

{xtypo_quote} "President Arroyo will leave Malacañang Palace only in a horizontal position"—Ado Paglinawan {/xtypo_quote}

Developments in the Philippines may prove right the fearless forecast of Ado Paglinawan, a Washington-DC based writer and community leader, that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will not give up easily the presidency. She will literally have to be carried out of her office either in a medical stretcher or in a body bag.

One of our impeccable sources said that President Arroyo has told several leaders that she would not follow in the footsteps of then Presidents Ferdinand E. Marcos and Joseph Ejercito Estrada who fled the presidential palace at the height of the people-powered revolutions in 1986 (EDSA Uno) and 2001 (EDSA Dos), respectively. She says that she is not a coward and will fight to keep the presidency – at all costs.

Another unimpeachable source says that President Arroyo does not want to end up in jail like her predecessor and be also accused of plunder. She will move heaven and earth to derail the 2010 elections because she knows that whoever is elected as the new President may probably order her arrest and

the prosecution also of her husband, several Cabinet members and quite a few kin for corruption charges, if not as co-accused in the economic-plunder case.

“If it (putting the federal-system in the backburner) is the price I have to pay to prevent Gloria from exploiting the federalism proposal to perpetuating herself in power, then I am willing to pay that price,” Senator Pimentel says.

Philippine Senate Minority Leader Nene Senator Pimentel, Jr., says that “Malacañang and its legislative allies should stop riding on the proposal for a federal system of government to pursue their hidden agenda behind the move to amend the Constitution.”

The complete press release from Senator Pimentel’s office about the obvious move of President Arroyo and her allies in the House of Representatives to shift to a parliamentary form of government by all means – whether fair or foul – is reprinted in its entirety at the end of this article.

Senator Pimentel is one of the national leaders who say that they “doubt

whether the Supreme Court, which has a majority of President Arroyo's appointees, will render a decision that is patently unconstitutional that will destroy their credibility and incite public indignation, if not uprising." Yes, many believe that the country may be plunged into civil war if President Arroyo forces the constitutional change, so as to continue her rule – that is if the junior officers of the Philippine military and/or the police will not stage first a coup d'etat. Either way, the end result will be chaos and a set back for democracy in the Philippine homeland.

Everybody hopes that Ado Paglinawan is dead wrong and that Senator Pimentel is dead right in saying that the Supreme Court will rule that the illegal process of amending the Constitution is unconstitutional. But from whatever angle one sees it, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is dead, oops, finished as the President of the Philippines. She may not even be the President by Christmas 2009.

*** Here is the press release from Senator Pimentel's Office:**

Federalism Proposal Should Not Be Used for GMA's Hidden Agenda

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Q. Senator Pimentel, Jr. (PDP-Laban) today said Malacañang and its legislative allies should stop riding on the proposal for a federal system of government to pursue their hidden agenda behind the move to amend the Constitution.

Senator Pimentel said no amount of denials by the administration can hide the fact that the obsession of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to keep herself in power beyond 2010 is the underlying motive behind the frantic moves of the administration congressmen to push for the approval of the Charter Change resolution.

He said he did not want the federalism proposal, of which he is the principal advocate, to be manipulated and taken advantage of by the administration for its dubious and self-serving purposes.

The senator from Mindanao said that although a majority of senators have expressed support for Joint Resolution 10, which calls for the convening of Congress into a Constituent Assembly to adopt a federal system government, he is willing to put the proposal in the backburner if only to foil an administration plan to use it as a jumping board for lifting the term limit of elective public officials, including Mrs. Arroyo.

“If that is the price I have to pay to prevent Gloria from exploiting the federalism proposal to perpetuating herself in power, then I am willing to pay that price,” Senator Pimentel said.

Actually, he said the President and her legislative allies are more interested in installing a unicameral parliamentary system of government where she hopes to become a prime minister.

The minority leader said they are so desperate at pursuing their fake version of Charter Change that they have gone to the extent of devising a plan wherein the House of Representatives will unilaterally amend the Charter in view of the refusal of the Senate to cooperate with their ill-conceived scheme.

Senator Pimentel said the administration plan will not succeed for the following reasons:

1. Charter Change has been overtaken by the 2010 elections. Even the Palace admits that the country is already in an election mode.
2. Owing to the bicameral structure of Congress, the House cannot amend the Constitution without the involvement of the Senate.
3. Even if the issue is elevated to the Supreme Court, it is doubtful whether the justices, including the Arroyo appointees, will render a decision that is patently unconstitutional that will destroy their credibility and incite public indignation, if not uprising.
4. Assuming that the House will succeed in amending the Constitution by itself, the Senate will not approve the allocation of any funding for the plebiscite on the amendments.
5. Even assuming that a plebiscite is legally held, the people are expected to repudiate amendments that will allow Mrs. Arroyo to stay in power beyond 2010. This is indicated by the fact that she has consistently received negative net approval ratings in surveys conducted by reputable research institutions. In the February survey of Pulse Asia, she obtained a negative 33 percent satisfaction rating. # # #