

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

De Castro, Teodoro lead admin bets

by TJ BURGONIO, MICHAEL LIM UBAC
Inquirer.net

MANILA—Vice President Noli de Castro and Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro have been confirmed as the leading contenders in the ruling Lakas-CMD's selection process for the administration coalition's standard-bearer in the 2010 presidential election.

However, rumors are rife that there is a slot for a third name in the short list of "presidentiables" being considered by the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats party and that this would be a toss-up between oppositionists Senators Francis Escudero and Manuel Villar—and possibly Sen. Loren Legarda.

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, the Lakas secretary general, confirmed that De Castro and Teodoro were in the short list, and that the "possible dark horse" could either be Legarda, Villar or Sen. Richard Gordon.

He said Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando was definitely out of the list because of his poor showing in the surveys.

According to Zubiri, although Legarda was the running mate



Vice President Noli de Castro



Defense Sec. Gilbert Teodoro

of the late Fernando Poe Jr., the opposition candidate in the 2004 presidential race, she has enough following in the administration coalition.

He said there was a clamor from the local officials allied with Lakas to include Legarda in the selection process.

Teodoro, Legarda and Escudero belong to the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), the party of business tycoon Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco. The majority of NPC members are allied with the ruling party, with only a handful with the minority.

Escudero, who is with the minority faction of the NPC, has categorically rejected being included in the Lakas selection process.

"Thanks, but no thanks. I'm a member of the opposition. I'm part of the opposition, and I have no plans and I will never leave the opposition," said Escudero in a phone interview.

If he is chosen as the NPC candidate, Escudero said he would

not "allow" an NPC merger with any administration party.

Back-door

According to the rumors, Escudero could become the administration candidate through the back door, that is, through the alliance between Lakas-CMD-NPC-Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), thus precluding the necessity of his formally jumping to an administration party.

Zubiri said the ruling party was in a rush to name its standard-bearer for 2010 because of the early deadline set for the filing of candidacies, which has been moved to Nov. 30, 2009 from February 2010. The ruling coalition will have its convention in June.

As regards Fernando, he said that "we love chairman Bayani very much, but he is not rating well."

"We must be practical. Many party-mates will desert the party if the candidate is not winnable because he or she can't convince local party leaders to support him or her," he said. ■

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[TheWeekthatWas]

10M Filipinos participate in Earth Hour

LAST Saturday, March 28, at precisely 8:30pm, various parts of the country switched off the lights for a full hour to keep with the worldwide "Earth Hour," a noble attempt to call for action on climate change.



RP's effort was led by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Department of Energy, and the Green Switch Movement.

National Director of Earth Hour Philippines Yeb Saño said the Philippines ranked number one in having the most number of cities and municipalities which participated in Earth Hour, with a total of 647 cities and municipalities switching off the lights.



Leading software company to continue to be an investment haven in RP

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo recently visited the office of one of the country's leading software companies and expressed optimism of the country's position as an information and software industry investment haven in the region.

At the Oracle Global Development and Delivery Center at the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig, the president also held an executive session with the top officials of the company.

GMA also had high praises for the company for its continued belief in the capability of the country to host foreign investors despite the global economic crisis.

Oracle is currently the world's largest business software company serving more than 320,000 customers, including 100 of the Fortune 100 which represents a variety of industries in more than 145 countries around the world.



DFA determined to continue issuance of e-passports

IN an effort to make traveling convenient for millions of Filipino workers, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said there is a need to continue the e-passport project.

"The e-passport project is an important government infrastructure project in line with the DFA's mandate to provide secure and globally accepted passports essential to every Filipino, in particular the more than eight million OFWs," Foreign Affairs spokesman Ed Malaya said.

The DFA launched the machine-readable passport project ahead of the April 1, 2010 deadline imposed by the International Civil Aviation Office (ICAO) to upgrade the passport system among all its member-countries. ■

