

'No politics in GMA visits to Pampanga'

By DING CERVANTES

CLARK FREEPORT, Pampanga- Amid controversies triggered by reports that President Arroyo will run next year for Congress, Presidential Management Staff (PMS) chief Hermogenes Esperon insisted last Saturday that there is "no politics" involved in Mrs. Arroyo's frequent sorties recently to her second district in this province.

Esperon, interviewed here by **The STAR** on his way to his 6th district in Pangasinan for All Saints' Day, also decried as "malicious" those who have accused the President of early campaigning for the congressional race in Pampanga.

Esperon said, "as daughter of Pampanga, she (President Arroyo) should not be barred from making frequent visits to her province."

"As former head of the PSG (Presidential Security Group), I can say she did her best to reach all parts of the Philippines. So what's wrong if she comes often to her province?" he said.

"If our frequent visits are appreciated by local folk, what can we do? If there is

another chance to serve them further, at least the people can say we have not forgotten them," he added.

He said he himself has always visited his hometown in the sixth district of Pangasinan, but admitted that he intends to run for congressman there in next year's elections.

"I go back often to Pangasinan as I am the Cabinet officer for eastern Pangasinan. But even before that, I would visit my province way back when I was just a lieutenant, then a captain and especially when I was chief of staff (of the Armed Forces), because I was a son of a teacher and farmer and I think anyone born in a place owes that place something," he said.

He noted that incumbent Pangasinan 6th district Rep. Conrad Estrella, whom he described as "a real friend" is now on his third and last term.

Esperon said he would run under the banner of Lakas-Kampi-CMD. He said he is prepared to resign from his post once he files his certificate of candidacy.

"Let us play by the rules," he said.