

# Poll automation is back on track

Smartmatic, TIM agree to settle their differences

by KRISTINE L. ALAVE  
Inquirer.net

MANILA — After four days that generated plenty of politicking, the two companies that won the contract to conduct automated elections in 2010 have settled their differences.

Commission on Elections (Comelec) Chair Jose Melo announced the development, saying that Smartmatic International and Total Information Management Corp. (TIM) had agreed on the key provisions in their joint-venture contract.

"Finally, we were able to thresh out everything. Right now, Smartmatic and TIM people are signing the incorporation papers of the joint-venture company," Melo, flanked by the Comelec commissioners, said at a press briefing Friday afternoon.

Smartmatic and TIM officials refused to explain how they came to an agreement, and Melo and other Comelec officials ap-

peared unaware of the details of the deal.

Melo waved away questions on the arrangements between Smartmatic and TIM, saying a close look at their feud might raise new animosities again.

"Whatever internal arrangement they have, that's between them. Don't scrutinize it anymore. If you keep asking about it, it may open old wounds," he said.

Melo added: "Everything seems to be back on track again. After one week of suspense and apprehension that we will be reverting to a manual system of elections, we are back with automation."

**Reiterate commitment**  
Officials of Smartmatic, a Holland-based company that conducted elections in Venezuela, and TIM, a Filipino information technology firm, issued a joint statement reiterating their commitment to the poll automation project.

"Both companies, fully aware

that above all private concerns lies the desire of the Filipino people for automated elections, maintain the agreements reached in April this year, and gladly announce to the Comelec our continuation with the full automation of the elections in May 2010," they said.

The two companies said they had signed all the documents for the incorporation of the joint venture, for submission to the Securities and Exchange Commission on Monday.

"Under the aegis of this joint-venture corporation, we shall move as one," they said, adding that the P7.2-billion poll automation contract would be signed with the Comelec later next week.

"To all the stakeholders in the elections of 2010, Smartmatic and TIM would like to manifest our assurance that the automation of the 2010 elections will push through, and that we stand behind the Comelec," the two firms said.

## In tatters

Only last Monday the partnership was in tatters, with TIM president Jose Mari Antuñez notifying the Comelec that his firm was backing out of the project.

Antuñez, according to Melo, wanted out of the partnership because he felt that TIM had no say in the election operations and in fund disbursements.

TIM was also concerned about its liabilities. TIM lawyer Boy de Borja said a lopsided joint-venture contract would leave the firm in a precarious position in case the computerized polls fail.

Melo said the Comelec had initially planned to sign the deal with the joint-venture corporation and the individual companies of Smartmatic and TIM.

"But to make it more convenient in terms of auditing rules, we will only have one provider. So the contract will be between the Comelec alone and this joint-venture company," Melo said.

He said that with the agreement in place, he doubted that the two companies would fight again.

"They have signed the contract," he said, adding that Smartmatic and TIM would be haled to court if they backed out of the automation project.

Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer said the important thing was

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# Kobe Bryant coming to Manila on July 21

MANILA — Still fresh from winning his fourth NBA title with the Los Angeles Lakers, Kobe Bryant will be heading for the Manila later this month as part of a six-city tour sponsored by Nike.

Bryant will make his first stop in the Philippines on July 21 and thereafter proceed to Singapore, Taipei (Taiwan), Hong Kong and Shanghai and Chengdu in China, according to a statement from Nike.

The Lakers star has toured Asia every summer since 2006 and last visited Manila in 2007. In 2008, he went on tour as part of the USA Basketball team leading up to the Beijing Olympics, where he and other NBA stars earned gold medals.

This year's tour, according to Nike, offers Kobe a chance to check back in with the young players he met on previous tours and meet up and coming players.

"I'm looking forward to returning to Asia to see the progress the kids have made since my last visit," said Bryant.

"I liked what I saw then and I'm planning to work the kids even harder to give them a better sense of the dedication and hard work it takes to be a champion." (Inquirer.net)

# RP to join in international math contest

MANILA — Four Filipino students are flying to Bremen, Germany to compete in the 50th International Mathematical Olympiad, a world championship mathematics competition for high school students, to be held from July 10 to 22, the German embassy in the country said Friday.

The four who passed a rig-

orous selection process from among 2,000 high school students are: Carlo Francisco Adajar of Paref Southridge School, Earl John Chua of Grace Christian College, Carmela Antoinette Lao of Saint Jude Catholic School, and Jonathan Wong of Grace Christian College.

The students will be accompanied by Dr. Julius Basilla of the University of the Philippines-Diliman and Dr. Ian June Garces of Ateneo de Manila University.

The Philippine participation to the Olympiad is a joint project of the Department of Science and Technology-Science Education Institute and the Mathematical Society of the Philippines.

The IMO 2009 is supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and organized by the Bildung und Begabung e.V. (Education and Talent), a national agency for talent development in Germany, and in cooperation with the international private university Jacobs University.

Before their departure for Germany, the team met with German Ambassador Christian-Ludwig Weber-Lortsch (Inquirer.net)

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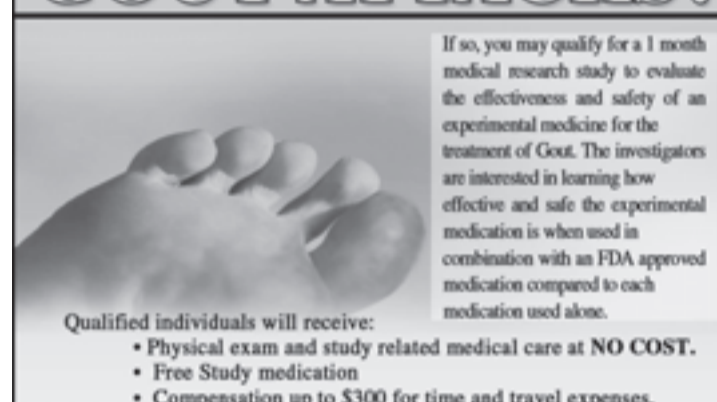
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