

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

Arroyo: There will be elections in 2010

Says party merger 'tangible proof'

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

SETTING off the election fever, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo declared that elections would push through in May 2010 and that the merged Lakas-Kampi-CMD (Christian Muslims Democrats) party would dominate it.

At the same time, the President gave marching orders to her allies to stand "strong and united" behind the merged party, which

she said was the "best guarantee for success in 2010."

After shunning talk of politics in the past months, Arroyo came out strongly on Thursday, May 28 during the merger of the two administration parties, as she shot back at critics who said that Charter change efforts were meant to extend her stay in office and postpone the 2010 elections.

The President said the merger of the two parties was a "tangible



Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo

proof" that elections would be held next year.

"Cynics and detractors love to paint grim scenarios on the cancellation of the 2010 elections," she said in a speech, adding, "Let this merger of Lakas and Kampi be tangible proof of the administration's readiness to help ensure that the election do push through."

"I need you with me, strong and united. That's why here, at least in our house, there is no other way forward but to be one, act as one, win as one," she said.

"The emergence of the Lakas-Kampi-CMD as one party is our finest weapon and perhaps our best guarantee for success in the 2010 elections. I look upon Lakas-Kampi moving as one,

fighting as one, as the instrument and beacon for electing the best, most qualified, and the worthiest leaders of our country," she said.

Arroyo, founder of Kampi and chairman of Lakas, acknowledged that "rarely we have been unanimous in our thinking and opinions, but I hope that all of us will be disciplined enough to support the party stand."

Lakas-CMD executive director Rey Roquero said that with that merger, there would now be "a well of presidential candidates" gravitating towards the administration party.

Two of the potential presidential candidates—Vice President Noli de Castro and Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr.—attended the merger. ■

Erap eyes own merger of opposition parties

by JOSE RODEL CLAPANO
Philstar.com

SAN FELIPE, Zambales—Former President Joseph Estrada hinted last May 28 at the possible merger of his party, the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino (PMP), with PDP-Laban, the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) and the Liberal Party (LP) for the national elections next year.

In an interview, Estrada said a merged PMP, PDP-Laban, NPC and LP would all the more strengthen the opposition in 2010.

Estrada also belittled the chances of administration candidates even with a merged Lakas and Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

"Like in the 2007 senatorial elections, we have a strong lineup of candidates for the 2010 elections. The administration will enter the needle's eye. The opposition will be an issue-oriented one in next year's elections," Estrada said.

He said that the administration will have a hard time explaining to the people the issues on "rising unemployment, rampant graft and corruption and the peace and order problems in the country today."

"Our country has been named as the most corrupt country in Asia; second to the most corrupt

country all over the world. International human rights groups also tagged the Philippines as a very dangerous place for journalists.

We would easily beat the administration candidates," Estrada said, adding that Filipino voters of today are intelligent. (Philstar.com)



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