

SAYS ARROYO SON

'We can afford to buy properties'

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

PAMPANGA Representative Juan Miguel "Mikey" Arroyo on Monday refuted reports of irregularities in his statement of assets, liabilities, and net worth (SALN), calling them "malicious" and a waste of his time.

Arroyo asserted that he and his family could afford to buy properties in the United States, such as the one the Vera Files reported on.

"If you examine clearly my SAL, if you read it well, you can see we can well afford to buy properties," he told INQUIRER.net in a phone interview.

"I have always been transparent with my SALN ever since I entered public office. I have declared everything I own there. It is self explanatory," he said in a statement.

Coming to his defense, Speaker Prospero Nograles echoed Arroyo's statement and criticized the report as "nitpicking" against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's eldest son.

"A perusal of the statement of assets and liabilities of Representative Mikey Arroyo sufficiently shows that he and his family can afford the value of the properties subject to this issue," Nograles said in a text message.

"Personally, I find this issue

nitpicking in the sense that the congressman can well afford the assets attributed to him," Nograles said, adding that the SALN can be "legally amended without liability if and when any oversight that is not substantial is discovered or corrected."

"This matter is not really substantial except that Mikey is the President's eldest son. Otherwise, if he were not what he is, this issue won't even hit the news," the Speaker said.

Inquirer.net and other media organizations carried the Vera Files report exposing that Arroyo failed to declare in his 2007 and 2008 SALN a \$1.32-million or P63.7-million beach-front

property in the San Francisco Bay Area in California which he bought and then transferred to his wife Angela in 2005.

The house is located at 1655 Beach Park Boulevard in Foster City in San Mateo County.

Vera Files added that while the congressman from Pampanga declared a residential house in the United States in his SALN for 2005 and 2006, he did not mention it in his SALN for the two succeeding years.

Vera Files also reported that the young Arroyo is indeed a shareholder in Beach Way Park LLC which is located on Beach Park Blvd California, the same street where the Foster City property is located.

"With regards to the San Francisco Bay house, it is registered under beach Way Park LLC in which I am a shareholder and

which I declared in my SALN. And this fact was even attested to by the writer or the writers of the story," Arroyo said.

The congressman said the report was misleading either due to the writers' malicious intent or lack of knowledge on the matter.

"Unfortunately, either the writer or writers deliberately imposed a malicious twist on the story or they lack knowledge on the legal aspects regarding corporations," he said.

Arroyo said those who have questions on his SALN can talk to his lawyer or those who do not believe him can sue him.

"As much as possible, I don't want to waste my time dealing with issues like this," said Arroyo. "There are far more important things to do especially in helping the government find

ways to lessen the effects if not bail us out of the impact of the global financial crisis."

Arroyo also denied that he snubbed the writers' request for an interview to get his reaction, stressing that the news agency did not attempt to reach him.

Arroyo placed his net worth at P99.2 million in his SALN for 2008, slightly up from P96.7 million declared in 2007, according to the report. He reported P27 million in real property, P129 million in personal assets, and P56 million in liabilities.

The three Arroyos in Congress—Mikey, his brother Diosdado "Dato" Arroyo of Camarines Sur, and his uncle Ignacio "Iggy" Arroyo of Negros Oriental—are among the 30 richest House members, according to their 2008 SALN. ■

Comelec to seek barangay officials' help in voters' education

by CECILLE SUERTE FELIPE
Philstar.com

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) disclosed last Aug. 31 the plan to tap the assistance of barangay officials to help educate voters on how to fill up the ballots for the automated elections next year.

Commissioner Armando Velasco said barangay officials would help in the information campaign in the grassroots level of voters.

Various sectors expressed apprehension over the automated poll's viability and security and the case against computerized elections now pending at the Supreme Court.

Velasco admitted that the commission slowed down the training of Comelec personnel and the preparation for the poll automation because of the case filed at the SC to stop the automated elections.

He, however, assured the people that the poll body is duty bound to implement Republic Act 9369, an act authorizing the Commission on Elections to use an automated election system.

Velasco said the Comelec has chosen Precinct Count Optical Scan (PCOS) system in which a voter will manually fill up by shading with a pencil an oval opposite the names of candidates of their choice and the elective office they are running

for.

He explained that the voter will personally feed the ballot to the machine, which he likened to a fax machine and at least 10 voters can cast ballots at any one time.

The voters should not feel intimidated by the new system and should participate in the elections, he added.

Velasco said the ballot can be fed at any orientation with whatever end and after the vot-

ing, the machine will automatically count the votes. Then the total number of voters will be electronically transmitted to municipal centers, and then simultaneously transmitted electronically to provincial centers and the Comelec headquarters.

He said the Comelec will need about 80,000 PCOS machines but the poll body intends to purchase 82,000 PCOS to have spare units in case some of the machines malfunction. ■

'Balangay' launched on a good day

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launch off the boat in June.

The team will take the *balangay*, christened "Diwata ng Lahi," around the Philippines the rest of the year, then proceed to other countries of Southeast Asia in 2010, and on to Mada-

gascar off Africa in 2011.

According to Pagasa, cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms are expected in southern Luzon and eastern sections of the Visayas and Mindanao for this week.

Pagasa, however, warned that

a surge in the southwest monsoon was expected to affect the seaboard of the Visayas.

It advised fishing boats and other small sea craft from venturing out while larger vessels were alerted against big waves. ■

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