Almost all barangay winner candidates already proclaimed

- The Comelec reported that 96.25 percent of 42,025 barangays in the country have already proclaimed their newly elected barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan officials. Some 2,252 barangays elected grassroots officials on October 26, while about 160 others conducted polls October 27. The remaining barangays which have not yet proclaimed winners in the polls might still be settling ties, especially in the positions of barangay and SK councilors. Section 240 of the Omnibus Election Code provides for the drawing of lots in case two or more candidates are tied with the highest number of votes, with the luck-favored candidate to be proclaimed winner. No pre-proclamation protests are allowed and no major sources of delays in proclamation are expected once the votes are counted, except for settling tied votes. The Comelec is still in the process of determining the voters’ turnout during the recently concluded grassroots polls.

Since no pre-proclamation protests are allowed for candidates who would want to contest, the Comelec may consider improving the process of hearing post-proclamation protests. It takes an average of two to three years to adjudicate these cases rendering the verdict moot since candidates would not serve the term they have earned.

Senators push amendments for Sangguniang Kabataan

- While there are bills proposing for the abolition of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago, has filed a bill seeking to lower the minimum age requirement for SK candidates to 12 years old. Senate Bill (SB) 1739 seeks to reduce the minimum age requirement for SK candidates from from 15 years old to 12 years old. The maximum age is 17. The bill likewise seeks to amend Section 329 of the Local Government Code and increase the allotment for the SK from the general fund of the barangay from 10 percent to 15 percent. It also seeks to create three committees to develop the spiritual, physical, and moral well-being of the youth. The proposed bill requires the punong barangay to supervise these committees and their activities. SB 1739 is a revised version of SB 1742 filed by former Senator Juan Flavier in the thirteenth Congress. At least four other bills concerning the SK system have been filed with the Senate for the fifteenth Congress. Sen. Francis Escudero, Sen. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., and Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri agree in reforming the SK instead of abolishment.

Two negating issues regarding the SK are now being faced by the Congress, abolition vs reformation. The government may consider educating the youth about the Sangguniang Kabataan system and its real role in development and governance. Thereafter, the government should have an independent survey consulting the youth regarding their involvement and now they are being affected by the SK governance. Any decision and move by the Congress regarding the SK will not only affect the youth sector but determine the quality of our future pool of local and national leaders.

Namfrel on the upcoming Myanmar election

- The November 7 parliamentary election in Burma (Myanmar) has been getting opposing opinions from both local and international organizations and governments even before the date of the election was announced by Myanmar’s ruling military junta in August 2010.