

President Arroyo to Turn the Philippines into a “Gulay Archipelago” - MabuhayRadio

Written by Bobby Reyes

Monday, 26 January 2009 02:53 - Last Updated Monday, 26 January 2009 03:06

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed recently Executive Order No. 776, which “directs officials to undertake an urban farming and fisheries program to help provide alternative employment for people in the face of the dismal global economic outlook.” The “Gulay Archipelago” Project, as some presidential aides have dubbed it, is part of her administration's Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) that includes the “Gulayan ng Masa” and the “Integrated Services for Livelihood Advancement” (ISLA) for subsistence fishermen.

When Filipino army-and-police generals heard the announcement of EO 776, they initially cheered it. They thought that the President wanted to make the country a Filipino version of the then Soviet Union's “Gulag Archipelago.” They were disappointed, however, when they learned that the initial announcement carried a typographical error.

However, Los Angeles-based poet and pundit Fred Burce Bunao said that it would have been advisable for President Arroyo to make illegal the planting of vegetables, urban farming and backyard fishponds. Mr. Bunao said had she done so, almost all Filipinos would immediately start to violate Mrs. Arroyo's Executive Order and, therefore, the country would have an oversupply of vegetables and other urban-farm products in due time. Mr. Bunao also said that the Arroyo Administration borrowed his copyrighted phrase, “Gulay Archipelago,” without his permission. He said he used the phrase as early as 1988 in his humor column.

Another Filipino-American pundit, Bobby Manasan of the Commonwealth of Virginia, was reportedly heard to have said that the present “sh_t” in many government offices could be turned into organic fertilizer for President Arroyo's mandated urban farms and suburban fishponds. Mr. Manasan allegedly said further that “the ‘Gulay Archipelago’ project could be an excellent opportunity for discredited former Agricultural Undersecretary Joc-joc Bolante to

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obtain redemption by gathering all the ‘sh_t’ and other dirty craps in government bureaus and departments and turning them into compost.”

On the other hand, some Filipino religious leaders fear that the Arroyo Administration’s push for the “Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program” will turn into CLEEPtomania. Some wags like the running priest, the Rev. Robert Reyes (not related to this writer, who is only a namesake), say that some presidential kin and cronies are virtually kleptomaniacs and they would probably take advantage of the CLEEP to make more money at the expense of the people.

Philippine political-opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Q. Pimentel, Jr., welcomed President Arroyo’s “Gulay Archipelago” initiative. Speaking in Tagalog, Senator Pimentel said: “Mabuti naman at tapos na sana ang pagtatanim nang sama ng loob ng ating Pangulo at magtatanim na lang siya nang mga gulay.” (It is good that the President will stop planting the seeds of discord and she will just plant vegetables.)

President Arroyo ordered the launching of “Gulayan ng Masa” and the “ISLA” in urban communities, with the active participation of the Department of Agriculture, local governments, and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (Pagcor). Vegetable gardens and backyard fishponds will be set up in vacant lots and unused government lands.

Unconfirmed reports say that the Pagcor plans to install huge aquariums in all the country

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casinos, so that tilapia could be raised in them. The tilapia harvests then could be used by casino restaurants. Instead of growing roses in hotel-resort gardens, the Pagcor will convert them into vegetable plots. Flower pots in Philippine casinos shall be converted into water-filled containers where asparagus could be grown hydro-phonically. The Pagcor plans further of converting all the swimming pools in all the country’s hotel-casino resorts into “instant fishponds.”

Homeowners of palatial houses in Metro Manila’s exclusive residential enclaves such as Forbes Park and Magallanes Village reportedly are up in arms with the Pagcor plan of converting their mansions’ swimming pools into fishponds. Leaders of the homeowners associations said that the Pagcor could do it only over their dead floating bodies.

The government will distribute—instead of cash—only vegetable seedlings and tilapia-and-catfish fingerlings to participants who will be identified by the Office of the President (OP). This way, the President’s advisers say that nobody could dip their dirty fingers into the fund for the fingerlings.

As of press time, the OP has not issued a confirmation of whether another clone of the President would be created to head the CLEEP and/or the “Gulay Archipelago” Task Force.

Editor’s Note: Readers may read this related article,

[Scoop: The Philippine Government to Clone President Arroyo](#)

The President created a steering committee composed of the Secretary of Agriculture, the directors of the Bureaus of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and Plant Industry, the chairman of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, the chairman of Pagcor, the chancellor of the University of the Philippines in Los Banos, and leaders of other concerned groups. The OP warned, however, the committee to stop the usual practice of only doing “bum steer” in its deliberations.

Governors and mayors were encouraged to set aside funding for the Gulayan ng Masa and ISLA and designate project supervisors in their areas. The OP clarified that raising marijuana is still prohibited by law and that it is not considered as vegetable in the first place.

Funds for the program will come from Pagcor and local governments with the DA providing a one-to-one counterpart.

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Here are excerpts from a straight news article published by the Philippine Daily Star, as penned by Paolo Romero:

<http://www.philstar.com/Article.aspx?ArticleId=434810&publicationSubCategoryId=63>

By Paolo Romero

President Arroyo is borrowing a page from former First Lady Imelda Marcos and launching her own "Green Revolution" – a popular program during the Marcos regime that was primarily geared toward rice sufficiency.

Mrs. Arroyo has issued an executive order rolling out backyard food production programs in urban areas to strengthen the country's food security and generate livelihood and employment for the poor.

Mrs. Arroyo issued Executive Order No. 776 on Jan. 16. She said the EO would boost backyard food production as part of her administration's Comprehensive Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program (CLEEP) that includes the Gulayan ng Masa and the Integrated Services for Livelihood Advancement (ISLA) for subsistence fisher folk.

In May 1973, the Green Revolution was launched by former President Marcos and his wife, Imelda, under the name of Masagana (bountiful) 99, which aimed to produce 99 sacks of rice (almost five tons) per hectare that was necessary to make the country self-sufficient in terms of rice supply.

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Under the program, high-yield varieties of seeds were introduced, irrigation systems were built, and fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural credits which were 85 percent guaranteed by the government were provided.

Productivity doubled and by 1977, the Philippines was self-sufficient in rice for the first time in its modern history. Similar government support made the country self-sufficient in corn, and one of the world's leading coconut oil producers.

Under President Arroyo's EO, the Gulayan ng Masa and ISLA will be rolled out as part of a massive government food production program in urban areas with the active participation of the Department of Agriculture, local governments, and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (Pagcor).

The rollout will include setting up of urban vegetable gardens and backyard fisheries in vacant lots and unused government lands, among other places.

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Mrs. Arroyo said two-thirds of the world is in recession but the Philippines is sustaining its economic growth.

She also said the government has committed P300 billion for pump-priming programs that include CLEEP.

"It is not business as usual, government agencies should hit the ground running," Mrs. Arroyo said. "The government should take advantage of the window of opportunity that is, declining inflation and interest rates and good weather."

All governors and mayors are enjoined to set aside funding for the Gulayan ng Masa and ISLA in urban areas and designate project supervisors in their respective areas.

The University of the Philippines-Los Baños and other state universities and colleges will lend their expertise in agriculture and aquaculture to the program.

The activities of the project include: developing various modules for urban gardening; producing and disseminating information materials; identifying beneficiaries subject to the approval of the Office of the President for the program components to be funded by the national government; organizing seminars and site visits; distributing vegetable seedlings and tilapia/hito fingerlings;

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monitoring local government progress; and holding a search for the Best Urban Garden/
Fisheries.

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