

Headline: Four-week teleserye

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It all started four weeks ago, at the State of the Nation Address. I'm not referring to the SONA itself, the message or performance of President Rodrigo Duterte, and that is unusual. This time, he was upstaged by his daughter, Inday Sara, who dipped tried her hand in national politics and showed she could do effectively. In what seems very clear to me, she made a play, got key partners to play with her, and managed to remove then Pantaleon Alvarez from the Speakership position.

Yes, it is Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo who was elected and installed as the new Speaker, and it would seem to many that she was the one who staged a successful coup. She did, she played her role, she was rewarded, but the lady mayor from Davao was the trigger or the master key that opened a tightly-locked door. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo would never have made an overt, aggressive move without the permission of President Rodrigo Duterte. It has been reported many times that the President never knew and agreed to the coup, but Inday Sara did. As it turns out now, what Inday Sara wants, Inday Sara gets.

The sudden and dramatic change of Speakership started the ball rolling for the 4-week period that ensued, and where are we now completes that month-long drama that blanketed not only the Philippine scene but even globally. President Duterte was reportedly sick in a coma according to Joma Sison, and caused a ripple of panic in some circles. But his presence and speech last Tuesday in Cebu eased the apprehension of many and disappointed others.

It was not only the rumors and the claim of Joma Sison about the President in coma, but a series of disturbing events that places the health condition of the President as unusually suspect. He had checked in a hospital four weeks ago, just before the SONA and was not his bombastic self in delivering his speech. In between, the President made mention that he wanted to retire or step down but would do so if only Bongbong Marcos were Vice-President. To many, that sparked the Leni vs Bongbong feud and case at the Comelec. To some, it showed the state of mind and the state of health of a tired man battling his physical disease.

From the coup at the House of Representatives to the official launch of the regional party of Inday Sara to the presidential remarks about quitting the presidency to the coma claim of Joma Sison, here is a destabilizing impact on the political dynamics of the country. If this were not, we would all be awed and fixated at the double whammy that his US President Donald Trump when two close and strategic associates just lost their legal battles – one being convicted and the other pleading guilty and entering into a deal with state authorities. As one president's illness is raising speculations here, another president's possible impeachment is doing the same thing in the United States.

The climate, too, has aggravated the negative atmosphere globally, what with trade wars and political realignments within the G& and EU and NATO, plus the continuing violence in Syria and Yemen. Deadly floods and earthquakes are hitting several countries which now make climate change a real and experienced devastation for many. Our own coastal configuration is threatened by rising ocean levels aside from the traditional typhoons, floods, landslides and earthquakes. The more extreme scenarios about ice melts and rising ocean waters could wipe out whole islands and not just coastal villages.

As a heavy month chugged along, we were hit with another incident of shabu smuggling in the billions of pesos. It is like a replay of a similar case when shabu valued at over 6 billion pesos seemed like it was just part of a bigger shipment or one of a series of shipments. The discovery plus maybe a non-discovery of more simply reminds us that illegal drugs are running strong despite tokhang and all. Worse, President Duterte has finally admitted that he cannot eliminate the scourge of illegal drugs, just as he also said he cannot stop corruption. I never thought he could in the first place, and so am not disappointed that he cannot on both illegal drugs and corruption. At the same time, as a citizen whose individual life is threatened when the collective life is beset by illegal drugs and corruption, I wish a more effective and comprehensive effort is introduced to combat and minimize them.

Who would imagine that a Xiamen Airlines plane would experience a hard landing during a sudden heavy downpour last August 16, 2018? Its Boeing 727-800 airplane hit several landing lights, its tire and nose landing gear got separated, followed by the main landing gear and left engine. Thankfully, everyone in the airplane survived. For four days, though, pandemonium hit the airport, all flights were cancelled, and no one could say just how long the single runway we had could be cleared of all obstructions. We always knew that NAIA was severely limited with its single runway but now it seems obvious we have to take drastic action versus more studies. A whole tourism industry could collapse like a Boeing 737-800.

Throughout all of these negative incidents and developments, there was, and still is, the nagging inflation and steady increase of basic goods. It came before the last four weeks and will continue beyond the next four weeks. These rising prices are hitting the majority of Filipinos who have little or no cushion against them. Finger-pointing is useless when families have to sacrifice the volume and frequency of their food intake. They cannot eat excuses, not even valid reasons. Only government can mitigate, and I hope it does what it can immediately.

What now is the challenge for ordinary people? By taking the wrong attitude and course of action, we can raise the level of anger and criticism. Or we can take a deep breath and continue being good citizens.

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