

GMA to get 100% pay hike

By JESS DIAZ

President Arroyo will get a 100-percent salary increase under a four-year government-wide pay scale upgrading plan that Malacañang has submitted to the House of Representatives.

Her basic monthly salary will jump from P60,000 to P120,000.

Vice President Noli de Castro, Cabinet members, senators and congressmen, and senior officials will also receive a 100-percent increase.

Lawmakers will double their pay to P90,000 a month. Incumbent members of Congress,

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however, will not get the adjustment as the Constitution prohibits them from benefiting from any law they pass.

Lower-level bureaucrats and employees will get less, but the minimum increase they will receive is 50 percent.

Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya Jr. submitted the salary adjustment plan to Speaker Prospero Nograles on Wednesday, together with the proposed P1.415-trillion national budget for 2009.

The plan is contained in a draft joint House-Senate resolution, which will have the force and effect of a law when passed.

Andaya said the government-wide pay upgrading would be undertaken over four years starting next year up to 2012, and would cost taxpayers a total of P109 billion.

He said the first installment, costing P20 billion, is already included in the proposed 2009 budget.

He said public school teachers, numbering about 522,000, comprise the single biggest group that would benefit from the proposed salary adjustment.

The second biggest group would be members of the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philip-

pines, he added.

He pointed out that teachers, policemen and soldiers would receive an increase of at least 50 percent.

These three groups of government personnel have the same basic monthly pay of about P12,000. Their salary would be increased to between P18,088 and P19,527, depending on their length of service.

A government accountant, who now gets a basic pay of P12,748 would receive an increase of about P9,000, while a medical officer and a legal officer, who have the same salary of P15,181, would get P29,353, or almost twice the present rate, under the proposal.

"The increase in salaries will

be more substantial for the professional and executive level considering that their compensation lags far behind those in the private sector," Andaya said.

"These positions, which perform critical policy-making and service-delivery functions, are the ones we are fast losing to outside competition," he said.

He said the plan, once implemented, could stem the migration of professionals in government like health care providers to the private sector.

"We are losing our professionals like teachers, nurses, doctors, lawyers, and accountants because of low salaries in the government. Our executives receive much less than a manager or CEO (chief execu-

tive officer) in a private firm. Government is therefore having difficulty attracting and retaining highly qualified employees," he stressed.

Andaya, who was a three-term Camarines Sur congressman and chairman of the House appropriations committee before President Arroyo named him her budget secretary, noted that it was his late father, as appropriations committee chairman, who worked for a general government-wide pay increase in 1994.

He said he is proposing the new round of adjustment "not because of filial but rather out of official duty."

The late congressman Rolando Andaya's pay adjustment plan increased the basic

pay of public school teachers from P3,000 to P8,600, and doubled the lowest pay in government to P4,000.

Secretary Andaya noted that in the past 30 months, Mrs. Arroyo has increased government salaries "three times, or once every 300 days on the average."

"As a result, an ordinary teacher's salary has increased by P3,087 since January 2006, that of an Army sergeant by P3,383, and that of a medical specialist by P5,043," he said.

"As to the calls for a P3,000 salary hike for state workers, the records would show that, by and large, we have complied with that, and the challenge left for us now is how to top it," he stressed.