

# Erap to block GMA bid for prime minister

by JOSE RODEL CLAPANO  
Philstar.com



Former President Joseph Estrada

FORMER President Joseph Estrada vowed last June 17 to run for congressman of San Juan to block President Arroyo's bid to become prime minister should her House allies succeed in establishing a parliamentary form of government through a constituent assembly.

"I can also easily run for Congress in San Juan to ensure that President Arroyo does not become prime minister," Estrada said.

Administration officials are expected to contest Estrada's congressional bid by claiming that he is barred from public office under the terms of the presidential pardon granted by Mrs. Arroyo.

"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 (Pampanga) Gov. (Ed) Panlilio, are egging me on to run because he's a non-performing asset," Mikey Arroyo told gmanews.tv.

It was United Opposition president and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay who first raised the scenario of Mrs. Arroyo running for a congressional seat in Pampanga in preparation for the establishment of a parliamentary system of government where she can emerge as prime minister.

"President Arroyo may opt to run for Congress to make herself House speaker, then prime minister," Binay said.

Panlilio earlier said that Mrs. Arroyo had been visiting the second district of Pampanga in the past weeks apparently on unofficial campaign sorties.

"She's the only president who has made 16 visits to Pampanga for four months, fourteen of which were done in the second district which includes, among others, Porac and Guagua," Panlilio said. "She is eye-

ing the prime ministership. Street concreting and construction of covered courts are being made in Pampanga."

"Becoming a congresswoman, then House speaker and then prime minister is one of her options in her desire to stay in power," Panlilio said.

"The message here is still to stop con-ass or Cha-cha in any form. This is just to show that the idea of President Arroyo running for Congress to keep herself in power forever is an audacious if not a ridiculous idea," Estrada spokesperson Margaux Salcedo said.

"If the administration insists on keeping Mrs. Arroyo in power beyond 2010 by a change to a parliamentary system of government and by making Mrs. Arroyo prime minister, they can be certain that the opposition is ready to counter their actions to ensure that she does not hold on to power forever," Salcedo said.

Mikey Arroyo said he was preparing for his election bid.

President Arroyo currently has four relatives in the House of Representatives: Mikey, 40, on his second term as representative of Pampanga's second district; another son Diosdado Macapagal Arroyo, 34 on his first term as representative of Camarines Sur's 1st district; Ignacio Arroyo, 58, brother-in-law, on his second term as representative of Negros Occidental's 5th district; and Ma. Lourdes T. Arroyo, sister-in-law, on her first term as representative of Kasangga party-list

In his interview with gmanews.tv, Mikey refused to call themselves a dynasty, saying a dynasty only exists if a number of family members get elected in one geographic area.

# DTI to go after 'vultures' in H1N1 scare

by CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA  
Inquirer.net

MALACAÑANG on Wednesday, June 17 warned what it called business "vultures" against jacking up prices of medicines and medical equipment in response to the growing scare over a supposedly "mild" Influenza A(H1N1) virus.

Lorelei Fajardo, deputy presidential spokesperson, said the Department of Trade and Industry was ordered to look into complaints that drugstores have been selling items such as anti-virals, vitamins, flu vaccines, and masks at much higher prices in the face of increased consumer demand.

With 64 new cases announced Wednesday, June 17 which brought the number of confirmed cases to 311, Fajardo, said businessmen should be "more responsible during this crisis."

"We should not support these vultures," she said, noting that patients could readily seek assistance from the Department

of Health (DoH).

Health Undersecretary Mario Villaverde told a news conference in Malacañang that the 64 new cases were all "mild in nature." Of the number, two were foreigners but the health official did not disclose their nationality.

If it's any consolation, he said, eight of the earlier recorded cases had fully recovered, bringing to 93 the total number of people who had recovered.

Villaverde warned that existing vaccines might create a "false sense of security" among the public. He noted that such vaccines were only for the regular seasonal flu and not for the new H1N1 flu virus.

Doctor Yolanda Oliveros, director of the DoH Disease Prevention and Control Center, said at least two drug companies—Novartis and Baxter—had presented plans to come up with pre-pandemic vaccines.

In the event that such a vaccine became available, she said the

government would strike a balance between available resources and who should be given vaccines first.

In other countries, she said priority was given to those who provided basic services such as policemen, soldiers, teachers and health workers. She said others put premium on working groups.

"The current vaccines available now are for the seasonal flu," Villaverde said. "So you are protected against the seasonal flu, but [the vaccine] is not specific to A(H1N1)."

Even if the number of cases continued to rise despite aggressive mitigation efforts by the government, health authorities continued to press for calm, insisting that the current flu strain was "mild."

Villaverde said cases could be treated at home and sometimes even without the popular antiviral Oseltamivir. He said work places need not be shut down in the event employees went down with the illness.

