

NPC split looms?

INDIVIDUAL preferences for a presidential bet among party members threaten to split the once-formidable Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), according to informed sources.

The sources, who asked to remain anonymous for lack of authority to speak for the party, said the looming split within the NPC ranks became more apparent when former party stalwart and now Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. made public recently his intention to run for president in 2010.

"Gilbert's declared presidential bid gave birth to a new bloc within the NPC that's inclined to support his candidacy despite early pronouncements that the party will support the bids of either Sen. Loren Legarda or Sen. Francis Escudero," an informant said.

Teodoro, who for a long time had been the designated point-man of NPC boss, businessman Danding Cojuangco, enjoys the trust and confidence of many party bigwigs—the same group now backing his presidential bid, sources said.

Another point of confusion among party members is the fact that at present the NPC as a political party is identified with both the administration and the opposition. The majority of the NPC member-

ship form part of the ruling coalition Lakas-Kampi headed by President Arroyo.

"Here is a situation where a party (NPC), which is an integral part of the ruling coalition, is uncertain about its real nature. Whether it will continue its alliance with the administration or identify itself with the political opposition is something that party leaders must decide upon soon," the source said.

The source said many NPC members would rather remain with the administration given the "political benefits" they have been getting as part of the ruling coalition.

Many NPC members have already manifested their preference for Teodoro as a presidential bet, especially if the ruling party later on decides to draft him as its standard-bearer.

"It will be easier to many NPC members who are presently identified with the administration to support Teodoro's candidacy than to go with Legarda or Escudero who are both NPC stalwarts but are known oppositionists," the source explained. (Philstar.com)

GMA departs for Egypt, Syria

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo left Saturday, May 2 for an official visit to Egypt and a state visit to Syria from May 3 to 5.

The President and her lean delegation took off from Terminal 2 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) at 2:30am via Philippine Airlines flight PR001. She will be back in Manila on May 6.

The President's working visit to Egypt will focus on peace, interfaith dialogue and investments.

Egypt is one of the most influential members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and one of the most effective and efficient peace brokers in the Islamic world.

The Chief Executive will also meet with and invite Arab businessmen to invest in the Philippines.

She is also expected to push for the Philippines' long-standing bid for an observer status in the OIC in her talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

While in Cairo the President is expected to meet with some 5,000 Filipinos, mostly migrant workers and students, in Egypt.

During her state visit to Syria, the President will embark on a search for new business and investment opportunities for the Philippines.

She is also expected to meet representatives of the estimated 17,000 Filipinos working in Syria.

Highlights of the two-day visit include her bilateral meeting with Syrian President Bashar Al-



President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

assad. President Arroyo is also scheduled to sign partnership and cooperation agreements with the Syrian President. (PND)

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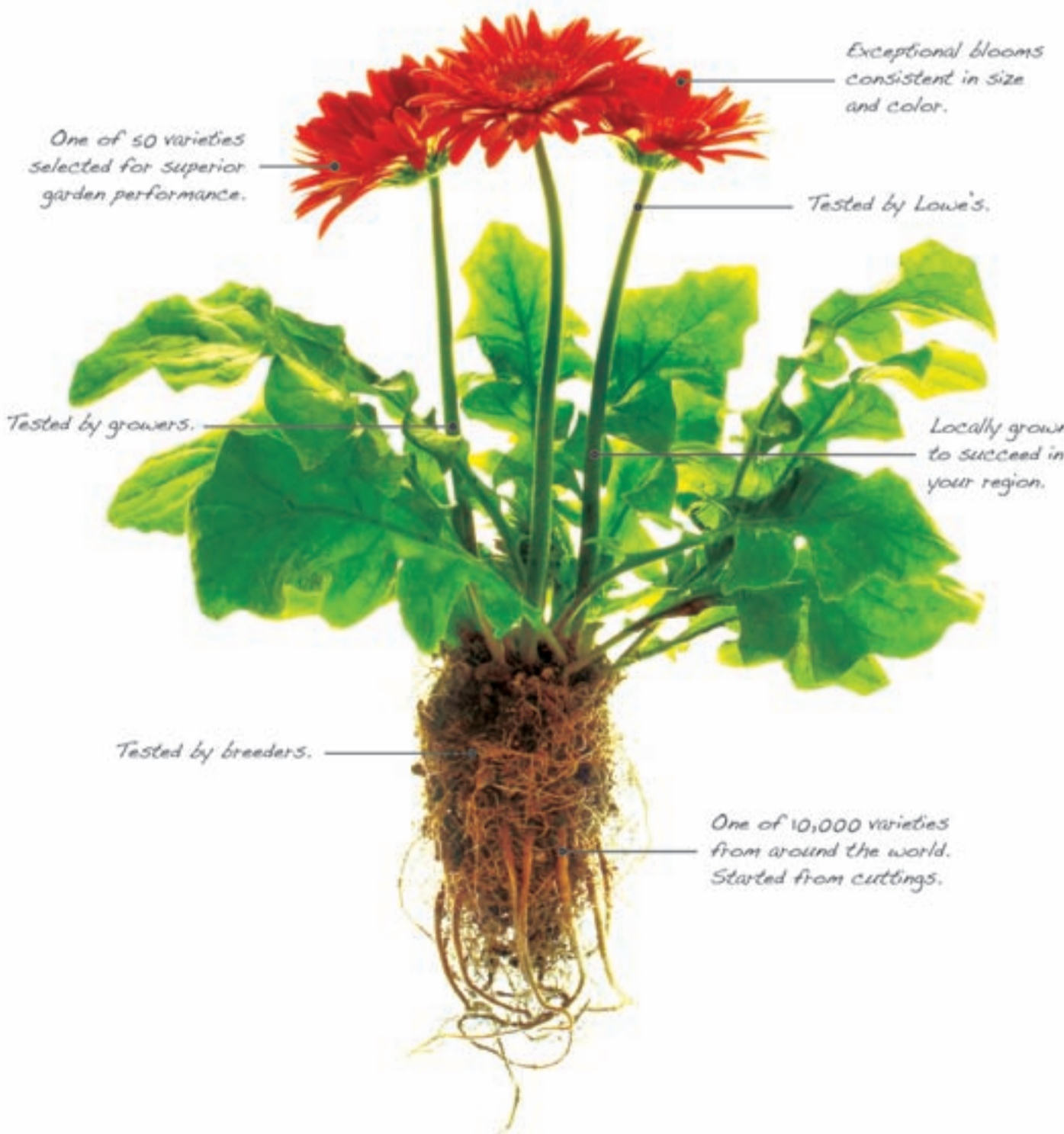
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