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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Cory buried...

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erendum organized, the answer of the people would likely be 'no' to honor a woman elevated by public acclaim to near sainthood."

Global Source noted that Malacañang had already asked its allies in Congress to end their push for Charter change, against which Aquino crusaded.

"Another outcome-changer for the near term lies in the way the new US administration has turned its attention recently to the Philippines, with Ms Arroyo finally able to meet with American President Barack Obama... after some botched attempts to do so," it said.

"Seasoned US political analysts believe this is a good sign she will leave office peacefully in 2010."

Foreign policy experts say any visit with a US president could not have been cleared without assurances that it would not turn out to be a diplomatic blunder later, according to Global Source.

CIA chief's visit

"Oddly enough, after a lightning visit of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) chief to Manila around mid-July, bomb blasts and bombing attempts ru-

mored to lay the predicate for a state of emergency in the country suddenly declined in frequency," it said.

Prior to Aquino's death and Ms Arroyo's meeting with Obama, Filipino's "waited anxiously" for that moment when she would say goodbye during her last State of the Nation Address (SONA), Global Source said.

It noted that two post-Marcos Presidents—Aquino herself and Fidel V. Ramos—had some version of farewell worked into their last major speech.

But it observed that all Ms Arroyo said in her SONA was: "At the end of this speech I shall step down from this stage, but not from the presidency. My term does not end until next year."

"It was an obvious jab at critics and political enemies who had been goading her to state explicitly that she would relinquish power to an elected successor in 2010," Global Source said.

"We believe, though, that the debate on whether or not this omission indicates an impending upheaval in the political system has increasingly become irrelevant..." it said.

Horse race
Global Source said the ruling

party would have to find other ways to keep itself politically relevant until and beyond the 2010 elections, which, it said, were now certain to happen.

In an earlier report, Global Source likened this search for options to a horse race, with the current leadership betting on a preferred horse and switching bets whenever the chosen one fell off the track.

As events have turned out, the race is now down to the last few horses, it said.

The first of the options is a post-2010 elections Cha-cha (Charter change). "Pundits call this the Putin formula where, using administration machinery, the President runs for a congressional seat in her hometown while her allies continue to push for constitutional change that allows her to become prime minister," Global Source said.

It added: "This option not only faces similar obstacles as a pre-2010 Cha-cha but also requires finding a loyal candidate who can win as president yet is willing to serve as a transitional one. With the transactional nature of Philippine politics, thrusting the vast powers of the highest office of the land in the hands of another ambitious politician can easily undermine the strategy for the incumbent." ■

Obama postpones immigration reform...

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He said comprehensive immigration reform would have to wait until next year.

Undocumented Filipinos

There are more than 12 million illegal immigrants living in the US. It is believed but not officially confirmed that there are about 500,000 undocumented Filipinos living in the US.

Immigrant advocacy groups like the Pilipino Workers Center (PWC) were disappointed when Obama made his announcement about putting immigration reform in the backburner.

"There are a lot of undocumented Filipinos, Filipino students and families looking for immigration reform," said Aquilina Soriano of the PWC. "There are a lot of Filipinos who are still stuck in the [immigration] backlog, families that have been separated for more 20 years. This will also affect Filipino veterans who have been stuck in the backlogs. They don't have the help and family to support them. And, as we all know, if a veteran dies then the petition dies with him."

Soriano said that putting off comprehensive immigration reform until later this year or 2010 will affect its chances of being passed.

The US primary election is set for next year and with some members of the Senate and House of

Representatives up for election, they might pass up on a comprehensive immigration reform bill because the immigration topic is such a divisive issue and might hinder their chances of being re-elected.

"Now is the time to act for Obama because it is a Democratic House," said Soriano.

"After March of next year, it's going to be hard for Obama to pass anything," she added. "We still urge him to move it more quickly and make good on his promise. He knows the [immigration] system is broken and that so many families have been separated."

Soriano urges the community not to give up the fight.

Despite Obama's decision to put off on immigration reform, the community can still act, said Soriano.

"Things always change in the political landscape. Just because he announced that he would not pursue immigration reform does not mean [the discussion] ends. We need to put more pressure on him. If this is something we care about, people should have their voices heard. We need to call the President and if there's enough pressure we [can] change his agenda." ■

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