

Comelec to declare bid winner this week

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) may officially declare within the week Smartmatic as the winning bidder and supplier of the P11.3 billion worth of automated machines for the 2010 elections.

Ferdinand Rafanan, who chairs the Comelec's Special Bids and Awards Committee (SBAC), said the panel is nearing the end of the bidding process and is likely to submit the necessary recommendation within the week.

"We are trying to wind up things and, probably, by Monday or Tuesday, we will make a recommendation to the commission en banc," Rafanan disclosed.

Rafanan explained that the Comelec Technical Working Group (TWG) is expected to complete the evaluation of Smartmatic's voting machines and will submit the report today (June 1).

After the post-qualification stage, the SBAC is supposed to submit to the Comelec en banc their recommendations on which bidder should be awarded the contract.

Based on the initial reports from the TWG, Rafanan said Smartmatic's machines scored an immaculate accuracy rate, better than the 99.995 percent requirement of the Comelec.

"The machines were tested four times and in all those times, the accuracy rating was 100 percent," Rafanan said.

Aside from the machine evaluations, the SBAC's post qualification screening also includes the verification into Smartmatic's alleged ties with the Venezuelan government and who are the machines' real "patent" owner.

According to Rafanan, they are still in the process of evaluating documents and waiting for additional documents from abroad.

Aside from being declared as the "single complying calculated bid," the road became clearer for Smartmatic after its remaining competitor, AMA Group of Companies and Election System and Software (ES&S) joint venture, decided to withdraw its

motion for reconsideration. The AMA group cited loss of confidence in the process in their decision to withdraw their appeal.

AMA Project Director Juanito Ramos said their confidence in the SBAC got severely damaged after the latter allowed Smartmatic to restart the demonstration last week despite an incident wherein one of its machines' batteries overheated.

Smartmatic had already explained that the battery overheated after they used a thinner set of wires to connect it to the machine but that their Precinct Counting Optical Scan (PCOS) equipment has an auto shutdown mechanism in cases of outside irregularities such as fire or smoke.

The SBAC decided to re-start the demonstration after noting that it was the batteries and not the proposed machines which were defective. (Philstar.com)

H1N1 cases soar to 21 - DOH

by SHEILA CRISOSTOMO
Philstar.com

FIVE more Filipinos, two of whom were guests at a wedding in Zambales last May 17, have tested positive for Influenza A(H1N1), raising to 21 the total number of confirmed cases in the country.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III yesterday said that two of the patients—a 40-year-old female and a 51-year-old male—came in contact with an infected Taiwanese mother and daughter who attended the same wedding.

The three other patients—a 19-year-old male, a 45-year-old male and his 39-year-old common-law-wife—have traveled to the United States but developed symptoms after they arrived in the Philippines.

"They are now confined in health facilities and are receiving Oseltamivir and supportive treatment... We reiterate that if you have

traveled to an A(H1N1) affected country or have been exposed to a confirmed case and have fever, cough, sore throat or other flu-like symptoms, please consult a health facility immediately," he noted.

Of the 21 confirmed cases of A(H1N1), 10 got the virus from the Taiwanese nationals.

According to Dr. Eric Tayag, director of Department of Health's (DOH) National Epidemiology Center, they were able to trace 32 contacts of the 10 infected wedding guests.

Five of them have manifested symptoms but tested negative for the virus when their throat swab samples were examined.

Three of the 21 cases have already been discharged after they recovered from the illness. Four more will be discharged once their second laboratory tests yield negative results.

School response level

system vs A(H1N1)

The Department of Education (DepEd) and the DOH have put in place guidelines for controlling the A(H1N1) virus from spreading in school campuses.

The guidelines, dubbed "School Level Response Level System for A(H1N1)" is composed of four levels of respons-

es for school authorities.

Education Secretary Jesli Lapus said that he has already signed a department order for the dissemination of the DOH's "School Response Level System for A(H1N1)."

"The response level system is similar to the Pagasa's storm

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