

EDITORS' PICKS



PCGG: Bongbong blocked return of \$40M to gov't

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Vice Presidential candidate and Senator Bongbong Marcos. INQUIRER FILE PHOTO / RICHARD A. REYES

Debunking Sen. Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s claim that the government blocked the compensation of martial law victims, the Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) Wednesday said court records would show that it was the senator who was hindering the return of his family’s ill-gotten funds to the people.

The PCGG said that of note was the \$40-million (P1.84 billion) Arelma account that was opened in Panama by the senator’s father and namesake on Sept. 21, 1972, or when the dictator declared martial law in the country.

Two years ago, the Supreme Court upheld with finality its 2012 ruling that this particular asset was part of the Marcoses’ ill-gotten wealth.

“In a litigation spanning more than 20 years, it was Senator Marcos Jr. who took the lead to prevent the early award of the Arelma funds to the Filipino people,” the PCGG said in a statement Wednesday.

In fact, the commission said the senator and his mother, Ilocos Norte Rep. Imelda Marcos, “hastily filed” two petitions in the Supreme Court after the Sandiganbayan forfeited the Arelma account in favor of the government in 2009.

The PCGG said the amount involved in the Arelma account was enough to cover for a year the government’s subsidy to 300,000 families under the conditional cash transfer program.

At the first and only vice presidential debate last Sunday, Marcos said he couldn’t give what he didn’t have when told by Camarines Sur Rep. Leni Robredo that his family should return its ill-gotten wealth.

When he was called out again by Robredo that his family had not abided by the court orders in Singapore and the United States, the senator hit back by saying that it was the government that was blocking the rights victims’ compensation.

The PCGG said to date it had allocated P10 billion for martial law victims, which came from the recovered Marcos Swiss accounts. It added that the Human Rights Compensation Commission was the one tasked with processing the claims of human rights victims.

The PCGG noted that cases against the Marcoses had been decided in favor of the victims, and it was only “a matter of executing them against the family.”

Based on its records, the PCGG said “the Marcoses are actively litigating and are represented by their lawyers” in 15 civil cases in the Sandiganbayan and the Supreme Court.

“In fact, in the 2007 hearing of the case filed by PCGG against Marcos and Lucio Tan, Senator Marcos testified as a witness before the Sandiganbayan, saying that the corporation subject of the case did not belong to Lucio Tan but indeed belongs to his father. The corporation subject here was not in the declared assets of the late President,” the PCGG said.

Among Tan's companies, which Marcos claimed 60 percent ownership, were Fortune Tobacco Corp., Asia Brewery Inc., Allied Banking Corp., Foremost Farms, Himmel Industries Inc., Grandspan Development Corp., Silangan Holdings Inc., Dominion Realty and Construction Corp., and Shareholdings Inc.

To date, the PCGG said based on its records, ill-gotten assets amounting to more than \$1 billion had yet to be received and were still pending in courts. These included the recovery of major assets, such as valuable artworks, properties in different parts of the country and the recovery of shares in major corporations.

"The PCGG continues to seek not just ill-gotten assets but also the proceeds of these ill-gotten assets, such as the paintings ... The artworks are now conservatively valued at around \$300 million (P13.8 billion)," the PCGG said. Among the paintings that the PCGG is still trying to recover are the works of renowned artists like Michelangelo, Monet, Rembrandt, Picasso, Renoir and Van Gogh.

Since it was created in 1986 to go after the Marcoses and their cronies' ill-gotten wealth, the commission has recovered a total of P170.4 billion worth of assets. Of this amount, P74 billion was remitted to the National Treasury during the Aquino administration.

The family of the dictator, who ruled the country for 21 years, is said to have amassed a total of \$5 billion in ill-gotten wealth.