

Gordon wants government to sponsor debates among presidential bets

by DING CERVANTES
Philstar.com

CLARK FREEPORT, Pampanga—Sen. Richard Gordon has urged the government to sponsor debates among presidential aspirants in next year's elections and challenged them to abandon their expensive advertisements in favor of such debates.

"Money should not be the issue. Level the playing field," Gordon said in an interview here over the weekend during the confer-

ence-workshop on environmental security on tourism.

He lamented that expensive advertising has lured voters over the years to favor leaders who win on the basis of "mere image."

"Those who have advertisements on TV don't want to debate. On TV advertisements, no one will ask them anything. But what's really important is (for a candidate) to explain his vision to the people," he said.

"Here's my proposal. Let's say

there's no advertising. The government says we are going to sponsor debates, we will give you 60 minutes of advertising on TV," he said.

The senator from Olongapo proposed the use of government-owned television for such debates. He said this should be done for free and under condition that other presidential candidates would abandon their advertisements in all television stations.

While he has "not yet announced his candidacy" for president, many have been speculating on it on the basis of his track record of 26 years of public service.

He said he is willing to go to Lakas or another party, but that his decision would depend on which party would decide on the basis of the qualification of its candidate, not on the basis of popularity surveys.

Former President Fidel Ramos earlier invited him to join the Lakas-Kampi CMD. Gordon has not made any commitment although he said he would also want to bring in his group, the Bagumbayan - Volunteers for a New Philippines, which is awaiting accreditation from the Commission on Elections (Comelec).

"Give me P100 million and let me advertise daily that I am good and in one month I will do well in rating. But is that what we want in a president, a mere image or do you want one with real track record who is capable of leading?" he asked.

Palace has high hopes for Smartmatic-TIM

by CHRISTIAN V. ESGUERRA
Inquirer.net

MALACAÑANG made it clear that it had only high expectations from the Smartmatic-Total Information Management (TIM) consortium in handling the historic full automation of Philippine elections in 2010.

Gabriel Claudio, presidential political adviser, said the partnership should put more premium on reforming the country's electoral system than cashing in on the automation project.

"We hope that the renewed teamwork between Smartmatic and TIM will be imbued now with

a sense of mission beyond profit and focused on helping our country transform its electoral process into a modern, reliable, and credible institution," he said.

Malacañang was apparently elated with the two firms' eleventh-hour decision to patch things up and proceed with the P7.2-billion poll automation deal they had cornered from the Commission on Elections.

Early last week, TIM, the Netherlands-based Smartmatic's local partner, announced that it was pulling out of the partnership because of so-called "irreconcilable differences."

Now that the matter had been settled, Claudio said there should be "less heckling and cynicism that serve only to unduly distract and discredit the efforts of our election officials."

"With responsible cooperation among Comelec, their service providers, election watchdogs and the electorate, we can look forward to an electoral exercise Filipinos can all be proud of," he said.

"It is the credibility and efficiency of the elections next year that can best guarantee the political harmony and stability of our country after 2010."

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.5 million teachers yet to prepare for 2010 polls

ALMOST half a million public school teachers still have to prepare for their election duties next year, Education Secretary Jesli Lopus said last July 6.

Speaking over radio, Lopus said the Commission on Elections (Comelec) has yet to discuss operational matters with the teachers.

Lopus said some teachers have yet to receive their allowance for duty in the last election.

A professional project manager for the automated elec-

tions must be hired to safeguard teachers from harassment, he added.

Lopus said a joint task force must coordinate the function of government and non-government organizations during the elections.

"Last elections we even made an election primer," he said.

"We should plan well... so much is at stake. This will be the biggest IT project, private or public, in the country's history."

Lopus called on the Comelec to immediately coordinate with the different government agencies to prepare for next year's elections.

"We want to see the project timetable," he said. "We're waiting for them to call us and sit down and discuss it with us."

Lopus said the Comelec must immediately touch base with them since it will be the first time Philippine elections would be automated.

"The project planning timetable should be presented to us for the teachers to have an idea what to do," he said.

