ELECTION MONITOR

NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTION (NAMFREL)

Government uncertain on issue of Health insurance for voters

➢ On the first State of the Nationa Address (SONA) of President Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III promised to give million families of a three- year health insurance through the Philippine Health Insurance (PhilHealth). The government started its on nationwide distribution on October 1 targeting vendors, drivers and household helpers. However, government is still divided on the issue whether it is legal for candidates to cover the Philippine Health Insurance membership of voters, especially the poor. As far as Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon "Dinky" Soliman is concerned, the distribution of Philhealth cards should not be used as a campaign tool. Health Secretary Enrique Ona has earlier requested the poll body to exempt from related laws a candidate who would want to cover the insurance premium of poor residents. Commission on Election (Comelec) spokesperson James Jimenez expressed that upon filing the Certificate of Candidacy, candidates who will provide such health insurance coverage, might be open to charges of vote buying. On the initiative to provide health benefits for people, the government is commendable on its effort to achieve universal medical care for its people. This is a great response for the achievement of United Nation Millennium Development Goal No. 6 (UN- MDG) in combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases where the Philippines has a low pace of progress. However, this campaign should not be used by candidates because allowing such would also lead to unequal opportunity to campaign for candidates with unequal election resources.

Barangay election violence

➢ As of October 3, a total of 146 people were arrested nationwide for violating the gun ban. Those arrested include 9 government officials, 4 police officers, 2 soldiers, and 131 civilians, according to Philippine National Police (PNP) records. They are being charged for illegal possession of firearms. A German national Wollandt Hans Georg was the only foreigner collared so far for violating the ban.

Despite the apprehensions, there were pre- election killings continue recently, one is a Comelec Election Officer in Basilan on October 3, former barangay captain planning to run again was shot dead in Negros Occidental, former mayor in Lanao del Sur has been gunned down, a judge was also ambushed on October 4 in Lanao del Sur. These are indications that police and armed security should be wary despite the gun ban. Gun ban should bestrictly implemented to mitigate the number of election violence due to the proliferation of licensed firearms. This should be coupled with police and military visibility, dialogue among candidates and vigilance of voters.

Poll records preserved for Roxas' protest case

➢ In preparation for the start of hearings on the electoral protest filed by losing vice presidential bet Manuel Roxas II against Vice President Jejomar Binay, the Commission on Elections has ordered the "preservation" of all records used in the May 10 national polls. Comelec Resolution 9046 issued by the commission en banc directed all of the agency's field officials to ensure compliance with the Precautionary Protection Order of the Presidential Electoral Tribunal (PET) issued last August 31. The Comelec said the order will remain in force until the PET lifts the instant precautionary protection order or upon an order of the Commission. Preservation of the book of voters is essential so additional registered voters in the coming Barangay election would not to the previous May 2010 voters list thereby avoiding confusion during the protest hearings

[Sources: Abs cbn News, Business World, RTT news,Malaya COMELEC data, NAMFREL data,