

GMA at prayer breakfast: This is my last as President

By MARVIN SY and JESS CRUZ

President Fidel Ramos, have advised Mrs. Arroyo not to demand the presidency by aspiring for lower office.

Not running anymore

In San Fernando, Pampanga, Mrs. Arroyo's elder sister Cirilo Macapagal-Salgado has finally declined a suggestion from Gov. Ed Panillo that she run for Congress also in the second district.

"I will not file my candidacy," said Salgado in a text message to The STAR.

She did not say whether she had convinced her brother

Arturo Macapagal to run instead.

The President's election lawyer Romaldo Macalintal said Mrs. Arroyo need not personally

file her COC at the provincial office of the Commission on Elections (Comelec) if she decides to run for congresswoman.

- With Ding Corventes

She may be mum about her political plans for 2010 but she is definitely stepping down as President if her address before yesterday's National Prayer Breakfast at the Malacañang Park is to be believed.

"We are entering our election year. This is the last National Prayer Breakfast I will be joining you as President. This time next year another leader of our country will hopefully break bread with you in common prayer and fellowship," President Arroyo said.

"And as I have hosted this prayer breakfast here in Malacañang, the bigger one, I hope that there will be other occasions before I step down to have, to be able to host other little prayer breakfasts with you," she added.

Lawmakers and religious leaders were in attendance at the prayer breakfast meeting.

Since the start of the year, the President has visited Pampanga over 40 times and with the election period fast approaching, the visits have become more frequent. This has fuelled speculation that she was aiming for a congressional seat.

Even her tabernacle in Pampanga are trying to figure out her political plans.

"Frankly, I don't know what her plans are," Rep. Aurelio "Ding" Corventes Jr. told The STAR yesterday when asked if the President is seeking the congressional seat in the second district now held by her son Juan Miguel or Mikey.

He said he is not aware of any plan of Mrs. Arroyo to make another trip to the province to file her certificate of candidacy (COC).

Corventes is close to the Arroyos. He is one of the President's favorite congressmen and is a friend of Mikey and his brother, Camarines Sur Rep. Diosdado "Dato" Arroyo.

Corventes, a first-term congressman, represents Pampanga's third district. He is scheduled to file his COC today.

There were speculations in the province yesterday that the President and Mikey would be going home together this weekend to file their COCs.

Candidates have only until Tuesday next week to present such documents to election officials.

The STAR called and texted Mikey on his mobile phone but he did not respond.

Asked if the President's son was eyeing the gubernatorial post, Corventes said Mikey's was not among the names he's been hearing as candidates for governor.

He said it is possible that Mrs. Arroyo's eldest son might run for governor now that Sen. Lito Lapid has opted to seek reelection.

Lapid, who belongs to Lakas-Kampi like Corventes and Mikey, earlier planned to reclaim the job of governor. Mikey was Lapid's vice-governor when the senator was governor.

Former leaders of the country, including former