

# Macalintal: Is the opposition afraid if GMA runs?

By EDU PUNAY

Is the political opposition afraid of getting beaten by the "unpopular" President Arroyo if she runs for another term in 2010 under a new Constitution?

Election lawyer Romulo Macalintal thinks so, saying the opposition's aversion to Charter change is nothing but a fear of the possibility of Mrs. Arroyo beating its candidate in another presidential race.

What Cha-cha critics in fact fear is that a shift to a new system of government will include a provision extending the President's stay in power without the need for reelection.

"The opposition's fear that the memorandum of agreement on ancestral domain is a move to amend Charter to perpetuate President Arroyo's continued stay in power beyond 2010 clearly negates their claim that she is an unpopular President," Macalintal told *The STAR*.

"If she's unpopular then what's the problem of the opposition if she runs again under a new Charter?" he asked. "Isn't she an easy rival as such so let her run again and let opposition prove they could defeat her as she is unpopular anyway."

Macalintal argued the opposition is being inconsistent with its claim of Mrs. Arroyo's unpopularity and with its concern that amending the Constitution will

allow her to run again.

"If she is unpopular, then why are they afraid of Charter change which we really badly need for political and economic development? The way opposition accused GMA (President Arroyo's initials) of planning to run again is an admission that she is still a power to reckon with," he stressed.

He also said the opposition has no basis for claiming that Mrs. Arroyo will resort to cheating.

"If they know they'll be cheated, then they should do something and be prepared for it," he said. "The laws didn't make babies out of the opposition who should always be attended to every time they have fears in their political problems," he said.

"If they would allow themselves to be cheated despite their alleged knowledge that they would be then they have no business to be in politics," he said.

"If they could not protect their interests, how could they protect the interests of the public that they seek to represent?"

Macalintal added that with the reported success of the automated election in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, credible polls in 2010 may also be expected.



President Arroyo speaks during a state dinner for East Timor President Jose Ramos-Horta at Malacañang. Ramos-Horta is in the country for a four-day visit.