

Kenney: I can't predict what Obama, GMA will discuss

By EDITH REGALADO

DAVAO CITY – United States Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie Kenney said she has no idea what President Arroyo and American President Barack Obama would discuss when they meet at the Oval Office on July 30.

"I honestly cannot predict what they would talk about when they are together," Kenney said, explaining that she had been in many talks between presidents of nations, and still she could not tell in advance what topics would be discussed.

Kenney said there are many things to talk about in the relations between the United States and the Philippines and it would be up to the two leaders what to discuss.

She said that other than what was earlier announced by Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director Leon Panetta about the meeting between Mrs. Arroyo and Obama, she does not have any idea what else they would be talking about.

In a recent visit to the Philippines, Panetta said that the forthcoming meeting between the two leaders would be focused on peace and prosperity in Southeast Asia and the entire Asian region.

Panetta said it would be an opportunity to discuss the partnership between the Philippines and the United States especially in the area of counter-terrorism, nuclear non-proliferation in the region and other regional security issues such as developments in Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan and the Middle East.

The situation in the Middle East is of particular importance to the Philippines because of the 2.4 million Filipinos in the area whose safety and security has always been the highest priority of the Arroyo administration.

Mrs. Arroyo said she is looking forward to her meeting with Obama on July 30 as an opportunity to discuss several important issues.

"Even when he (Obama) was still a candidate, there was already correspondence with him," said the President, who would be the first Southeast Asian leader to visit the White House under the Obama administration.

The President said peace and security, terrorism as well as economic issues shall be on top of her discussion with Obama.

"These are issues that affect Mindanao. Issues like peace, security and terrorism," she said during a regional media interview at the

Waterfront Insular Hotel upon her arrival Friday from Egypt where she attended the 15th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit.

The President said she shall also be tackling with Obama the US assistance for peace and development of Mindanao and the current global economy, particularly its impact on the poor countries.

She stressed that in her talk with other US officials, she would also be pushing for more access for Philippine products into America.

Products, she said, that would mostly come from Mindanao like mango, banana, seaweed and milkfish.

"There would also be discussions about the construction of the US military base in Guam which is expected to employ Filipino workers," the President said.

She added that she would also meet with leaders of the US business community.

"I would tell them that the Philippines is a good business destination to invest in because of the resiliency of its economy," Mrs. Arroyo said.