

# AMA's net satisfaction rating hits record low - SWS

President Arroyo has become the most unpopular Philippine president since Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 after her net satisfaction rating slipped to a new record-low of -38, surpassing the previous record of -35 in 2005, according to the Social Weather Stations (SWS).

Her dissatisfaction rating dropped dramatically to 60 percent, against a satisfaction rating of 26 percent.

For the first time, gross dissatisfaction is at majority levels in all study areas: 63 percent in Metro Manila, 60 percent in the balance of Luzon, 56 percent in the Visayas, and 62 percent in Mindanao, the SWS said.

The net satisfaction rating is the difference between the percentage of satisfied and unsatisfied respondents.

Results of the survey were released barely a week before Mrs. Arroyo delivers her eighth State of the Nation Address.

The non-commissioned survey was conducted from Feb. 27 to 30, using face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults divided into random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

In Malacanan, Presidential Management Staff chief Cerge Remonde blamed the president's high oil and food prices.

"The president is paying a high price for making the right decisions on very unpopular issues such as the value-added tax (VAT)," he said.

Remonde said the public also reacted negatively to Mrs. Arroyo's decision to continue with a trip to the US in June despite the ravages of typhoon "Frank," which left hundreds of people dead and missing.

"While the President is sensitive to public opinion, she took an oath that requires her to do what is right and not what is popular," he said.

Remonde said US President George W. Bush also suffers from poor public approval ratings.

To whom such responsibility is given, much is required. It's never easy to be

President of the Philippines," he said.

On the other hand, Deputy Presidential Spokeswoman Lorelei Fajardo said the record low ratings of Mrs. Arroyo did not come as a surprise.

"I am lonely at the top," she said in a recent interview. "Whether else shall the people look for relief but from the president and government."

Fajardo said the sound economic and fiscal programs of Mrs. Arroyo have kept the country afloat in "these rough seas."

"Popularity is not what is important at this time, much as it is desired, it is not what the administration is after but rather the President and her economic team would rather buckle down to the nitty-gritty of seeking ways to help cushion the effects of the worldwide recession and just see to the immediate and effective implementation of programs to benefit our people," she said.

Meanwhile, Vice President Noli de la Rosa said the survey correct but unpopular decisions are behind Mrs. Arroyo's latest negative net satisfaction rating.

In an interview at the 110th quarterly drop in the Department of Foreign Affairs, De Castro said the decisions of Mrs. Arroyo may not have been acceptable to many, which could be the reason behind her unpopular ratings.

He added that she could not be accused of not working hard, since she has always reminded her Cabinet to double their effort since she only has barely two years before her term ends.

"We have barely two years left so I want double effort."

The SWS said the new net rating is a 12-point drop from net -26 (21 percent satisfied, 53 percent dissatisfied) in the first quarter 2008 survey of March 28-31.

It is the fourth consecutive quarterly drop in Mrs. Arroyo's net rating since June 2007, when it was a neutral -3, the SWS said.

The SWS added public satisfaction for Mrs. Arroyo dropped in all areas.

Mrs. Arroyo's net satisfac-

tion rating in the Visayas, where she customarily draws her strongest support, fell by 18 points from -15 in March (36 percent satisfied, 51 percent dissatisfied) to a record-low -33 in June (23 percent satisfied, 56 percent dissatisfied), SWS said.

It fell by eight points in Mindanao, from -33 (26 percent satisfied, 59 percent dissatisfied) to -41 (21 percent satisfied, 62 percent dissatisfied), also a new record-low for the area, the SWS said.

Her net satisfaction ratings fell by 13 points in balance Luzon, from -25 (26 percent satisfied, 51 percent dissatisfied) to -38 (22 percent satisfied, 60 percent dissatisfied).

It also fell by three points in Metro Manila, from -37 (23 percent satisfied, 60 percent dissatisfied) to -40 (23 percent satisfied, 63 percent dissatisfied).

"The existing record-lows in those areas are -47 (May 2005) in balance Luzon and -48 (June 2006) in Metro Manila," the SWS said.

It fell by 11 points in March 2008 and June 2008. Mrs. Arroyo's net rating fell by 11 points in both urban and rural areas: the former from -27 to -38, the latter from -26 to -37, the SWS said.

Meanwhile, the SWS said Mrs. Arroyo's net ratings also hit record-lows in all socio-economic classes.

The June 2008 survey found dissatisfaction concerning in all socio-economic classes, with the middle-to-upper classes or ABCs just as dissatisfied now as the masses or class D, the SWS said.

It fell by 11 points, from 10 percent of Mrs. Arroyo fell the most among the middle-to-upper classes or ABCs, the SWS added.

It fell by 23 points, from -14 (34 percent satisfied, 48 percent dissatisfied) last March to -37 (22 percent satisfied) in June, the SWS said.

