

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

HOUSE ALLIES CONFIRM

'Arroyo can run for prime minister'

Likely scenario once Con-ass approved

by GIL C. CABACUNGAN JR.
Inquirer.net

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo can run for prime minister in a parliamentary system being pushed by her allies in the House of Representatives who are seeking to amend the Constitution and are threatening to bypass the Senate in the process.

This was confirmed during the hearing of the House committee last May 12 on constitutional amendments by La Union Rep. Victor Ortega when questioned on whether the pending Charter change (Cha-cha) bills do not preclude the incumbent from seeking the highest post in the new form of government.

The Cha-cha debate is expected to come to a head as soon as congressmen start choosing between a constituent assembly (Con-ass) and a so-called "fourth mode" of Charter change starting next week.

Ortega said that the House would put off plenary deliberations on Speaker Prospero Nograles' House Resolution No. 737, which seeks to lift constitutional restrictions on foreign busi-



BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo appears relaxed at the Imperial Palace Waterpark Resort Hotel and Spa in Mactan, Cebu, even as she carries on with the affairs of state. Earlier, she addressed the One Visayas Summit on Climate Change where she said that it is bad for the economy, particularly for the Visayas whose future is in eco-tourism. Inquirer.net Photo by Edwin Bacasmas

nessmen through the normal legislative route—the fourth mode.

Ortega said his committee would have to decide first next Tuesday on Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte's House Resolution No. 1109, which is pushing a Con-ass with the House and the Senate voting jointly.

With the House dominating in numbers, the Senate would then become irrelevant, according to lawmakers. The Senate is opposing Con-ass.

Ortega, who chairs the committee, said nobody would be prohibited from running for prime minister should Congress pass the necessary constitutional amendment and the shift to the parliamentary system was approved in a plebiscite.

"All prohibitions contained in the (current) Constitution is set aside," he said.

"Should we become parliamentary, President Gloria can run in her district, President Erap can run in San Juan, President Cory in Tarlac and President Ramos in Pangasinan. If they will become prime minister, only God can answer that," Ortega said.

He stressed that he was only talking about the possibility and not the probability of Ms Arroyo running for Congress.

"It only confirmed our fears that these (Cha-cha) resolutions

are dangerous and are meant to protect Arroyo's stay in office," said Akbayan party-list Rep. Riza Hontiveros-Baraquel.

Immunity from lawsuits

Former Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. claimed that the President would run for a congressional seat in her Lubao hometown in Pampanga province in 2010 to have immunity from lawsuits.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Rodolfo Antonino noted that it was entirely possible that she will become Speaker.

But Quezon Rep. Lorenzo "Erin" Tañada III pointed out that only the prime minister (just like the president in the current system) would have legal immunity.

Tañada said this was the reason President Arroyo, who has faced a string of corruption scandals, has to be impeached first before being charged in court, while senators or congressmen could be charged in court any time.

Public hearings required

Antonino earlier said that approval of HR 1109 in the committee should come first since it had already been endorsed by a clear majority of the House members with 174 signatures.

Antonino said it would be a waste of time for the committee to discuss it further when the proposal clearly had sufficient support. ■

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GMA defines her desired legacy for Filipinos

LAPU-LAPU CITY, CEBU—What legacy would President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo want to leave behind for the country and the Filipino people when she bows out of office?

The President was asked this question during a media interview Tuesday, May 12, at the brand new Imperial Palace Waterpark Resort here shortly before she addressed the *One Visayas Climate Change Summit* and the Cabinet meeting in the same venue.

Her answer: the continuity and completion of the many programs she has initiated in the economic and fiscal fronts.

The President also wants to see the continuation of what she has invested in the three E's—education, economy and the environment.

In her inaugural address in 2004, the Chief Executive stressed that her principal responsibility was to keep the country on track and to focus on her vision of transforming the Philippines into a First World country in 20 years.

Her vision of a modern Philip-

ponents of free enterprise, modern agriculture, a social bias to balance the country's economic development, and enhancing the rule of law and standards of governance.

It was apparently in accordance with this vision that her government focused on efforts to strengthen the country's macroeconomic fundamentals, strictly observed fiscal discipline, launched an aggressive campaign to re-engage with the world, and assiduously worked on the fulfillment of her ten-point agenda that puts premium on investing in the Filipino.

It may also be accordance with her governance orientation that she dared to sacrifice much of her political capital several times, making unpopular reform decisions that happily proved correct and beneficial for the long-term welfare of the Filipino people.

One indication of her success in economic governance is the country's unprecedented record of 36 quarters of uninterrupted growth and a record-breaking 8 percent gross national product (GNP) growth in 2007. (OPD)

The comeback kid

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the referee signaled the fight over. It was like the ending of Rudy when the walk on finally had his chance and was carried off the Notre Dame field by his teammates.

After the match, Top Rank President Bob Arum walked up to Vilorio and said, "That took a lot of guts, kid."

"Everyone who followed my career closely knew what I had to go through to get back there," said Vilorio nearly choking up. "This time around it wasn't spoon fed... I had to fight for it and it felt like I had to fight more for this world championship that's why this is more special than my first one."

The day after the match, Vilorio was still in disbelief.

Vilorio's fiancé Erica Navarro said that Vilorio woke up wondering if it was all just a dream.

"I told him to look at his face and see all the bruises," said Navarro. "I saw what Brian went through and when he was contemplating about his career. I was there when he cried. I was there in all of his lowest points and to see him go through that it was hard for me but to see him comeback and overcome all of those obstacles was just amazing. I told him, 'they should make a movie about you.'" ■