

GMA to visit Egypt, Syria

By MARVIN SY

President Arroyo will push through with her five-day visit to Egypt and Syria before dawn tomorrow.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Anthony Golez said that the President would leave for Cairo, Egypt on Saturday morning on board a chartered flight.

The President's official visit to Egypt would start on Saturday with a visit to the Marsa Alam Aviation facility and a meeting with the company's officials for the possibility of investing in the Philippines.

Golez said that the President would be meeting with the Filipino community in Egypt before holding a bilateral meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

He said that the meeting with Mubarak is significant to the Philippine government, particularly in its peace process with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, because he is "known worldwide as fostering peace in the Arab world."

Golez said that Mubarak has a "deep sense of conflict resolution."

After her working visit in Egypt, the President would head to Damascus in Syria on Sunday for a two-day state visit.

Golez said that the visit to Syria had already been planned early on since it was an invitation from the Syrian government.

During her visit to Syria, Mrs. Arroyo will meet with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

Several agreements are expected to be signed during Mrs. Arroyo's visit to Syria but the details were not revealed by

Malacañang.

During her state visit, the President would also be addressing the Syrian People's Assembly, the equivalent of the Philippine Congress.

President Al-Assad will host a state dinner in honor of Mrs. Arroyo at the presidential palace.

Just like in Egypt, the President would also meet members of the Filipino and business communities.

Acting Executive Secretary Cerge Remonde said that the President would drop by the Tartous International Container Terminal (TICT) facility situated some 250 kilometers away from Damascus before she heads home to Manila on May 6.

TICT is a subsidiary of the International Container Terminal Services Inc. owned by businessman Enrique Razon.

Remonde said that the primary purpose of the President's visits to Egypt and Syria is to promote interfaith dialogue, of which the Philippines is one of the main proponents.

Golez said that there should be no concern about the President going on a trip overseas while there is an international concern over the so-called swine flu.

"Well first of all, I have not read any article or information that states that both countries would have already cases of swine flu," Golez said.