

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

GMA not running for Congress in 2010, says Remonde

MALACAÑANG said last June 7 the opposition's claim that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, using the charter change and constituent assembly to perpetuate herself in power beyond 2010, are attempts "to demonize the current administration."

In a briefing shortly after the Chief Executive arrived this morning at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport from the week-long official visits to South Korea

and Russia with some members of the Cabinet, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said the President herself has confirmed—with the merger of Lakas Kampi CMD recently—that the elections will push through in 2010.

Asked if the President intends to run for Congress in 2010, Remonde said she does not.

He said that all the grim scenarios are being painted by the opposition because of the coming

"election season."

"In every election season you expect anything, including dirt to be thrown your way," Remonde said.

He reiterated that the President has not, in any way, interfered with the functions of Congress in the charter change or ConAss issue. "So why is the opposition insisting she had a hand in ConAss?" Remonde asked.

He said the Palace respects the democratic rights of everyone "to express their dissent and feelings about anything, but they must do the same within the boundaries of the law."

The President was met at the airport by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro, and P/Supt. Jesus Versoza, among others. Her plane arrived at 8am. and upon acknowledging those who welcomed her and her party, the President boarded her car after briefly meeting with some officials.

It is a busy week for the President as she had a trip to Porac last June 8 and a series of trips to Mindanao within the week.

Remonde said the President is calling "next week" a meeting of the Legislative Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC), which was created by her predecessor, former President Fidel V. Ramos. (PND)

Erap, Chavit together again



THE last time Pres. Joseph 'Erap' Estrada and former Ilocos Sur Gov. and now National Deputy Security Adviser Luis 'Chavit' Singson were seen together in one place was last January at the wake for Erap's

mom, Doña Mary Ejercito.

The two were seen together again recently and was captured by the photo shown above at the 65th wedding anniversary celebration of Romeo and Ester de Guzman of Baguio City, the

two gentlemen's family friends, held at Wack-Wack Golf & Country Club in Mandaluyong City.

Also present were the couple's sons Bobbit and Jun. Not in picture is son Omar. (Philstar.com)

Escudero, Lim launch Charter change protest

SENATOR Francis Escudero and Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim launched last June 8 the first

salvo of anti-Charter change protests during the flagraising rites in city hall.

Lim dubbed the passage of House Resolution 1109 as treachery by representatives who voted for its passage.

He claimed that it was an act intended to deprive the people of the right to choose their leaders.

For his part, Escudero lamented how the members of the House of Representatives were gearing up to make amendments to the 1987 Constitution on their own, disregarding the Senate.

The senator and the mayor led some 1,000 city hall employees in signing a manifesto saying "No to con-ass! The Manileños have spoken." (Inquirer.net)

GMA trip bags \$2 billion in investment pledges

by PAOLO ROMERO
Philstar.com

PRESIDENT Arroyo arrived last June 7 from an eight-day trip to South Korea and Russia where over \$2 billion in investment and financial commitments were secured and diplomatic and security ties with the two countries were strengthened, Malacañang said.

Mrs. Arroyo arrived aboard a Philippine Airlines flight at the Centennial Terminal at around 7:50 a.m. with First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo along with some Cabinet officials. She was met by Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde, who accompanied Mrs. Arroyo to the trip, told an early news briefing at the airport that "the President was focused on labor and opening markets for our products in every country she visited."

"All in all, we were able to get a total investment commitment of \$2.211 billion," Remonde said.

In Seoul, South Korea, the President joined the celebration for the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and South Korea. While in Korea, she also joined other heads of state in the region to attend the Asean-Republic of Korea Commemorative Summit.

She also held bilateral talks with South Korean President Lee Myung Bak and Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, who agreed to strengthen his country's defense cooperation with the Philippines and work together to maintain stability in the disputed areas in the South China Sea.

Among the investment commitments secured during the trip are \$12.97 million from the Korea International Cooperation Agency for a rice processing complex that will be built in Luzon; \$150 million from the Export-Import Bank of Korea for alternative energy projects and an additional \$475 million for similar ventures, including \$175 million from Eco-Solutions for a jathropha plantation in South Cotabato and \$300 million of investment from Enviro-Plasma for a sugar ethanol plant in Clark.

Korean firm M Castle also pledged to push tourism projects in Subic worth \$1.521 billion while Dong Wang is planning to put up a \$515 million hotel and golf course in Clark, Remonde said.

Other investment pledges include the \$6.52 million for an agricultural project; \$10.9 million for the expansion of the Malinao Dam in Bohol; and \$49 million for a coconut shell processing plant.

Remonde said Hanjin, one of the biggest investors in the Philippines, informed Mrs. Arroyo of plans to put up a ship component facility in addition to their ship building complex in Subic. The facility is expected to generate \$29 million in annual average production value. ■

Government can't relax in face of recession—Noli

VICE President Noli De Castro said the government cannot afford to be complacent in the face of a possible recession as reported by the National Statistics and Coordination Board (NSCB).

Speaking at the Business Summit at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), De Castro said the reported recession only confirms the need for the country to be vigilant because the economic environment remains volatile.

"Our government is not taking any chance. We cannot afford to become complacent. We have to aim for the best," De Castro said, adding that the government is implementing the economic resiliency plan or ERP to address the impact of the global crisis.

"The ERP will have a funding support of P330 billion and will seek to ensure sustainable eco-

nomical growth, save and create as many jobs as possible, protect the most vulnerable sectors, and promote low and stable prices of commodities," he added.

In the housing sector, De Castro said the Pag-IBIG Fund has set aside more than P80 billion for housing loans of its members.

He said the administration has also issued an executive order encouraging all government agencies to allocate at least 1.5 percent of their maintenance and other operating expenses (MOOE) for emergency employment. "Priority will be given to those displaced by the crisis," he said.

Globally, De Castro said countries are hopeful that the financial storm is weakening and that recovery will begin next year. (Philstar.com)



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