

GMA to hold talks with Medvedev

By MARVIN SY

SINGAPORE - President Arroyo is set to hold bilateral talks with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to discuss the forthcoming Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, Press Secretary Cerge Remonde announced here yesterday.

Remonde said the "pull-aside meeting"

between the two leaders would focus on the NPT conference that the Philippines would preside over next year in New York.

Remonde said Mrs. Arroyo would also meet with the representative of Taiwan at the sidelines of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation

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(APEC) summit here.

Remonde said the meeting with Medvedev would be very timely, considering the Russian leader had earlier concluded his own summit on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation.

He said Mrs. Arroyo would also take the opportunity to express gratitude to the Russian Federation for sending two helicopters for the rescue and relief efforts at the height of tropical storm "Ondoy" last September.

Remonde added Mrs. Arroyo would discuss with the Taiwan representative the issue of labor mobility, among other issues.

Remonde said the issue of labor mobility refers to the open exchange of human resources between and among APEC countries, both sending and receiving nations.

He said Mrs. Arroyo would push the interest and welfare of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and for their opportunities during the summit.

Remonde said the President would also put forward the need to lower transaction costs for migrant workers, specifi-

cally placement fees.

Mrs. Arroyo would propose the establishment of a regional standard for hiring migrant workers, the upgrading of educational systems and policies that would favor both the sending and receiving countries, Remonde said.

He said the President would propose the removal of overly restrictive immigration policies of member nations.

Remonde said the summit would further discuss defense cooperation, trade and investment relations, the pending air services agreement, cooperation on labor migration, culture, energy and anti-drug trafficking among member nations.

Mrs. Arroyo arrived on time for the summit but had to wait for around half an hour before getting out of the Changi International Airport here.

The cause of the delay turned out to be the huge delegation from Vietnam, which arrived just a little before the Philippine delegation.

Remonde said the delay caused Mrs. Arroyo to miss a photo opportunity.

As part of protocol for the APEC Summit, each of the arriving world leaders would have a brief photo and video session before the covering media at the airport.

Because the arrival of the Philippine and Vietnamese delegations came at about the same time, Mrs. Arroyo had to wait for her turn for the welcoming ceremonies.

President Arroyo waited for almost 30 minutes but decided to forego the photo ops since she was already running late for her appointments.

Mrs. Arroyo took the side exit of the hotel to her convoy that took her to the Singapore Arts Museum where she formally opened two Filipino exhibits with the bang of a gong.

Whatever inconvenience was caused by the airport incident was erased after Mrs. Arroyo was given a warm welcome at the Fullerton Hotel by the Filipino community in Singapore.

The Filipino community hosted a reception for Mrs. Arroyo at the hotel in her second meeting with them in two years.

To end the first day of the summit, the APEC leaders



President Arroyo is joined by Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Michael Somare (left) and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in a leaders' lunch at the Istana Banquet hall during the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Singapore yesterday.

would be attending a dinner and concert during the Singapore Evening at The Esplanade.

US President Barack Obama was expected to join the reception after it was revealed that he left Japan for Singapore ahead of schedule yesterday.

Obama will join today his counterparts from the 10 Association of Southeast Asian

Nations member countries for the first ever US-ASEAN Summit.

President Arroyo, who was designated as coordinator for ASEAN for the summit, would be seated beside Obama during the meeting.

Remonde said Mrs. Arroyo "will definitely be missed" by both her ASEAN and APEC counterparts when she steps

down from office next year.

He pointed out Mrs. Arroyo is one of the most senior leaders in the ASEAN and APEC and one of very few women leaders in both groupings.

"The President's leadership, especially on the area of the economy, is quite recognized in both the ASEAN and APEC," he said.

- With Pia Lee-Brago