



DILG chief hits Comelec order on multiple term village chiefs

Interior and Local Government Secretary Jesse Robredo bucked at the recent resolution of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) allowing the proclamation of village chiefs who have exceeded three terms. Robredo said a "third- termers" list was submitted by the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) as early as September 24, giving the Comelec ample time to verify the list. Comelec has less than a week to act on the list, before the newly-elected village chiefs assume office on November 30. The Interior Secretary expressed that the DILG merely wanted to assist the Comelec by providing useful information that can assist the latter in fulfilling its mandate. In fact, Comelec can easily validate the list since its local election officers have their own list of proclaimed winners at the barangay level during previous elections. Comelec however claims that the list submitted by the DILG has errors. But while Robredo admitted that the DILG list contained errors, these were only three out of the over 4,000 names.

NAMFREL E- Newsletters Volume 1 Issue Nos. 29 and 41 discussed that the Comelec being the election management body vested and mandated with all election related activities, this includes the task of accepting qualified local candidates registration. The Comelec was given ample time to act on the "third- termer" issue prior to elections and yet they did not. It is hoped that the impending changes in the Comelec's leadership would also be seen as an opportunity to introduce changes in the commissions management policies, practices, and procedures to prevent perennial issues plaguing the election body from arising again.

Philippine economy slows after election splurge

Philippine economic growth slowed to 6.5 percent in the July-September period as an election period spending splurge tapered off but consumer spending held firm. The government said that the year-on-year figure was lower compared with the 7.9 percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) the previous quarter, capped by a presidential, national, and local elections. Consumer spending levels spurred by election spending momentum supported growth even as bad weather sank farm output. Services, which comprise half the economy, grew 7.7 percent from a year earlier, as moderate inflation drove people to spend more and to build and purchase more homes, even as government spending on infrastructure declined. Industry growth rose 9.2 percent while agriculture, which accounts for about a fifth of the economy, shrank 2.5 percent. For the first nine months of the year the economy advanced 7.5 percent from the previous year.

Economist and the business community optimism is buoyed as election season approaches since election spending has always stimulated (albeit a consumer led-short term) economic growth due to billions of pesos spent by politicians for their campaign. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) has estimated that as much as 0.5 percentage points of GDP in 2010 can be attributed to the past two recent elections spending. This year's elections could also boost government's tax efficiency and collection. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), previously issued Revenue Regulation 8-09, slapping a 5% withholding tax on all political contributions and campaign expenditures this year.

Palace backs freedom of info bill

President Aquino has backed the crafting of a new Freedom of Information (FOI) measure by the House, but aired concerns over whether transcripts of meetings should be made public. The paper was submitted to the House committee on public information which began hearing the proposed FOI. Access to transcripts and minutes of official meetings may diminish candid and open discussions by public officials. The intention is not to hide information or to limit frequency of access but only to ensure that government operations are not hampered.

The Freedom of Information (FOI) bill or HB No. 3732, among other key measures, was not passed when the 14th Congress of the lower house adjourned on its last day of session on 3 February 2010 without a quorum. Section 7 of the Bill of Rights (Art. 3) and Declaration of Principles and State Policies Section 28 state the right to information of the citizens on matters of public concern except when it will create a clear and present danger of war, invasion, or any external threat to the state. The FOI bill if passed will be an enabling law of the rights to information granted by the Constitution. The proposed FOI law aims to address delays and failure of the government to cater to the request of citizens to public documents and providing clear administrative, criminal, and civil liability for violations of such rights to information. Transparency and accountability in government will be best served because of an expansive, non- discretionary, clear, uniform, and speedier process to access public documents and government transactions.

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