

Comelec: 2010 poll automation still on

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10 years to decide," he added.

Macalintal said waiting for the resolution of the cases involving supposed anomalies in the purchase of the ACMs from MPC would only make the machines futile.

"By that time, these 1,991 ACMs will become totally obsolete or will be fully deteriorated. In the meantime, we lost P1.2 billion and at the same time the Comelec, since 2004 up to the present, continues to pay the amount of P3.9 million as storage fees for keeping them at the Maxilite warehouse. This is indeed ridiculous, if not highly frivolous, as the government continues to spend P3.9 million for storage fees of 1,991 ACMs which we cannot even use for the purpose for which they were purchased," he lamented.

Macalintal appealed to the government to take a "practical and equitable" move by making use of the 1,991 ACMs.

He said it is too late for the Comelec to purchase new automated machines at this point.

He said that even if qualified bidders come up, the poll body does not have ample time to set up necessary programs and training to use the newly acquired automated machines next year.

"To reiterate, there is nothing wrong with these machines. Only legal technicalities made them wrong. Now is the time to rectify this wrong and at the same time prevent another wrong in the offing if the government would still insist on spending P11.3 billion for the 2010 automated polls when all starting bidders were already disqualified," he said.

But Melo said the poll is prohibited from using the P1.2 billion ACMs.

"It's not possible because as per Supreme Court's order, the Comelec cannot use or touch the mega pacific machines," Melo said, adding that the case is still pending before the court.

Open election system
Meanwhile, National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales has another suggestion to the Comelec on how it could implement automated polls in 2010 even after the bidding for computerized machines to be used in balloting failed. ■

SOLON SUGGESTS Ask people on Charter change in 2010 polls

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

As congressmen can't seem to agree among themselves on how to amend the Constitution, a member of the House of Representatives proposed last May 13 to throw the question to the people.

Paranaque Representative Roilo Golez said that a question could be inserted in the ballots in the May 2010 election on whether or not the voters favor a constitutional convention to amend the Charter.

Golez said he would file a House concurrent resolution last May 13 invoking Section 3 of Article XVII of the Constitution that states that "The Congress may... by a majority vote of all its Members, submit to the electorate the calling of such a (constitutional) convention."

"Let the people, not Congress, decide whether they want a con con," he said in a text message. "Thus, they will vote yes or no for con con, instead of having to select delegates already in the 2010 elections."

This way, he said the people would be able to decide "whether they want charter change and whether it should be by con con."

With the yes or no proposition, Golez said the issue of Charter change "becomes less politicized and clearer."

"This option makes the clear statement: Let the people decide," he added.

The congressman warned that the voters could be exposed to "an overdose of political noise and indigestion" if they would also have to elect delegates for the constitutional convention together with the national and local candidates in 2010.

On the hearing of the committee on constitutional amendments last May 12, several members have expressed an inclination toward constitutional convention to amend the Constitution, even as Speaker Prospero Nograles said the House would consider this option when Congress resumes session in August.

Nograles said that for now, the majority bloc in the House would see how House Resolution 1109 would prosper at the committee level and in plenary.

HR 1109 seeks to convene Congress into a constituent assembly. ■

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