

News and Notes

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International Developments

RP Assured of Continued Japanese Aid

Masayuki Fujio, Chairman of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party and personal envoy of Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, visited the Philippines last May 13 as part of his tour to ASEAN countries to promote bilateral relations with Japan. Fujio assured President Ferdinand E. Marcos of continued Japanese economic assistance to the Philippines. When asked by the envoy regarding ways in which Japan could help the Philippines, Marcos stated that the issues between Japan and the Philippines pertained to: (1) the setting up of a Philippine trade center in Japan, (2) the imposition of taxes on imports from Japan based on "total value" and not on "value added," and (3) heavy taxes imposed by Japan on Philippine bananas.

US Prods FM to Implement Reforms

The Republican-dominated Senate, by a vote of 89 to 8, adopted a resolution on May 15 designed to pressure President Marcos to implement democratic reforms in government. The resolution sponsored by Democrat Senator John Kerry contained, among others, the following: (1) holding of "free and open elections," (2) implementation of a "free market" system, (3) release of political detainees, (4) abolition of the Presidential Detention Action (PDA), and (5) prosecution of those accused in the assassination of former Senator Benigno S. Aquino. The resolution called for cutting off US military and economic assistance should these changes not be effected.

Marcos called the Kerry resolution baseless. He noted that a constitutional electoral commission composed of neutral commissioners had already been created to oversee the elections. Political affairs Minister Leonardo Perez described the resolution as "characteristic of the penchant of some American politicians for meddling in purely internal affairs."

In another development, the Opposition expressed the view that the US\$102 million military assistance proposed by the Reagan Administration

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would be passed by the US Congress if two conditions are met, namely, (1) the appointment of Lt. Gen. Fidel V. Ramos as Chief of Staff, and (2) the institution of reforms in the military.

National Developments

Salary Increase for Government Employees

All government employees shall enjoy a 10% across-the-board salary increase in line with President Marcos' newest order issued last April 2. The said order is retroactive to January 1, 1985 and implements EO 1000 issued by the Office of the Budget and Management on January 25 of the same year.

The salary raise shall be based on December 31, 1984 rates. Budget Minister Manuel Alba however reiterated that based on the guidelines drafted by his office, payments can only be made when sufficient funds are available.

President Marcos said that the increases were effected to enable public servants to cope better with the steady rise in the cost of commodities as well as promote the quality and efficiency of public service.

LRT Operation Goes to High Gear

Calling it "a symbol of freedom in the New Republic for a free flow of movement of the people," the First Lady Imelda Marcos inaugurated the Light Rail Transit in ceremonies held at the Arroceros Central Station.

With the 15-kilometer LRT now in full operation, LRT officials anticipate a significant increase in passenger volume from the present 250,000 per day. Mrs. Marcos told newsmen that the LRT is "cheaper, safer, and faster" compared to any other existing transportation system in the country and elsewhere in the ASEAN region.

Life, however, will become more difficult for jeepney drivers and operators plying the Monumento-Baclaran route, as the LRT's operation would mean a substantial drop in their earnings.

The LRT charges a fixed fare of ₱2.50 and only takes 30 minutes to traverse the 15 km. railway stretch. Its coaches run from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Poll Code Provisions Approved in KBL Caucus

After a four-and-a-half hour caucus, the Kilusang Bagong Lipunan issued a resolution calling for the approval of a number of poll code provi-

sions slated to be discussed by the Batasang Pambansa in the latter's succeeding sessions.

Specifically, the KBL expressed their collective assent to the following:

- (1) The holding of the 1986 local elections and the 1987 Presidential Elections on the second Sunday of May of their respective years;
- (2) Allowing incumbent local officials elected in 1980 to remain in office until June 30, 1986 on a hold-over capacity thereby effectively extending the said officials' terms for another 90 days;
- (3) Continuing registration for new and qualified voters and reviving the pre-martial law municipal and city election committees for each town and city to be composed of the electoral registrar as chairman and one representative each from the majority party and the dominant opposition party (DOP);
- (4) Setting aside the provisions on the criteria for the accreditation of political parties of Batas Pambansa Blg. 697 which was used for the 1984 Batasang Pambansa elections and using instead the results of the last Batasan elections for the accreditation of the DOP, other than the KBL;
- (5) Adopting the opposition's proposal that the Comelec should organize an extra-legal body to assist the Comelec in the conduct of the elections but not necessarily the NAMFREL; and
- (6) Including the phrase "man of his confidence" to teachers and relatives within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity who could assist illiterates and disabled in the preparation of ballots for casting.