

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino “Nene” Q. Pimentel, Jr., warns that the integrity of the first automated polls to be held in the country this May is in grave danger of being compromised because of “serious problems” now surfacing in Mindanao.

“Reports had reached my attention that Smartmatic, the company tasked to provide and operate the machines to be used in the automated polls, had hired political operators with known connections to the Ampatuan clan,” said Senator Pimentel.

“If this is true, then we might as well throw to the dogs this electoral exercise even before it is undertaken,” Senator Pimentel stressed in asking the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to look into the matter that is of public interest. Comelec, he said, should make its reply publicly, too.

According to reports, Smartmatic had wittingly or unwittingly hired people associated with the Ampatuans to man supervisory and higher posts for the automated polls in the entire Mindanao.

Ampatuans Controlling Mindanao Polls Feared - MabuhayRadio

Written by Senator Pimentel's Press Office

Saturday, 09 January 2010 17:27 - Last Updated Saturday, 09 January 2010 17:29

Senator Pimentel said that for a known political clan to control any part of the electoral exercise is not right.

{xtypo_quote} The Ampatuan clan had been 'credited' for 'delivering' the votes for the Arroyo Administration in the elections of 2004 and 2007 through the use of threat and intimidation in Maguindanao. – Sen. Nene Pimentel{/xtypo_quote}

A certain Arnulfo "Popoy" Cuyugan was reportedly hired by Smartmatic last December as its Provincial Coordinator at Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) at the behest of the Ampatuans. Senator Pimentel said that "While there is nothing essentially wrong with being identified with the Ampatuans, under the circumstances, Smartmatic should refrain from giving the impression that the dominant political clan in Maguindanao can sway the appointment of its personnel who have a heavy duty to perform in the automation elections in that area."

"Even if the best and most honest people are hired to man the machines, they may be intimidated into following the dictates of their supervisors, if the latter are under the control of politicians.

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Members of the Ampatuans are facing charges for the massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao, as well as for alleged rebellion.

The clan had been “credited” for “delivering” the votes for the administration in the elections of 2004 and 2007 through the use of threat and intimidation in Maguindanao.

Mr. Pimentel urges the Comelec not to have a cavalier attitude over the matter because of its belief that the automated poll process cannot be subverted by cheats.

“If there’s a will to cheat, there would always be a way. I am speaking from experience as a victim of poll fraud, like my son who also got a raw deal in the counting of votes in Maguindano.”

The Senator’s son and namesake, Lawyer Aquilino “Koko” Senator Pimentel, had placed under protest the proclamation of Miguel Zubiri as the 12th-elected senator in 2007. # # #

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