Lopus said the Comelec's plan of action should include voters' education and teachers' training and orientation.

"During the last elections, we signed a MOA (memorandum of agreement) with them on how the teacher will be paid their allowances - half will be given on the day of their duty and the rest will be given upon submission of the certificates of canvass," he said.

Lopus said the Comelec must also assure the teachers that they would be given legal aid when they are harassed by losing candidates.

"In the last elections, I have also spoken with the Associations of Law Schools who have volunteered to provide legal aid services for our teachers," he said. (Philstar.com)

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Maid who returned P2.1M back from HK

by NIÑA CATHERINE CALLEJA
Inquirer.net

A 38-year-old Filipino domestic helper in Hong Kong who earned praise for returning P2.1 million in cash and checks which she found in a garbage heap said she only did what was right.

Upon her arrival Tuesday, July 6 at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Mildred Perez, a native of Bambang, Nueva Vizcaya, was met by her children who greeted her warmly. Later on, Perez, who was teary-eyed, faced the media.

Her daughter said everyone in their hometown was so proud of her mother because "she showed goodness."

Perez flew into the country on board Cebu Pacific Flight 5J111. Her roundtrip ticket was paid for by Nueva Vizcaya Rep. Carlos Padilla.

According to Padilla who met Perez at the airport, the House of Representatives has approved a resolution commending her for her honesty.

"She's a rare species, one out of a million," Padilla said, adding that despite Perez's predicament abroad, she managed to stay upright.

Padilla was referring to Perez's experience at the hands

of her employer in Hong Kong whom she had charged with indecent assault. The case is still pending.

Perez lost her job and was barred from working since she has a pending court case. She resorted to rummaging through garbage, looking for recyclable items which she could sell to earn money.

Padilla said he was inviting Perez to visit the House of Representatives so that she could personally receive the commendation from Speaker Prospero Nograles.

On top of the commendation, Perez will receive P150,000 in cash from Padilla and the Nueva Vizcaya provincial government in addition to scholarships for her two children.

Three months ago, Perez was collecting scraps when she saw an envelope containing cash and checks worth P2.1 million.

She called the contact number printed on the envelope and returned the money the next day. For her good deed, she was given a can of biscuits.

Perez will fly back to Hong Kong to attend court hearings against her employer.

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NBI warns public vs credit card fraud

by TINA SANTOS
Inquirer.net

The National Bureau of Investigation warned the public, particularly frequent travelers, against purchasing airline tickets from unauthorized agents who could be part of or in connivance with unscrupulous groups involved in credit card fraud.

At the same time, the bureau also advised the public to be cautious in using their credit cards, saying these can be used in unauthorized purchases.

The warning came following the arrest of four Nigerians who were part of a syndicate which allegedly purchased electronic plane tickets through fraudulently acquired credit cards.

The suspects, who were detained at the NBI jail, were charged for violation of Republic Act 8484 (Access Device Regulation Act of 1998), said Vicente de Guzman III, head of the NBI Anti-Fraud and Computer Crimes Division.

Seized from them were laptop computers, USB drives, router, Smart broadband antennas, invoices of money remittances, a skimming device, various blank credit cards and other materials they used in their illegal activities.

Palmer Mallari, executive office of NBI Anti-Fraud and Computer Crimes Division, explained that the suspects either used a skimming device to duplicate credit cards of unwitting victims, or hack information of legitimate credit card users from merchant websites.

"There are skimming devices that are very small, credit cardholders would not even notice that their cards were already swiped and copied using these devices," Mallari said. "So it pays to personally bring your credit card to the cashier or keep an eye on your cards every time you make purchases."

The Nigerians' modus operandi involved offering, through the Internet, cheap airline tickets, domestic or international, to various destinations or discounted air fares.

Prospective victims pay in cash but the suspects buy the plane tickets under the buyer's name using cloned, hacked or stolen credit card credentials online and pocket the cash they receive, the NBI said.

The NBI said the arrest of the suspects came following the complaint of Philippine Airlines.

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