



## **NATIONAL CITIZENS' MOVEMENT FOR FREE ELECTIONS (NAMFREL)**

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### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **NAMFREL expresses concern over reliability of PCOS machines for the May 2013 elections**

NAMFREL's mandate as a citizens' arm is to assist the COMELEC in ensuring the conduct of free, orderly and clean elections. As such, its volunteers have already reported on the performance of the PCOS machines in several demonstrations conducted in their chapters. Based on their reports, NAMFREL would like to express its concern on the reliability of the performance of the machines that will be used during the May 2013 elections. 77,829 machines will be deployed since each clustered precinct will have one. Mrs. Corazon de la Paz-Bernardo, NAMFREL National Chairperson, in a letter to COMELEC Chairman Sixto B. Brillantes, Jr. dated April 23, 2013, expressed NAMFREL's findings and concerns.

The letter is as follows:

*In line with our commitment as your citizens' arm to assist the Commission in ensuring the conduct of a free, orderly and clean elections this coming May 13, 2013, we would like to respectfully bring to your attention our concern about the capability of the PCOS machines to initialize, operate and transmit the results on election day. We are receiving reports from our provincial chapters about the preparations for the coming elections and this is one of the areas that we feel we have to raise a red flag on.*

*The malfunctioning of the PCOS machines will pose problems on congestion and long lines in the precincts, voluntary disenfranchisement for voters who do not have the time or patience to wait, possibility of low turnout, and frustration for both Board of Election Inspectors members and the voters.*

*The bases of our apprehension are the following:*

1. *During the mock elections on February 2 where we had observers in 17 out of the 20 mock election sites, the following were observed by our volunteers:*
  - 1.1 *The initialization of the PCOS machine took more than an hour in Baseco, Tondo, Manila; there were no available technicians to assist the Board of Election Inspectors (BEI). The BEI had to call the COMELEC office in the City to get step by step instructions on how to get the machine started.*
  - 1.2 *The PCOS machines malfunctioned in a number of places and had to be replaced. The common problem was ballot rejection. This happened in UPIS, Quezon City and Bato, Camarines Sur.*
  - 1.3 *The PCOS machine performed initially but stopped after accepting a few ballots at EDSA Elementary School in Manila.*
  - 1.4 *Delays were observed for more than an hour before the BEI could transmit the results. The BEI had to go to a suitable location (e.g. the upper floor of the school building) to get a signal from the network provider. This happened in Cagayan de Oro Central School, UPIS in Quezon City, and two precincts in Camarines Sur.*
  - 1.5 *Failure of transmission was observed in a number of places such as Bongao, Tawi-tawi, Dumaguete City, Iriga City and Bato in Camarines Sur.*
  - 1.6 *Still on transmission of Election Returns, the BEIs in Kabulakan, Negros Oriental were advised to try transmitting at the local COMELEC Office in the area.*

2. *During the National Assembly of NAMFREL on March 2, the demonstration PCOS machine failed to accept ballots.*
3. *During the Training of the Board of Election Inspectors in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, the PCOS failed to function.*
4. *In the designated COMELEC "Demo Centers" (for Voters Education), the PCOS failed in Cubao and in Davao.*
5. *During the Overseas Voting in Hongkong, the PCOS refused to accept ballots.*
6. *The result of the Random Manual Audit at the UPIS, Quezon City showed 15 variances between the manual count and the PCOS count.*

*We know that the COMELEC is trying its best to ensure that the preparations for the May 13 elections include the operation-worthiness of the PCOS machines. We enjoin you to have your technical staff double check the capability of the PCOS so that the elections will run smoothly from voting to transmission.*

*A second point we want to raise is a request that COMELEC shares with NAMFREL and other citizens' arms its Contingency Plan or Plan B in the remote possibility that the elections will not use the AES. We would likewise want to develop our Contingency Plan to dovetail with that of COMELEC's.*

*Meanwhile, we will continue to monitor the preparations in the field as the election nears and will provide you feedback/reports when necessary.*

NAMFREL has previously submitted to the Commission on Elections on February 20, 2013 its report on the Mock Elections held on February 2, 2013 in 20 polling precincts nationwide. Interested parties may request for a copy of said report from the NAMFREL National Secretariat.

For the May 2013 elections, NAMFREL is embarking on six projects, namely Mobile Pollwatching, Voters' Education Program, Voters' List Monitoring, Logistics Monitoring, Random Manual Audit Monitoring, and Electoral Finance Monitoring. We will be releasing reports to the public based on our findings during the conduct of these six projects.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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