

GMA may face new impeachment raps amid food, fuel crisis

By HELEN FLORES

A leftist lawmaker yesterday warned that attempts to impeach President Arroyo will be revived following the recent record plunge in her satisfaction ratings and growing unrest of the people over the food and fuel crisis.

"We foresee that in the next few weeks or months, due to this convergence of economic and political crisis... the campaign and efforts to remove her (Mrs. Arroyo) from power will be revived," Bayan Muna Rep. Teddy Casiño told the weekly Kapihan sa Manila Hotel media forum.

In a previous statement, House Deputy Minority Leader and Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo urged Mrs. Arroyo to heed the people's clamor and step down in the light of the latest Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey showing an unprecedented popular dissatisfaction and distrust in her presidency.

Ocampo said the survey "clearly indicates that the people have spurned Arroyo's solutions to spiraling prices of food and fuel through dole-outs to the poor."

In its June survey released last week, the

SWS disclosed that 60 percent of 1,200 respondents interviewed said they are not satisfied with the President's performance and only 22 percent said otherwise.

This gives Mrs. Arroyo a net satisfaction rating of -38, making her the most unpopular Philippine president since 1986.

Mrs. Arroyo's latest net satisfaction rating was her lowest since the -33 she got more than three years ago.

Meanwhile, another SWS survey released yesterday showed that the number of Filipino families who experienced involuntary hunger at least once in the past three months went up to 16.3 percent in June from 15.7 percent in March.

Casiño also urged Mrs. Arroyo to "redraft" her State of the Nation Address (SONA) saying that she could no longer boast of economic gains considering the present food and fuel crisis that is adversely affecting the poor.

Mrs. Arroyo is expected to discuss her newly instituted National Social Welfare Program when she delivers her eighth SONA before a

joint session of Congress on July 28.

Unfazed

But the President is unfazed by the low satisfaction rating she received, saying she will continue with her focus on governance whether this is appreciated or not.

Interviewed over dzBB, Press Secretary Jesus Dureza said that the result of the recent survey has not dampened the spirit of the President and has in fact led her to work even harder.

"The President works even harder whenever there are surveys showing that her popularity is low. That is why she is out everyday focused on work. Governance is very important," Dureza said in Filipino.

He reiterated that the poor rating of the President was a result of global factors, particularly the rise in the prices of oil and rice, which has led to higher domestic prices for almost all goods and commodities.

"You know the President is like the mother of the country and she gets the blame for all of the problems," he said.

Dureza said the President does not care if her decisions are popular or not as long as she feels it is for the good of the country.

He also noted that the President does not discuss her survey ratings with her Cabinet at any time as she is always focused on governance.

"What we discuss always is governance. How do we help our countrymen in the midst of the present challenges we have," he said.

Various camps have suggested that the President implement a major revamp of her Cabinet and the heads of other government offices in order to improve her satisfaction rating.

Dureza said it is entirely up to the President to decide, but the focus of every government official now is to work closely with her to ensure the programs are being implemented.

"This is up to the discretion of the President. It is her judgment call who she wants to work with. So far, there is a growing need for focused governance work and every member of the Cabinet needs to be closely working with her, at pace with her," Dureza said.

- With Marvin Sy