

Escudero needs boost in pre-poll survey—ally

by MAILA AGER
Inquirer.net

SENATOR Francis Escudero's strong showing in recent pre-election surveys are "good," but not good enough to serve as a launch pad for a "credible" presidential campaign in 2010, a member of a committee that has been studying his possible candidacy said.

While Escudero has been consistently in the top two or three potential candidates, his

ratings have not reached 25 percent as targeted, former Senator Sergio Osmeña III said.

"Maganda yung rankings nya pero that's still below 25 percent. Mababa pa rin. Dapat at least 25 percent [His rankings are good but that's still below 25 percent. That's still low. It should be at least 25 percent]," he said.

"It's the popular base. Yung nagno-nominate for president in 1992, yung mga surveys ng Pulse Asia at SWS [The surveys

of Pulse Asia and SWS nominated the presidential candidates in 1992]," said Osmeña, who has been with Escudero's exploratory committee for six months.

In the May 14 to 17 Pulse Asia Inc. independent survey, Escudero got a 17-percent rating, one percentage point behind Vice President Noli De Castro, who scored 18 percent.

The difference was within the three-percent error margin. In the April 16 to May 6 Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey, Escudero got 14 percent, behind De Castro who got 18 percent, and Senator Manuel Villar with 22 percent. Villar commissioned the study.

"We're still exploring... It's too early to declare his [Escudero's] candidacy," Osmeña said over the phone.

Contrary to the pronouncements of other presidential hopefuls, Osmeña believes that Escudero could launch his presidential bid with at least P100 million to P300 million.

Senator Panfilo Lacson has dropped his presidential bid, citing financial constraints.

"Yung iba kasi sinasabi na billions ang kailangan [Some say billions are needed]... We could start at P100 million to P300

Fernando now 'adopted son' of Kalibo

by DENNIS CARCAMO
Philstar.com

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA) chairman Bayani Fernando has been declared as an "adopted son" by the Kalibo municipal council for coming to the aid of the town during the typhoon "Frank" last year.

Passed last Friday, June 12 by the 11-member municipal council, the resolution also recognized Fernando and MMDA personnel for their "gestures of sympathy and assistance to the people of Kalibo."

"It would be a source of pride and inspiration for Kalibonhons to have an adopted son in the person of Chairman Bayani Fernando who is a dynamic leader and a man of vision who swiftly

executes his mission to deliver effective public service," the resolution said.

On June 25, 2008, Fernando sent a relief mission four days after tropical storm "Frank" battered Kalibo, destroying millions of pesos worth of properties and causing massive flooding in the town.

"The arrival of the MMDA contingent who came all the way from Manila is the first and most visible technical working group of the many agencies that extended assistance to Kalibo, thus, their presence gave hope and rekindled the sagging spirits of the town folks," the resolution said. ■

SC junks petition vs constituent assembly

by TETCH TORRES
Inquirer.net

THE Supreme Court has dismissed the petition filed by two lawyers seeking to nullify House Resolution 1109 which seeks to convene lawmakers into a constituent assembly, even without the approval of the Senate.

In its ruling, the high court said the issue on the constituent assembly was premature and lacked a justiciable issue.

The petitioners—lawyer Oliver Lozano and his daughter, lawyer Evangeline Lozano—

said HR 1109 was railroaded by the House of Representatives to extend the term of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo beyond 2010.

"The railroaded HR 1109 is unconstitutional or bogus for deviation from the prescribed procedures to amend the Constitution by excluding the Senate of the Philippines from the complete process of proposing amendments

to the Constitution and for lack of thorough debates and consultations," the Lozanos said.

"The nullification of HR 1109 will refocus the nation's attention to find alternative solutions to the economic crisis, poverty, hunger and rebellion... Wherefore, it is respectfully prayed that HR 1109 be nullified in the interest of public welfare," they said. ■

'OFW inflows, exports to lift economy'

by IRIS C. GONZALES
Philstar.com

SOCIOECONOMIC Planning Secretary Ralph Recto is optimistic that dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and an improvement in the performance of the export industry would help the country achieve the government's latest economic growth projection for 2009.

"Consumer spending will improve in the remaining part of the year," Recto said when asked of the chances of meeting the government's latest economic growth revision.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), the interagency group that sets the country's economic assumptions, downscaled anew the country's economic growth projection for 2009 to between 0.8 percent and 1.8 percent from the original target of between 3.1 percent and 4.1 percent on account of the larger impact of the global financial crisis.

Recto said the country would benefit from the continued inflows of dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers who traditionally send money by June for the school opening and before December, ahead of the holiday season.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) chief said these factors would prevent the economy from slipping into a recession.

The revised economic growth projection would result in a larger budget deficit for 2009 of P250 billion from P199.2 billion.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said the government would borrow more to finance the larger deficit.

"Due to lower revenues, there will be an increase in borrowings. We are thinking of an increase in ODA (official development assistance)," Teves told reporters.

He also said that despite the adverse impact of the lower growth on revenue collection, the government would keep its level of spending to help us sustain modest economic growth.

In the first quarter of the year, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew by only 0.4 percent. The economy shrank by a seasonally adjusted 2.3 percent from the last three months of 2008, its lowest level recorded for the past 20 years.

The 0.4 percent is significantly below the government's first quarter growth projection of 1.8 percent to 2.8 percent and below the adjusted 3.9 percent GDP expansion recorded in the same period last year. ■

NZ gov't urged to extend work permits of OFWs

by JEROME ANING
Inquirer.net

A GROUP of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in New Zealand will try to persuade immigration officials there next month to allow OFWs laid off due to redundancy to remain in the South Pacific state so that they could find new jobs.

Migrante said that New Zealand Immigration Minister Jonathan Coleman acknowledged last Monday, June 15 receiving its letter of June 12 which sought government intervention in extending laid-off migrants' work permits for three to six months.

"We believe that granting this appeal will not only alleviate considerable hardship for the individuals involved, but will also be the appropriate move to protect the rights of migrant workers who significantly contribute to the needs of the New Zealand economy," the group's national coordinator Dennis Maga said in his letter to Coleman.

Migrante, with the support of the local labor group National Distribution Union, earlier launched a petition regarding the work extension, adding that in practice, some employers had been willing to keep their workers for two to three months after announcing the redundancies, thus giving laid-off workers a chance to seek new jobs.

The group said migrant workers whose jobs were declared redundant usually receive two- to four-week notices from their employers.

Maga, however, said the period was not sufficient for a retrenched worker to find a new job and apply for a new work permit.

Maga said that retrenched OFWs and Filipinos seeking work in New Zealand would find it more difficult to land jobs after the labor department last week removed 40 occupations from its list of job categories that have "skills shortage" and may be filled up by migrant workers.

The de-listed job categories included bakers, sheep farm workers and numerous construction sector occupations, such as bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers and scaffolders. ■

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