



MOA-AD not included in impeachment rap

Why is Malacañang panicking us? Leaders worldwide are trying to allay fears of economic meltdown. But in RP Sec. Jess Dureza, speaking for the President, is scaring Filipinos that the worst is yet to come. Brace for the storm, he cries, because our banking system's sound fundamentals won't help. What is Malacañang up to?

The fourth impeachment rap in four years against Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is for betrayal of public trust, culpable violation of the Constitution, high crimes, bribery, and corruption. It's a mix of some old and mostly new charges. The old had been trashed before by Arroyo congressmen's tyranny of numbers, but still valid. The new are recent unresolved scams directly in-

The three endorsing congressmen reportedly didn't want to touch the deal that the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional. So the 48 congressmen from Mindanao are sighing with relief that they won't be compelled by constituents to endorse as well.

volving Arroyo.

Arroyo betrayed public trust for pushing the overpriced but needless \$330-million NBN-ZTE deal; selling the Diwalwal gold reserve to ZTE at a grossly injurious 90:10 split of earnings; and rigging the 2004 election.

She culpably violated the Constitution in implementing the Northrail works sans Monetary Board assent; and directing or tolerating extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, tortures and illegal arrests, which are also betrayals of public trust and high crimes.

Arroyo committed bribery in the NBN-ZTE scam, and in distributing P500,000 cash each to 190 congressmen to take on a bum impeachment rap in 2007 and pre-empt a genuine one.

She committed corruption in overpricing Northrail to \$503 million; profiting from Jojoc Bolante's P728-million fertilizer fake deliveries to 105 congressmen, 53 governors, and 23 mayors; involvement in the "Hello Garci" election farce; and abetting the misuse of P5 billion in Quedancor loans for her 2004 campaign.

Joey de Venecia III led the complainants as exposé of the NBN-ZTE scam, along with Rolex Suplico. Harry Roque pitched in his studies of the ZTE-Diwalwal, Quedancor and Northrail scams. Editha Burgos, Erlinda Cadapan and Concepcion Empeño signed as mothers of *desaparecidos* Jonas, Sherlyn and Karen. Other signatories are activists and concerned citizens: Josie Lichauco, RC Constantino, Henri Kahn, Elmer Labog, Rez Cortez, Francisco and Jose Luis Alcuaz, Virgilio Eustaquio, Leah Navarro, Romeo Clamor, Armando Albarillo, and Bebu Bulchand.

Three sectoral reps endorsed: leftists Satur Ocampo, Liza Maza, and Teddy Casiño. The mainstream opposition, led by Minority Leader Ronnie Zamora, is lukewarm.

Half of the 97-page complaint details murder, torture, abduction and illegal detention of dozens of militants. It makes for riveting reading. Will congressmen take the cudgels for the victims, more so if their constituents? Or will they ignore the human rights breaches as they count their pork and perks. There was muffled rejoicing among admin lawmakers when the rap was filed Monday. For them, it spells another round of bribery to quash the

case, plus releases of pork barrels that they can pocket in part or full. Guess whose money that is.

Conspicuously absent from the rap are two recent issues that Arroyo couldn't justify: the secret marine pact that gave China and Vietnam access to RP undersea riches, and the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain ceding territory to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

Significantly, the Supreme Court yesterday ruled that Malacañang's MOA-AD with the separatists is unconstitutional. Thus it would have made a strong case against Arroyo for culpable violation of the Charter. But the three endorsers reportedly didn't want it included. So the 48 congressmen from Mindanao, mostly pro-Arroyo, are sigh-

ing with relief. Had the MOA-AD been in the rap, they would have been compelled to endorse it. Their political futures would have weighed heavier than loyalty to Arroyo. They cannot risk telling their constituents, Christians or Muslims, that they favor granting territory to an armed band that kills civilians.

Do justice department officials, like Undersecretary Ernesto Pineda, no longer care about their reputations?

Pineda's panel, with doubtful legal power to investigate, has declared no overpricing in the NBN-ZTE scam. Their proof, if it can be called such, is that whistleblowers Jun Lozada and Joey de Venecia snubbed their hearing. Another reason for clearing the patently scandalous deal, they said, is that Arroyo cancelled it anyway at the height of last year's public outrage.

What losers! If they had real authority to probe and not programmed to whitewash, they would have dug up solid evidence of fraud. For one, there's the quotation from Israeli subcontractor Alvarion Inc. for WiMax equipment, which ZTE tripled in its negotiated contract with DOTC — for a \$16-million overprice (*Gotcha*, 18 Feb. 2008). There's also the clear violation of NEDA limits of six percent for design and 10 percent for construction supervision, as Services in the NBN-ZTE deal comprised 41 percent (*Gotcha*, 20 Feb. 2008). Then there's Equipment, which according to whistleblower Dante Madriaga had *tong-pats* of \$132 million. And there's the published statement of local telecoms experts that they could have built the NBN at one-third the contract price of \$330 million.

The inevitable happened. A New York printer, dizzy with nonstop news on election and terror, sent out absentee ballots misspelling Barack Osama as presidential candidate. Watch out, he might also misspell the running mate as Joe Bi(n La)den.

In Manila beer guzzlers wish San Miguel Brewery would buy up Philamlife and come out with a brew called SanMig Life. That'd be a lifetime of drinking.

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