

**JPE WARNS COMELEC**

**No election could spark revolution**

by CHRISTINE AVENDAÑO  
Inquirer.net



MELO. Mellow during the four-hour Senate hearing to probe Comelec's preparedness and into the winning bidder's contract.  
Inquirer.net Photo by Jess Yuson

SENATE President Juan Ponce Enrile expressed last June 24 concern over the preparations for the conduct of the automated balloting next year, warning a failure to hold the presidential election could spark a revolution.

During a four-hour Senate hearing, officials of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) were questioned on whether due diligence had been made in selecting the consortium of Smartmatic-Total Information Management Corp. to carry out the computerized polling.

The signing of the P7.4-billion contract has been set for June 26 with the Barbados-based company to supply 82,200 counting machines to get results of the polls within two days of voting instead of weeks it takes currently.

The senators also sought a review of the "hubs" where the counting machines will be stored following disclosure that planning for this had been subcontracted by Smartmatic to a forward firm, To Go, owned by the Aboitiz family that is closely identified with the First Family.

"If you don't have an election in this country, you're going to have a revolution," Enrile said. "We have to be very careful and be sure that we can really hold an election with an automated system. Never mind the money, it's the social explosion that will come that we should be worried about," he added.

**Patented machine breakdown**  
Politicians and analysts have been casting doubt over the automated process. Many fear chaos due to potential machine breakdown and delays in result transmission, which could lead to a failed election and political limbo.

"While elections automation is definitely a step in the right direction and helps limit cheating and fraud, it is not fool-proof and both the public and candidates could lean on irregularities and flaws to contest results."

Critics fear that allies of President Macapagal-Arroyo could exploit any perceived malfunc-

tion in the automation process to invalidate the elections.

**Pretext for martial law**  
"If a popular uprising results, Arroyo could use it as the national security pretext for declaring martial law and subsequently extending her term," Troilo said.

During the hearing, the senators sought the need to authenticate the papers of Smartmatic after it was found out that it was the Philippine Embassy in Washington and not the Philippine Embassy in Caracas, Venezuela, that did the authentication.

Escudero said he got word from Foreign Secretary Franklin Ebdalin that this document should have been authenticated by the Philippine Embassy in Venezuela as it had jurisdiction over Barbados.

Smartmatic spokesperson Cezar Flores said that the company was formed by mostly Venezuelans in Netherlands but it had another company in Barbados, which made the tender and eventually won the poll automation project.

Rafanan disagreed on Escudero and Enrile's desire for the Comelec to make corrections on the authentication papers.

"Why will the consulate general in Washington do the authentication if he did not have any jurisdiction?" Rafanan said. "There is nothing to correct."

**P1.5-billion capital**  
But it turned out that the Barbados firm had only a capitalization of P1.5 billion, which is less than

the P7.4-billion winning bid it made for the project.

"This means they are frying us in our own fat," Escudero later told reporters. "They are not using their own money. What we pay them that's what they are going to use for the automation."

**Do homework**  
Escudero said that Comelec should have done its "homework" and exercised due diligence because it was important to know the people behind Smartmatic.

Comelec officials also got a scolding after senators learned that the plan for the deployment and storage of the 80,000 counting machines to be used on election day was made not by the poll body but by To Go.

The senators were concerned on the choices of "hubs" and "sub hubs" for the deployment of the counting machines by the Aboitiz firm.

For Sen. Richard Gordon, a hub is "a place in a strategic area where one has the capability to transport cargo by air, land sea and has communication capability" and the hubs that were enumerated were "not hubs."

Both Enrile and Gordon demanded a detailed proposal on the hubs and subhubs.

"Why is it that To Go would be saying how this would be done and why is it not the Comelec which made a study and plan based on experiences from past elections," Escudero said.

**STOP FORECLOSURE!**

**Modify Your Loan**

**NOW HANDLING**

**Loan Modification • Bankruptcy 7 & 13**

**Immigration • Divorce**

**Family Petition**

**Negotiate the Terms of Your Current Loan Immediate Debt Relief**

**Easy Payment Plans Available**



Suzy Padilla-Tuaño

**Handang Tumulong sa Inyo**



**LAW OFFICE OF ALAN R. FREEDMAN**

2770 S. Maryland Parkway #205, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109

**Tel: 792.4018 • Cell: 334.8843**

**SEA CARGO**

*Secure*

As low as

**\$65**

Box size: 24x18x18

NVOCC licensed & bonded: 8609N



www.teamlbc.com

**FULLY PROTECTED!**

LBC takes great care in ensuring that the contents of your balikbayan boxes are safe and secure – arriving intact in your loved ones' homes. Fully sealed and protected.

For more information, please call:  
**(800) 338-5424**

or email us at: [customer.care@teamlbc.com](mailto:customer.care@teamlbc.com).