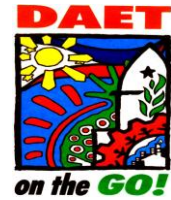




Republic of the Philippines
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MUNICIPALITY OF DAET



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Daet mayor explains Ombudsman case, cites political harassment

DAET, Camarines Norte --- “My political enemies are out to embarrass me, but in the end I’m confident that I will be vindicated,” said Mayor Tito Sarion in reaction to the two cases filed against him by the Ombudsman with the SandiganBayan for violation of Section 3(e) of Republic Act 3019 and malversation of public funds.



The pending case against Sarion at the Sandiganbayan stemmed from a complaint filed on Nov. 25, 2008 by a certain Zenaida Baluca with the Ombudsman for violation of Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and malversation of public funds.

The alleged graft committed by the Daet mayor arose when approved the partial payment of P1 million in price escalation to Markbilt Construction, the contractor of the Daet Public Market. The contractor sought some P 5 million in price escalation from the local government of Daet for the construction of the public market.

The partial payment in price escalation was taken from the Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance No. 1 in the total amount of P4.4 million for that specific purpose that was enacted by the Sangguniang Bayan on March 6, 2008.

On May 12, 2011, after more than two years and three months since Baluca filed her complaint, the Ombudsman on May 12, 2011 finally issued a resolution recommending the filing of the two cases against Sarion with the anti-graft court.

The Daet local chief executive on July 8, 2011 filed a motion for reconsideration of the Ombudsman, but the same was denied on July 14 of the same year.

Sarion said “he sees the evil hands of his political enemies behind the filing of the two cases against him before the Ombudsman. When we checked the identity of Zenaida Baluca, we discovered that she is an ambulant vendor who was used by a crooked politician in the province to harass me and derail my honest-to-goodness governance of Daet.”

The Daet mayor also expressed strong suspicion that someone was behind the undue speed by which the Office of the Overall Deputy Ombudsman denied his motion for reconsideration in just a matter of three working days upon its filing, in contrast to the more than two years and three months it took the anti-graft body to resolve the complaint filed by Baluca.

Lawyer Andres Rommel De Jesus, legal counsel of Sarion said that he is confident that his client will be cleared of criminal liability.

“Unlike the graft investigators of the Ombudsman, the honorable justices of the Sandiganbayan are beyond reproach and more knowledgeable in determining the innocence or guilt of the accused based on the evidence that we will present in court, De Jesus said.

Sarion through his lawyer already filed with the Sandiganbayan on Aug. 19 a motion for the determination of probable cause. Hearing on his motion is reportedly set on Aug. 26 2011.

RONNEL C. YU, MPA
Municipal Information Officer