

Sulu-based task force urges Comelec to sustain holding of automated polls

The Task Force Kahanungan (TFH) is calling the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to sustain the holding of automated polls, citing the last May 10, 2010 elections has marked a crucial chapter in the Philippines electoral system and history.

The TFH, in a statement Tuesday, said the automated election is indeed a renovation of the electoral system in the country that shines like an icon of democratic exercises when the electorates contended the completion of their constitutional rights to suffrage.

The TFH is composed of multi-sectoral groups based in the southern Philippines province of Sulu which was created earlier this year with an aim for a violence-free election in the said province.

Kahanungan is a Tausug term which means peace.

The TFH said that although there was sprouting cynicism regarding the credibility of the elections process in Mindanao, more particularly in Sulu, nonetheless, the automated election was a democratic methodological development that had to be socialized with by Muslim political communities "because elections is a societal aspect of citizenship."

The task force, which conducted a post-election assessment in Sulu, said the automated polls were labeled peaceful on the account that no single person was shot dead on the day of the elections compared to the past elections in the said province.

The assessment was designed to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the automated elections toward exercising democratic rights to vote by the people.

The task force said that armed violence, which were recorded in the province of Sulu in previous polls, were reduced to mere fist fights by the conduct of the automated elections last May 10.

Zenaida Masong, a member of TFH, said the elections before in Sulu was "so tensed because of human intervention from voting up to the canvassing of votes."

"In automated elections, once you feed the ballot to the PCOS (Precinct Count Optical Scan) machine, that it is done and your vote is counted," she said Tuesday afternoon in a press conference.

The TFH also labeled the peaceful conduct of the May 10, 2010 polls in Sulu as one of the laudable achievements of the Commission on Elections (Comelec), police, military and the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

"It shows that peaceful elections in Sulu is possible and election-related violence can be avoided when everyone works collaboratively and are conscientious of initiating peaceful political enterprise," the task force said.

"The task of solving deficiencies in the election process is a multi-stakeholder's responsibility and not solely attributed to Comelec being the commission mandated to run the electoral process," the task force said.

Dr. Amildasa Annil, chairman of the Ulangig Mindanao which is also a member of the TFH, said he hoped that the Comelec would think of conducting elections in future through biometrical system. (PNA/PIA9-BST