

'GMA just loves her cabalens'

She just loves her province-mates.

Malacañang assured the peo-

desire to pay more attention to projects in her home province.

Deputy presidential spokes-

GMA has medical check-up at Asian Hospital. See Page 7.

ple yesterday that the frequent visits of President Arroyo to Pampanga are only part of her

man Anthony Golez said that the President cannot be faulted for

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paying special attention to Pampanga since her family is from there and she was born there.

"I don't think there's any unusual activity going on. The President is just implementing her programs in all provinces and of course she can not overlook (her own) province," Golez said.

He said that this should be taken at face value and no other interpretation should be given, including a supposed plan to run for Congress after she steps down in 2010.

"We don't have any reasons other than that, implementing her programs, making sure her programs are also available in her home province," Golez said.

The President was in Guagua, Pampanga, yesterday to inspect several infrastructure projects being implement-

ed by the national government, including the construction of school buildings, farm-to-market roads and potable water systems for town residents.

It was the President's 17th visit to her home province this year and the 14th to the second district where she is a registered voter.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Lorlei Fajardo said Mrs. Arroyo just wants to look after her *cabalews*, who have given her their full support from the start.

"Pampanga is her home province, she loves her *cabalews*. She's just giving back to her *cabalews*," she said.

The opposition had raised speculations that Mrs. Arroyo would seek an elective post in her district after she steps down next year.

The fears of the opposition were ignited by moves of the President's allies in the House of Representatives to amend the Constitution through a constituent assembly.

Administration congressmen passed a resolution calling for the convening of a constituent assembly to amend the Constitution even without the participation of the Senate.

The opposition believes that Congress intends to implement a shift in the form of government from presidential to parliamentary through an amendment of the Constitution.

Under a parliamentary form of government, any member of parliament could be designated as Prime Minister by the lawmakers.

A report also came out quoting Agrarian Reform Secretary Nasser Pangandaman that Mrs. Arroyo plans to run for Congress after her term ends.

Golez noted that Pangandaman has denied the report, saying that he was bewildered by it since he claimed he never mentioned anything about the President running for Congress.

Lawmakers give GMA advice

Speaker Prospero Nograles urged President Arroyo not to run for a congressional seat in Pampanga because she has already reached the pinnacle of her government career.

"If I put myself in her shoes I will not run. It is because I have already reached the epitome (of public service), or the highest position in the land. There's nothing more to prove," Nograles said.

Nograles said he believes that Mrs. Arroyo will not seek an elective post in Pampanga.

Meanwhile, party-list Rep. Neri Colmenares of Bayan Muna advised Mrs. Arroyo yesterday to remember the case of convicted rapist and ex-congressman Romeo Jalosjos who was arrested and detained, despite being a lawmaker.

Colmenares said being elected as a member of the House of Representatives will not give Mrs. Arroyo immunity from

suit after she steps down from the presidency.

"The present Constitution offers no succor to President Arroyo even if she becomes Speaker of the House. The cases that will be filed against her range from corruption and plunder to electoral fraud and human rights violations, most of which are capital offenses and are therefore non-bailable," he said.

He said the Constitution grants members of Congress immunity from arrest and prosecution for offenses punishable by not more than six years' imprisonment.

Colmenares, who is a lawyer, reminded Mrs. Arroyo that Jalosjos remained in jail because the crime of raping a minor was not covered by bail and punishable with life imprisonment.

The President had commuted Jalosjos' jail sentence. The convict received additional time allowance for good conduct.

Jalosjos is reportedly planning to seek public office again, but lawyers said his conviction carried with it the accessory penalty of perpetual disqualification from public office.

Colmenares said Arroyo has to change the Constitution so she can continue to enjoy immunity from criminal prosecution.

"She needs to change the Constitution to grant her immunity and allow her to run again as head of government either as president or prime

minister," he said.

Thus, there is a need for the people to be vigilant against Charter change (Cha-cha), he said.

"The people must persevere in the struggle against Cha-cha and prepare for the serious prosecution of President Arroyo and all public officials who conspired with her to commit these crimes once she is out of office," he added.

Over the weekend, Bayan Muna lawmaker Teodoro Casiño said Mrs. Arroyo is planning to seek a congressional seat to give her immunity from criminal prosecution after she leaves the presidency on June 30, 2010.

He said the President has the wrong notion that membership in Congress could protect her from prosecution.

She loses her immunity once her term ends.

Several presidential aspirants have vowed to prosecute Arroyo if they are elected.

Pampanga Gov. Ed Panlilio, a critic of Mrs. Arroyo, has vowed to field a candidate against her in case she seeks a congressional seat in the province.

Panlilio said in other countries, leaders facing corruption charges and who are as unpopular as the President do not impose themselves on the people.

"They either resign or commit suicide out of embarrassment," he said. — Marvin Sy, Jess Diaz, Delon Porcalla