

# GMA reiterates call for approval of CARPer bill

By DING CERVANTES

SAN FERNANDO, Pampanga – President Arroyo yesterday reiterated her call for Congress to approve the extension of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) for another five years before the legislature adjourns this June.

She also bared the start of a climate change management program in the agriculture sector in the country by releasing P15 million for projects related to environmental protection.

"I trust Butil will work for the extension of CARP before Congress adjourns in June," the President said in her speech before a gathering of leaders and members of the party-list group Butil at the Paskuhan theme park here.

Mrs. Arroyo noted that her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal, had worked hard for the abolition of shared tenancy and initiated land reform.

She said her administration will always uphold her father's legacy by giving support to farmers, which has led to the increase in government purchase of palay from farmers, from 33,000 metric tons to one million metric tons annually.

She also cited Pampanga's "historical importance" as a food producer next to Nueva Ecija in Central Luzon.

But she added that there is a need for the agriculture sector to be aware of environmental concerns, noting that next to fossil fuels, methane also leads to environmental degradation that triggers global warming.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde said the Palace wants to see the passage of the bill before the CARP finally ends on June 30.

The CARP actually expired last December but a joint resolution passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives

extended it for another six months ending this June.

Remonde pointed out that the Palace has held dialogues with the parties interested in the CARP extension, including the Catholic Church.

Last March, the President met with Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales and Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal to assure them of her support for the bill, and that they should prod Congress to act on the measure.

"We hope that this will be passed before its expiration," Remonde said.

The government is pushing for the extension of CARP in order to complete the acquisition and distribution of around 1.8 million hectares of land to farmer beneficiaries.

The President at the same time ordered the Philippine Information Agency to intensify its information campaign on the segregation of solid waste in order to battle climate change.

Mrs. Arroyo also turned over to Butil Rep. Agapito Guanlao a check worth P10 million to be used for solid waste conversion into fertilizer.

She also gave the officials of Porac, Pampanga another check worth P5 million for the establishment of a material recovery facility in the town's 29 barangays as part of the government's thrust to help curb climate change.

"Now is the time for action (against global warming). This is the start of the climate change management program among farmers," she said.

Butil is the electoral wing of the National Farmers Supreme Council (Sandugo).

The party supported the candidacy of Mrs. Arroyo in the 2004 election.

– With Marvin Sy