

GMA going to Egypt, Syria on Labor Day

By MARVIN SY

President Arroyo is off to two more foreign trips, this time to the Arab nations of Egypt and Syria on Labor Day.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde, who is acting executive secretary until May 1, announced the coming trips over government-run radio station *dzRB* yesterday.

Remonde said the

President hopes to promote peace and inter-faith dialogue during the trips.

He said Mrs. Arroyo's first stop would be Cairo, where on a working visit she would meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and with businessmen and the Filipino

Turn to Page 11

GMA going From Page 1

community.

Remonde said the visit of the President to Egypt would be the first by a Philippine president in 30 years.

From Cairo, the President would proceed to Damascus on May 3 for a two-day state visit.

Remonde said Mrs. Arroyo's trip to Syria is a state visit because it's upon the invitation of the Syrian government and most of the expenses would be shouldered by the host nation.

Aside from meeting with Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, Mrs. Arroyo is expected to sign a number of agreements.

She would also be addressing the Syrian People's Assembly, which is the equivalent of the Philippine Congress.

A state dinner would also be tendered by President Al-Assad in her honor at the presidential palace.

She would also be meeting with the Filipino community.

Before returning to Manila on May 5, Remonde said the President would visit the Tartous International Container Terminal (TICT) situated some 250 kilometers from Damascus.

TICT is a subsidiary of the International Container Terminal Services Inc. owned by businessman Enrique Razon.

Remonde said the President's visit to Egypt and Syria is also an acknowledgment of the important roles the two Arab nations play in the peace process between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Remonde said Egypt and Syria are two of the most influential members of the Organization of Islamic Conference.

He said the President is expected to consult with Egypt on the peace process with the MILF since the country is "one of the most effective and efficient peace brokers in the Islamic world."