

MANILA, Philippines - President Aquino wished his former girlfriend Shalani Soledad well yesterday in her venture into show business.

The Valenzuela City councilor is the co-host of comedian Willie Revillame on the TV5 game show "Willing Willie."

"I understand she looks at it as a perspective to broaden her ability to serve her constituents. So I hope the upside will be fully attained, she finds fulfillment and happiness in it. As far as the downside of being in show biz is concerned, hopefully (it) will be very mitigated or non-existent," Mr. Aquino said.

Soledad had her debut as Revillame's co-host last night. She thanked the TV station's management and the public for the new opportunity given her.

Sources said Soledad informed the President that she was joining Revillame, who supported Mr. Aquino's rival in the last elections, Nacionalista Party standard-bearer Sen. Manuel Villar Jr.

The President and Soledad broke up in September. While both of them have yet to give direct confirmation, the President had said that it was quite clear to both parties as to where they stood now and that "we now have separate lives."

But the President could not say whether he could watch Soledad's show since he has a lot of materials to study for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in Japan this week.

Deputy presidential spokesperson Abigail Valte, on the other hand, said it would be former Sen. Manuel Roxas II who would surely be watching his wife, broadcaster Korina Sanchez, when asked if Mr. Aquino would watch "TV Patrol," where Sanchez returns as an anchor. Sanchez is also a former girlfriend of the President.

Deliberation delayed

Meantime, the deliberation of the P2-billion budget of the Valenzuela City government was delayed yesterday after Soledad failed to show up for the third time during the 14th regular session of the city council because she had to attend to her TV5 show.

Soledad is chairman of the council's committee on appropriations which is deliberating the proposed P2,005,574,191 budget for 2011.

She is also in charge of reviewing the contracts of the city government submitted to the council for approval.

The session of the city council starts at 2 p.m. but Soledad has to report to TV5 in Novaliches, Quezon City at 3 p.m. to prepare for the show which starts at 5 p.m.

Councilor Louie Natividad Borja, the council's acting presiding officer, appealed to Soledad and members of the committee to attend the budget hearing so that the proposed budget will be presented for plenary debate.

Since the news of her breakup with President Aquino came out, Soledad has asked for permission to travel to Asian countries. Her latest trip was to Cambodia where she attended an Asian conference.

According to a city council employee who declined to be named, the work of Soledad as chairman of the appropriations committee will be compromised because of her daily TV show. "The committee on appropriations needs a full-time chairman who will review every detail of

the budget so that he or she can defend it during plenary debate,” he said.

But Councilor Alvin Feliciano said the hearing will not be affected by Soledad’s TV work since the budget has already been deliberated upon at the committee level and the presentation is only procedural.

He said the sessions of the city council are held only during Mondays so Soledad can continue her showbiz career while performing her job as a member of the council.

Soledad also held the same committee during her first term as councilor of the second district of Valenzuela.

A check with the office of the council secretary showed that Soledad has not filed a single ordinance since she was re-elected as number one councilor of the district.

But a council staff said, “The performance is not based on the number of ordinances filed but on the performance of their respective committees.”

For his part, Senate President Pro-Tempore Jinggoy Estrada is hoping to have Soledad as his leading lady in future movies.

Estrada said Soledad deserves to become part of the showbiz industry because she has a pretty face and a good demeanor. -Aurea Calica, Perseus Echeminada and Christina Mendez