More security in hotspots areas

- The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) will deploy its forces in areas considered as election hot spots as security officials anticipate intense rivalries for the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections on October 25. Out of the total of 42,025 barangays where the elections will be held, the Philippine National Police (PNP) has so far listed some 2,300 barangays where poll-related violent incidents would likely proliferate. Most of the soldiers will be dispatched as peacekeepers as part of a major strategy to make up with the limited number of police and military forces in these areas. Such strategy is important in order to maximize the implementation of security measures as both the military and the police try to duplicate their success during the May 10 elections which was considered as an improvement over violence-marred history of Philippine elections.

COMELEC grants palace request on appointments

- President Aquino is still allowed to appoint and reshuffle officials even with the existing appointment ban during the campaign period leading to the barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) elections on October 25. Commission on Election (Comelec) Commissioner Nicodemo Ferrer said five of the seven commissioners approved on September 27 the request of Malacañang for an exemption from the appointment ban. The exemption covers only new appointment and transfer of officials to other departments. Malacañang submitted a list of officials for new appointment and transfer and names beyond the list submitted to the Comelec are no longer covered by the exemption. Comelec spokesman James Jimenez said the exemption from the ban is not unusual since the poll body also granted similar exclusions in the past elections to Malacañang and other government offices. Also exempted from the ban are the appointments of 23 non-career ambassadors and another 23 regional trial court judges. The exemption is granted so as not to paralyze government operations and public service.

NAMFREL invited to observe COMELEC bidding

- The COMELEC through the new Chairman of its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), Atty. Ferdinand T. Rafanan, has invited once again NAMFREL to be an official observer for its BAC. NAMFREL was last invited to attend as BAC observers three years ago. This would be part of NAMFREL’s election and good governance effort to ensure a transparent and accountable management of COMELEC’s procurement requirements. One of the first items up for bidding under the new BACs leadership is for the procurement of supplies related to the October 25 Sangguniang Kabataan and Barangay Elections. The bid submission and opening, was originally scheduled for September 25 but was postponed to September 29 due to concerns of the bidders capability and experience on security papers. Total Approved Budget Contract (ABC) for three lots of ballot, election calendars of activities in connection with the Oct 25 election.

[Sources: Manila Bulletin, Philippine Star News, COMELEC data, NAMFREL data]