# GMA signs law revising government workers pay

PRESIDENT Arroyo has signed Joint Resolution No. 4 Series of 2009 or the Salary Standardization Law-3, which will raise the salaries of all public servants by 50 percent this July.

Before leaving for Japan for a four-day official visit, the President made the ceremonial signing before members of Congress at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Pasay City.

The SSL-3 is the third salary adjustment implemented by the government. The first was in 1989 and the second in 1994.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. said the new adjustments in the pay and position scale of public servants would make government service more competitive with the private sector.

"Though talent would follow the market that would pay for it,

we cling to the hope that the new SSL will stop or at least delay the migration of government-trained professionals to the private sector," Andaya said.

"To stop this hemorrhage, we could have prescribed higher pay for all, but the rule in wage-setting is that it should be tempered at the level that your employers can afford," he added.

Andaya pointed out that the SSL-3 would cost the government P125.6 billion for its 1.141 million employees.

The SSL-3 will be implemented in four tranches from this year to 2012.

The first installment would be in the amount of P18.4 billion which is already allocated in this year's national budget.

"The idea behind the staggered payment is to let revenues

grow alongside expenses. As more money goes into public coffers, more will be put inside pay envelopes. In short, the pay hike will be commensurate with the hike in the tax effort," Andaya explained.

He noted that the public school teachers would be one of the groups that would benefit the most from the salary adjustment.

At more than 522,000, teachers account for almost half of the government workforce.

The teachers would end up getting a basic salary of somewhere between P18,000 to P19,500 or a 50 percent increase when fully given.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo said the pay increase would encourage more talents to join the government service. (Philstar.com)

# Green activist seeks presidency

by EDSON C. TANDOC JR.  
Inquirer.net



CLEAN AND GREEN (HORN). Nicanor Perlas, a well-known name in clean and green circles but without name recall in the dirty and shadowy political landscape, offers himself as a "real choice" in 2010. Inquirer Photo by Raffy Lerma

LOOKING for politicians "of real qualifications" and finding none, an activist-environmentalist yesterday presented himself as an aspirant for the presidency.

By his act, Jesus Nicanor "Nick" Perlas III said he was showing his faith in not only his experience of working with farmers as well as foreign officials but also in the readiness of Filipinos to vote for change.

"There are many Filipinos who have grown tired of elections where there are no real choices. We are tired of always having to choose the lesser evil. This is why I am announcing my intention to run in the 2010 elections," Perlas told some 50 friends and supporters at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani park in Quezon City.

Asked if he could win, he said: "Yes, absolutely!"

With that envisioned victory, Perlas said he would ensure a "tight case" against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"She has damaged this country so much, and I want justice," he said.

Perlas said he had been offered full-time government posts, including the environment portfolio

in 2003, but that he had turned these down.

"I am a private person," he said. "I don't want to be in the limelight."

But having grown tired of waiting for change, and after being assured of the support of friends and family, including his wife Kathryn Carpenter and their 19-year-old son Christopher Michael, he made the "painful" decision to seek the presidency.

**A million volunteers**  
Perlas, 59, is the latest in the list of personalities projected as alternatives to traditional politicians.

They are his friends, he said, referring to Pampanga Governor Ed Panlilio, Isabela Gov. Grace Padaca and Olongapo Councilor John Carlos de Los Reyes of Ang Kapatiran party.

Perlas is also aware of wealthier and more popular presidential aspirants.

He hopes to match their machinery and campaign funds by mobilizing a million volunteers and operating on the idea that money "cannot buy hearts and minds that dream of something better."

"No one really steps up to chal-

lenge the system the way I can challenge it," he said.

**But who is Perlas?**  
In a statement distributed during yesterday's event, organizers said that while Perlas was "not a familiar name to most Filipinos," he had spent the last 40 years "in dedicated and quiet public service."

The man is known for opposing the operation of the fraudulently built Bataan Nuclear Power Plant (BNPP) and the plan to build 11 others during the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos.

He served as consultant of the Presidential Committee on the Philippine Nuclear Power Plant and of the Philippine Council of Sustainable Development during the Aquino and Ramos administrations, respectively.

He was a member of the steering committee of Kompil II, a civil society umbrella group that helped oust President Joseph Estrada in 2001.

He also served as co-founder and spokesman of Pagasa 1.0, which was among the groups that called for Ms Arroyo's resignation at the height of the "Hello Garci" election fraud scandal in 2005.

**Selection process**  
Perlas said he had spoken with Panlilio and Padaca about his planned run for the presidency.

He is open to a "selection process" to unite the so-called Third Force "as long as the process is credible."

"It will be fantastic if we can unite," he said.

Perlas observed that Panlilio and Padaca's "expertise on specific areas is limited to the local level," whereas he spent 10 years "briefing policymakers abroad."

Because of his work against the BNPP, Perlas was forced to leave the country in 1978. He did not return until 1987.

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