

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

De Castro plays coy about 2010 plans

BOAC, Marinduque— Vice President Noli De Castro continued to play coy about his presidential ambitions during a visit to this province.

De Castro, who is also the Cabinet Official for Regional Development (CORD) for Mimaropa (Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan), visited the province Wednesday for a dialogue with the Marinduque Provincial Development Council on the global economic and financial crisis.

Since participants, including members of the media, were told by De Castro's staffers to limit questions relating to the event, Marinduque Governor Jose Antonio "Bong" Carrion asked a hypothetical question for De Castro.

His answer gave way for opinions from participants that the vice president would run for president.

"In the event that you decided to run as president in 2010, what would Mimaropa expect from you as president?" asked Carrion.

"Governor, I will answer that question if I am already there," replied De Castro, who rode on his popularity as a broadcaster in his venture into politics.

Earlier in the dialogue, the mayor of the town of Buenavista, Ofelia Madrigal, unintentionally addressed De Castro as "Mr. President" when she asked a question.

The Vice President replied to Madrigal in jest that she would not be corrected.

In both instances, De Castro elicited cheers and applause from dialogue participants.

An elected local official of the province, who refused to be identified, said that with the candid remarks of De Castro, it was clear that he was running for president in 2010.

"He is just playing safe not

to answer directly so that he will be spared from criticisms or demolition jobs from other potential candidates," added the local official.

An employee of the provincial government, meanwhile, said although De Castro's remarks might be viewed as jokes, it was clear that he was planning to run for president in 2010.

De Castro was charged with fraud along with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo for alleged cheating in the 2004 presidential elections, but the case against him did not prosper after Loren Legarda, De Castro's closest rival for the vice presidency in 2004, ran for senator again and won. (*Inquirer.net*)

No preliminary Senate probe into Villar rap

by MAILA AGER
Inquirer.net

SENATORS failed on Thursday, May 7, to hold a preliminary inquiry into the ethics complaint filed against Senator Manny Villar when members of the minority bloc insisted on amending the rules to be used on the case.

Senator Alan Peter Cayetano, a staunch ally of Villar, also asked the committee of the whole to reconsider the findings of the ethics committee that the complaint was sufficient in form and substance.

"Can we not look at the form and substance again?" he asked.

For his part, Senate Minority Floor Leader Aquilino Pimentel posed a continuing objection to the "processing" of the complaint unless a new set of rules was adopted.

But even before Cayetano and Pimentel could present their arguments, Senator Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, manifested his strong objection to any motion to "disregard or vacate" the decision of the ethics committee, which he heads.

"I can't allow that sufficiency in form and substance be disregarded by the minority objection," Lacson said.

He also raised his objection to any move by the minority bloc to amend the rules of the ethics committee.

But Pimentel expressed "regrets" for what he described as an attempt by Lacson to pre-empt the discussions.

Senate President Juan Ponce-Enrile, who presided over the hear-

ing, said the committee of the whole would decide on Cayetano and Pimentel's motions when they convene again on Monday.

"It's possible, we might tackle both forms and substance. *Madali lang yun* [That's easy], *babasahin lang yung* [we will just read the] complaint, *yung mga* [the] attached annexes, which are the evidence then we go to the preliminary inquiry," Enrile told reporters after the hearing. ■

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