

### **Freedom House cites PHL May 2010 elections successful**

Freedom House is an international think- thank based in Washington, D.C. that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights. It publishes an annual report assessing the degree of perceived democratic freedoms in each country. Its recent survey, the Freedom in the World 2011 report described the Philippine election as “one of the few noteworthy gains in a year in which global freedom suffered its fifth consecutive year of decline”. The Freedom House report showed that the Philippines scored three points in political rights and three points in civil liberties (one point represents the best score and seven points the worst score). The Philippines’ political rights rating improved from 4 to 3 due to perceived “peaceful and credible presidential and legislative elections” held in May 2010. Of 194 countries examined in the latest report, the countries designated as “free” fell from 89 to 87. Sixty countries including the Philippines were rated as “partly free”, up from 58 the previous year, and the number of countries deemed to be “not free” remained at 47. The Philippines was rated a “free” democracy from 2002 to 2005 and had a political score of two and a civil liberty score of three. It was downgraded to a “partly free” democracy in 2006 because of allegations of massive electoral fraud, corruption, and government intimidation of political opposition. A “Partly Free” country is one in which there is limited respect for political rights and civil liberties. “Partly Free” states frequently suffer from an environment of corruption, weak rule of law, ethnic and religious strife, and a political landscape in which a single party enjoys dominance despite a certain degree of pluralism.

Compared to other countries in the Asia Pacific region, the Philippines has a more democratic and generally successful elections last May despite technical and procedural glitches. In Burma, the elections held last November was tightly controlled to ensure the government-backed party’s sweeping victory. Sri Lanka having assessed with the most prominent decline, suffered from the misuse of state resources prior to its national elections, the persecution of opposition presidential candidate Sarath Fonseka, and the increasing concentration of power in the hands of President Rajapaksa and his family. In Cambodia, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Indian-administered Kashmir, the space for peaceful protests on politically sensitive matters were curtailed, with security forces in some cases using deadly violence and arrests to disperse demonstrators. In Vietnam, a crackdown on activists in advance of a Communist Party Congress created a climate of self-censorship on political topics.

Comparatively, the Philippines despite of the Maguindanao massacre in November 2009 showed a decrease in violence and democratic suppression. The Presidential result was also consistent with the pre- election surveys done by independent groups as it compares to many of its neighboring countries which experienced an absence of basic political and civil rights.

### **Charter Change is not a priority of Aquino’s Administration**

Former Philippine Presidents Fidel V. Ramos and Gloria Macapagal- Arroyo have proposed to amend the 1987 Constitution but were blocked by the public and rulings by the Supreme Court because it was seen as an attempt to extend their terms of office. The current administration said that amending the Constitution is not among the 30 proposed priority of legislation that was raised at the Cabinet workshop in preparation for the Legislative-Executive Advisory Council meeting in Malacañang at the end of this month. President Benigno Aquino III even announced his disinterest to run for any public office in 2016.

Proposal to amend the constitution is too early for a six- month old administration which has reported that they are still on the process of “repairing and cleaning” the government that was left to them from the previous administration. Collaborative effort from interested groups is needed so amendments would be first specified and studied before formally endorsing to the Committee on Constitutional Amendments in both

Houses of Congress. Also, while initiatives to specify particular amendments has to be done, different committees in the Congress should also identify the laws which are flawed or obsolete and need to be abolished or amended before the Congress session starts. In this manner, the charter change would support the “cleansing process” of the Aquino administration and attain its goal of poverty reduction and a stable economy within its term.

### **DepEd Procurement and DOH Medicine monitoring update**

- On December 22, 2010, Namfrel observed the Department of Education (DepEd) bid opening of Printing from Camera ready materials and Delivery of Various Preschool Instructional Materials. The three items under the Approved Budget Contract (ABC) were discussed are:

A.	Readiness Skills Workbook	Php	21,513,200.00
B.	Answer sheets for RSW		4,286,800.00
C.	Standards cum Curriculum		<u>1,500,000.00</u>
TOTAL AMOUNT (ABC)			Php 27,300,000.00

Out of the 13 bidders that have submitted their bidding documents, only five submitted their bid price namely: Book Media Press, Inc.; Rex Bookstore; Studio Graphics Corp.; Vibal Publishing House, Inc.; VJ Graphics Arts, Inc. The Vibal Publishing House, Inc. submitted the lowest bid price amounting to Php 15,221,004.92.

- The Quirino Memorial Medical in Quezon City held a bidding conference on January 7, 2011 for its medical supplies. There were 34 bidders who attended the bidding. The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Chairman raised defficiencies over incomplete bid documents with the absence of Bid Bulletin No. 2 attachments during the evaluation of eligibility. Of the 34 bidders four bidders were deemed ineligible. However, ineligible bidders claimed that they were not informed by the BAC Secretariat prior to the Opening of Bids and they will file a Motion for Reconsideration. BAC retorted that said bulletin was posted on December 28, 2010 conspicuously in the premises and in the Philippine Government Electronic Procurement System (PhilGEPS). The BAC added that they will investigate whether the BAC Secretariat has been liable for not disseminating such information.
- The DepEd had a two bid conference, a Bid Opening and a Pre- Bid, on January 11, 2011. The Bid Opening was for the “Delivery (Freight and Handling) of Various Instructional Materials (IMs) Developed by the Bureau of Elementary Education (BEE) and the Bureau of Alternative Learning System (BALS), Re- bid” with a total ABC worth Php1,355,558.27. From the six bidders who purchased the Bid Documents for this project, five bidders submitted their bids namely: F2 Logistics Phils. Inc., Front Cargo, LIBCAP Marketing, AVC Logistics and R.E.D. Cargo.

Front Cargo, LIBCAP Marketing and R.E.D. Cargo were able to pass and complete the Eligibility and Technical Documents. The Lowest Bid went to R.E.D. Cargo Forwarders with the total amount of Php 996,000.00.

The DepEd also conducted the Pre- bid for the “Delivery and Retrieval of National Achievement Test (NAT) for Grade 6 Test Materials, Re- bid”. The project’s ABC is Php 2,890,000.00. There were three prospective bidders who purchased the Bid Documents namely: F2 logistics Phils. Inc., Front Cargo Forwarders, Inc. and EXL Worldwide Express.

The F2 Logistics inquired if the Security Requirement for the Test materials, Inspection and liquidated damages are still applicable since the materials are a re- bid. The DepEd BAC replied that there are no changes on the Technical Specifications on the Bid Documents issued. The Opening of Bid was scheduled for January 25, 2011.

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