials said this will boost spending and buoy up the economy.

"As reported, consumption and investments, which slowed significantly in Q1, are expected to recover in the next quarters, supported by steady remittances, the full impact of the ERP (economic resiliency plan), and improvement in market confidence as more news/data are released that the worst in global contraction may be over," Tetangco added.

The central bank project a flat growth for remittances this year as some OFWs lose jobs because of the global slowdown but monetary officials believe that remittances will post a positive growth this year on back of continued higher demand for OFWs.

Tetangco said they have not revised their remittance forecast for this year but "this will be reviewed shortly."

In end-April this year, remittances posted a 2.6 percent growth after inflows for the four-month period aggregated to US\$ 5.5 billion from year-ago's US\$ 5.36 billion. (PNA)

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