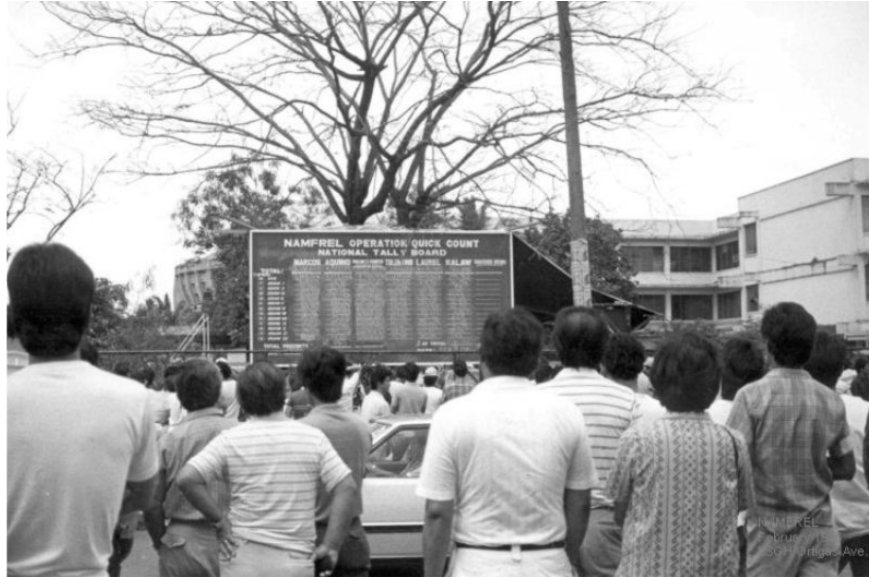


Nation commemorates 25th anniversary of the 1986 Snap Presidential Election



Today is the 25th anniversary of the historic 1986 Snap Presidential Election, in which hundreds of thousands of NAMFREL volunteers, led by founding chairman Jose S. Concepcion, Jr., came out to protect the ballot boxes and conducted the Operation Quick Count as Comelec's accredited citizens' arm.

Millions of Filipinos turned out to vote on February 7, 1986. Just a few months earlier, under pressure from different sectors in the country and from the international community, Marcos called for the snap election a year ahead of the regular presidential election schedule, to legitimize his continuous rule in the country. The official election canvasser, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC), declared Marcos the winner. The final tally of the COMELEC had Marcos winning with 10,807,197 votes against Aquino's tallied 9,291,761 votes. However, NAMFREL's parallel tally had Aquino winning with 7,835,070 votes against Marcos' 7,053,068 votes. NAMFREL volunteers nationwide suffered intimidation and violence in the conduct of its observation and collection of results, resulting to injury and death. The snap election was also marred by widespread tampering of election results, culminating in the walkout of 29 COMELEC computer technicians to protest the deliberate manipulation of the official election results to favor Ferdinand Marcos. Later that month, millions of Filipinos came out to peacefully protest the Marcos dictatorship. The rest is history.

To revisit moments from the 1986 Snap Elections please visit the following sites:

<http://www.namfrel.com.ph/photogallery/index1980s.htm>

<http://blip.tv/file/3332029>

http://www.namfrel.com.ph/archives/articles-excerpt_bantay_ng_bayan.htm

Poll officials involved in folder scam now back to work

In the May 10 automated elections, six Commission on Elections (Comelec) officials were involved in the alleged scam of procurement of folders worth PhP 687 million. The six Comelec officials were Executive Director Jose Tolentino, and former members of the Comelec's Bids and Awards Committee (BAC): Maria Lea Alarkon, Allen Francis Abaya, Maria Norina Casingal, Martin Niedo and Antonio Santella. Comelec Chairman Sixto Brillantes Jr. said that these officials can no longer serve in the BAC because they have already been replaced and can only return to their plantilla positions. However, their suspension expired without the Ombudsman filing any indictment against them before the anti-graft court Sandiganbayan. Though Tolentino heads the Specifications Committee that determines requirements for projects to be bid out by the BAC, the Comelec en banc would study if he can get a role in the bidding process while the case with the Ombudsman is still pending.

On July 22, 2010, it was reported that the Ombudsman initiated an investigation when Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez ordered the anti-graft agency's Field Investigation Office (FIO) to study and evaluate the report made by Comelec law department chief Ferdinand Rafanan recommending the prosecution of several poll officials over the ballot secrecy folder issue. However, there has not been any case filed yet by the Ombudsman and has not even conducted a preliminary investigation, although media reported that an order was released in July 2010 to probe the scam.

It is recommended that the Office of the Ombudsman immediately act on this issue, to dispel doubt from the public on the Comelec's manner on how it conducts its business especially now that other elections are coming up such as various Special Elections and the August 2011 ARMM polls.

Political Party updates

Thirty-four former members of Lakas-Kampi formed a new political party, the National Unity Party (NUP). Elected party chairman was Deputy Speaker Pablo Garcia, while Nueva Ecija Rep. Rodolfo Antonino was elected party president. Cavite representative Elpidio Barzaga was elected NUP vice president for external affairs. In the House, he is currently Chairman of the Committee on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms. Palawan representative Antonio Alvarez was chosen vice president for internal affairs, while Bataan Rep. Albert Garcia is treasurer. In an eight-page petition, the NUP named Southern Leyte Rep. Roger Mercado as its secretary-general. The group claims to have 3,000 members, and said that they will be pro-administration in the House of Representatives.

On January 11, 2011, the Supreme Court (SC) denied with finality the motion for reconsideration filed by former House Speaker Jose De Venecia, Jr. questioning the union of two of the country's largest political parties, the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats and the Kabalikat ng Mamayang Pilipino (KAMPI) for the May 10, 2010 polls. The SC ruled that De Venecia's motion for reconsideration raised "no substantial arguments" which would warrant the reversal of its December 16, 2009 resolution. It further said that De Venecia failed to show that the Comelec abused its discretion when it upheld the merger.

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