



Sandiganbayan acquits Tancangco

Timeline of Activities

November 13- Special elections

November 30- All winning candidates in Barangay and SK elections shall be proclaimed

The Sandiganbayan last Thursday acquitted former Commission on Elections (Comelec) commissioner Luzviminda Tangcangco of graft charges in connection with the scrapped PhP 6.6 billion poll modernization contract awarded to Photokina Marketing Corporation in September 2000. In its decision, the Sandiganbayan said the Office of the Ombudsman failed to come up with sufficient evidence to establish Tangcangco's guilt. The court said the testimony of the lone prosecution witness, Fe Campos (then director of the Comelec's Personnel Department and was a member of the Public Bidding and Evaluation Committee (PBEC) and the Public Bidding and Award Committee (PBAC), both under Tangcangco at that time), showed the PBEC/PBAC actions were "collegial and merely recommendatory" and that there was no evidence showing that Tangcangco had the power to award, grant or approve the project on her own. It added that if there is anybody who should be held responsible for the award, it should be the members of the Commission en banc, and not Tangcangco.

The Office of the Ombudsman filed the case before the Sandiganbayan based on the January 27, 2004 complaint filed by Guillermo Luz, who was then secretary-general of NAMFREL; Augusto C. Lagman; and Telibert Laoc accusing Tangcangco of violating the requirements of RA no. 8436 to prioritize automation of the vote counting system for the May 11, 1998 national elections. The complainants said Tangcangco instead gave more importance to an automated registration by pushing for the issuance of a Notice of Award to Photokina, which submitted a PhP 6.62 billion bid – nearly six times the authorized budget of only PhP 1.2 billion. They said the project was awarded even without a Certificate of Availability of Funds from the chief accountant of the Comelec as required under PD NO. 1445 or the Government Auditing Code.

In 2002, the CBCP National Secretariat for Social Action, Justice and Peace (NASSA) and NAMFREL launched the People vs. Tangcangco Movement, a multisectoral group formed to consolidate efforts to impeach Tangcangco for graft and corruption, betrayal of public trust, and culpable violation of the constitution. This stemmed from the Comelec's failure to automate the counting of the 2001 election due to delaying tactics by the Comelec's modernization committee then-headed by Tangcangco, in favor of Tangcangco's PhP 6.56 billion Voters Registration and Information System (VRIS) project awarded to Photokina, the contract for which then-Comelec chair Harriet Demetriou even refused to sign, and afterwards shelved by Demetriou's successor Alfredo Benipayo. The contract had since been considered disadvantageous to the Philippine government (the Comelec not having enough allocated funds for said contract it wanted the government to enter into) and the awarding dubious, Photokina allegedly having ties with Guia Gomez, and Tangcangco herself closely associated with a brother-in-law of then-President Joseph Estrada. More than 200 organizations and hundreds of individuals here and abroad representing civil society, the church, business, the IT community, academe, and others joined the People vs. Tangcangco movement. However, only 57 congressmen supported the impeachment complaint, a dozen short of the required one-third of the House of Representatives.

PTF partners forum

The Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) in cooperation with Coalition Against Corruption (CAC) and Makati Business Club (MBC) successfully conducted a "Partners' Forum" yesterday, November 05, 2010 from 8:00am to 12:00nn at the AIM Conference Center, Makati City.

The specific objectives of the forum were to: (1)assess the impact of PTF-supported projects in the Philippines, (2) identify key lessons in the specific areas of intervention, (3) determine the progress of instituting transparency, accountability, participatory, and sustainability mechanisms with government agency partners, as well as (4) to provide advice to PTF and CAC on future programs implementation.

The forum was participated in by nine (9) PTF grantees in the Philippines, namely: Ecolink Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University (ASoG), National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), Procurement Watch (PWI), Evelio B. Javier Foundation Inc. (EBJFI), Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG), Ten Outstanding Boy Scouts of the Philippines Association (TOBSPA), and Philippine Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (PhilDHRRRA), and the Philippine Alliance on Justice Democracy and Governance (OAJDG).

During the forum, all PTF partners were given the opportunity to share their experiences and challenges encountered in project preparation, implementation, and evaluation.

The PTF Country Director, Mr. Geert van der Linden, the CAC Chairperson, Mr. Jose L. Cuisia, Jr., and the Social Development and Civil Society Specialist and PTF board member, Mr. John Clark presided over the forum.