It fell by 11 points, from -26 for ABCs was -34 in May 2005," the SWS said.

"It had been positive in February, June and September 2007, when the ratings for the

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lower D and E classes were negative or zero."

Mrs. Arroyo's net rating fell by 11 points among the class D or masses, from net -24 in March (28 percent satisfied, 52 percent dissatisfied) to net -35 in June (23 percent satisfied, 58 percent dissatisfied). The SWS said.

The previous record low for Class D was -34, also in May 2005. The SWS added.

Her net rating fell by eight points in Class E, from net -37 in March (22 percent satisfied, 60 percent dissatisfied) to -45 in June (20 percent satisfied, 65 percent dissatisfied)," the SWS said.

The previous record-low for Class E was -37 in March 2008, the SWS added.

The SWS survey has sampling error margins of plus or minus three percent for national percentages and plus or minus five percent for area percentages.

"The quarterly Social Weather Survey on public satisfaction with the President is a non-commissioned item, and is included in SWS's own initiative and released as a public service, with first printing rights assigned to *BusinessWorld*," the SWS said.

## 'GMA not vying for Miss Universe'

Palawan Rep. Antonio Alvarez sympathizes with Mrs. Arroyo as "two events being blamed on her."

"The first was an act of nature, typhoon 'Frank,' which walloped Visayas but has whiplashed the President from undesired criticisms, such as decisions before, during and after the storm to bring aid and comfort to those who are affected," he said.

Alvarez said the other one is the unabated oil prices, which is a "global phenomenon."

"It's a global phenomenon which even the powerful leader of the most powerful country in the world, Bush, can't stop," yet we expect our own leader of a country that owns a mere 1/500th of the world's daily oil production, to buck a global trend and give

us our daily dose of cheap gasoline," he said.

Alvarez said Mrs. Arroyo is running a country, not vying for Miss Universe.

"So there are decisions she had made which though right are unpopular to the very same people who will benefit from them, consumption taxes for example," he said.

Another pro-administration lawmaker, Davao del Norte Rep. Anton Lagdamo, said any president who wants to be popular can simply order that gas be retailed at P20 per liter, rise at P10 a kilo, increase the minimum wage to P1,000 a day, and declare zero taxes on goods.

"But these are not a prescription to popularity; rather, they will lead us to the road to perdition, which brings us to the first lesson in presidency: that you cannot please the right decisions are tough, and they will not endorse you to the people," he said.

## 'Band-aid solutions'

Quoted President Joseph Estrada described yesterday as "band-aid solutions" Mrs. Arroyo's economic subsidies for low-income families.

Mrs. Arroyo is not handling the crisis properly, he added. He said he would temporarily suspend the expanded value-added tax on oil, Estrada said.

Estrada arrived in Bacolod City yesterday to distribute relief goods to 3,300 families in Sagay, Cadiz and Manlapa towns in northern Negros who were victimized by typhoon Frank.

He was accompanied by Manila Mayor Jejomar Binay and former Senate president Ernesto Maceda.

Estrada debunked claims that his relief operation in areas affected by the typhoon is part of his political agenda.

"I have been doing this since I was a superstar, mayor, or senator or vice president. It is not for political gain."

Estrada said he has a genuine concern for the poor and the displaced.

"They have played a big role in my political career," he said.

Meanwhile, Estrada expressed optimism that the opposition will be a force to reckon with in the 2010 presidential elections.

Estrada said the United Opposition is seriously looking at six possible candidates for the presidency: Binay, Senators Loren Legarda, Manuel Rosendo III, Francisco Duque and Panfilo Lacson, and Senate President Manuel Villar Jr.

Binay said he is aspiring for the top position in the country. However, he will abide by the decision of the opposition, he added.

## Controversies drowned GMA rating

Senators believe the worsening economic condition of many Filipinos, along with the allegations of corruption and many other controversies, brought down Mrs. Arroyo's satisfaction rating to -38 in the latest SWS survey.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said the administration's slogan: *Ramdam ang kaunlaran* (Feeling the progress) is what became rising food and fuel prices.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said Mrs. Arroyo's low rating "reflects incompetence, misgovernment and corruption, extrajudicial killings, human rights violations and a presidency without a mandate."

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano said Mrs. Arroyo failed to get the people's approval because she was addressing the current crisis of high fuel and food prices with stop-gap measures instead of long-term solutions.

However, Sen. Juan Miguel Zubeta said Mrs. Arroyo was not the only one who was criticized for low satisfaction rating because the rise in oil and food prices was a global phenomenon.

Sen. Manuel Roxas II urged Mrs. Arroyo to use State of the Nation Address to inspire courage and hope among Filipinos amid a storm of rising oil and food prices, and winning jobs and threats to law and order.

—With Paolo Romero, Pia Lee-Brage, Delon Porcella, Antonieta Lopez, Aurora Calica