

'GMA overworked, underpaid'

By PAOLO ROMERO

President Arroyo is overworked and underpaid but she's not complaining.

This was the retort of Palace officials to critics following reports that Mrs. Arroyo's salary would double if Congress approves the proposed joint Senate and

Turn to Page 6



GMA overworked From Page 1

House of Representatives resolution increasing the pay of workers in the public sector.

Press Secretary Jesus Dureza said there should be no issue on the raise that may be received by the President along with her fellow workers in government.

"They're (critics) too much," Dureza said. "Whatever the amount, this upgrading is not only for the President, this is for the whole government bureaucracy."

"How much does the President earn? P50,000? P60,000? Do they (detractors) want to take that away from her when executives of large corporations easily earn more than six times that amount," he said.

He said, "I'm sure she is giving more than that in her personal capacity to other projects."

Dureza said he would not comment further on the matter since it might "dignify their (critics') uncalled for comments."

According to the proposal submitted by Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. to the House of Representatives last week, the President will get a 100-percent salary increase under a four-year, government-wide pay scale upgrading plan along with other top government officials.

Andaya submitted the proposal along with the proposed P1.415-trillion national budget for 2009.

Deputy presidential spokesman Anthony Golez, who is also a medical doctor, said the heavy workload and stresses of the job are taking a toll on the President's health.

He said Mrs. Arroyo, who has been hospitalized more than twice since 2006, is trying

hard to keep a balance among her numerous responsibilities.

Mrs. Arroyo earlier suffered from a bum stomach that forced her to lighten her schedule.

But Malacañang clarified on Saturday that the proposed increase in the salary of the President was not designed to benefit the incumbent but all future presidents of the country.

The clarification came after some senators expressed opposition to the proposal to raise by 100 percent the salaries of public officials, including the president, vice president, cabinet members, senators and congressmen.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr., in an interview over *dzRB*, said it was only right to bring the salary of the country's chief executive closer to what her counterparts in the private sector are getting.

Andaya pointed out that the proposed salary upgrade that was submitted to Congress was not limited to the President but to the entire bureaucracy. — With Marvin Sy, Aurea Calica