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2010 ELECTIONS GEARED FOR GARCI COMEBACK

“The recent development in the COMELEC’s pursuit for an Automated Elections System (AES) has set the cue for yet another Garci,” said Mr. Rick Bahague, national coordinator of the Computer Professionals’ Union (CPU) in response to COMELEC chair Jose Melo proclaiming a possible return to manual elections. “Questionable anomalies such as this have always preceded massive election frauds in the Philippine experience.”

The CPU has been a vocal critic of the push for a hasty AES implementation, and has been an active watchdog since 2004’s Mega Pacific scandal. It has warned COMELEC from the start that without rigorous scientific testing, the AES would only serve as an efficient tool to manipulate or sabotage the elections.

“But far from being a validation of our reprimands, the sudden and incredulous withdrawal of Total Information Management (TIM) from the AES implementation casts a shadow of doubt on the return to manual elections,” Mr. Bahague noted.

“COMELEC should look into Smartmatic’s connections with families and groups that will benefit from a haphazard automation system,” advises Mr. Bahague. “In addition, Comelec should clean house as those involved in the 2004 and 2007 election anomalies are still entrenched in the Commission.”

In a previous statement, the CPU warned that a Garci this time around might lead to a failure of elections.

In connection to this, Mr. Bahague pointed out the proximity of TIM’s withdrawal to the planned convening of a constituent assembly right after Gloria Macapagal Arroyo’s 2009 State of the Nation Address.

“Regardless of whether AES is implemented or not, it is clear that those who currently hold political power stand to benefit from this the most,” explained Mr. Bahague. “The memory of the Hello Garci scandal is still fresh in our minds, as it proves that GMA and her cohorts are fully capable of manipulating the 2010 elections – or worse, orchestrating a failure of elections.”

The Computer Professionals’ Union enjoins the Filipino people to take part in protest actions opposing the attempts of the Arroyo regime to extend their grip on political power. The CPU actively participates in protest actions against charter change, using new media tools to help organize protests and providing on-the-ground technical support. # # #