

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

'Charter change on but 2010 polls to push through'

by JESS DIAZ
Philstar.com

THE 2010 presidential elections will push through despite the insistent Charter change (Cha-cha) campaign of President Arroyo's congressional allies, leaders of

her two political parties said last April 13.

Speaker Prospero Nograles, who is president of Lakas, and Camarines Sur Rep. Luis Villafuerte, head of the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi), announced last April 13 their resignation as heads of their parties to fast-track the merger of the two political forces and prepare for the 2010 presidential elections.

Nograles and Villafuerte announced during a news conference their resignation as heads of their parties to give President Arroyo a free hand to determine the appropriate leadership structure for the "consolidated party."

The Speaker told reporters that preparations the two biggest political parties are making should reassure the public that next year's polls would be held as scheduled despite the Charter change (Cha-cha) initiative.

"That also means that we are not extending our terms of office," he said.

Villafuerte said Lakas and Kampi are on "electoral preparations mode" and that should erase doubts that next year's elections would be canceled and Cha-cha would shift the nation to the parliamentary system.

The two party leaders said such preparations and their Cha-

cha campaign are "unrelated" and that efforts to amend the Constitution could be separately pursued.

Villafuerte is the author of a resolution that seeks to convene members of Congress into a constituent assembly (con-ass) to propose Charter amendments.

He has left the job of filing the resolution to Nograles, who said he would do it within the week.

The con-ass resolution has 175 signatories, 22 signatures short of Villafuerte's target of 197 to bypass senators who oppose Cha-cha.

Nograles said a majority vote in the House and a majority in the Senate would be required to convene Congress into a con-ass.

Villafuerte said his resolution calls upon "members of Congress," not on the "institutions" of the House and the Senate, to meet as a con-ass.

The two political leaders said they are giving Lakas and Kampi officials 45 days to merge the two parties.

They said a merged Lakas-Kampi "will allow if not compel administration allies to field single electoral tickets at the local level, thus enabling them to work for the victory of national candidates with greater unity and focus."

"We exhort all members of the administration coalition to rally their respective followers and constituents in support of the President's call for honest,

efficient and credible automated elections in May of 2010 to bring about greater political stability in our country," they added.

Malacañang welcomed the resignations of Nograles and Villafuerte as heads of Lakas and Kampi to guarantee the merger of the two parties.

Presidential Adviser for Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio thanked Nograles and Villafuerte "for their statesmanship in offering their resignations as party presidents in order to facilitate the formal consolidation of the two parties into one."


"It signifies the determination of the two parties to prepare in earnest for next year's polls and achieve victory through a united nationwide machinery," Claudio said.

"The joint declaration also provides one of the best guarantees from Congress itself that the elections in 2010 will proceed as scheduled and there will be no extensions of the terms of incumbent officials," he said.

He said consultations with party members show clear support for the merger.

Nograles said that former President Fidel Ramos would retain his position as chairman emeritus of Lakas, but there is no decision yet on Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr. who co-founded Lakas with Ramos.

"I do not know about Joe (de Venecia), but FVR will keep his post," Nograles said. ■



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More queries on P11-B poll bid answered

by ANNA VALMERO
Inquirer.net

AS the bidding for one of the world's biggest election automation contracts draws near, the Commission on Elections (Comelec) continues to clarify technical details about the P11-billion deal.

The Comelec Special Bids and Awards Committee (SBAC) last April 13 issued its sixth supplemental bid bulletin containing clarifications on the project, SBAC chairman Ferdinand Rafanan said.

The bids of 10 participating companies are scheduled to be opened on April 27.

Rafanan said vendors can submit questions until April 17, and the SBAC will answer these queries in supplemental bid bulletins no later than April 20.

"We have answered about 70 percent of bidder queries on the terms of reference and request for proposal (TOR/RFP)," he said, noting that bid bulletins become part of the P1-million bid documents.

To prepare for the opening of bids and technical evaluation of machines, the SBAC is also studying laws and procedures on government procurement.

At the same time, Rafanan said the bids committee "will issue in a bid bulletin the checklist of documents and requirements for the opening of bids, to be released hopefully before April 17. Vendors must follow the checklist we will issue to facilitate the bidding process."

After the bids are opened, the vendors will demonstrate to Comelec how their machines work end-to-end—from counting to electronic transmission to consolidation to canvassing. This demonstration from April 30 to May 8 will help Comelec evaluate the bids.

The nine-page sixth bid bulletin (http://www.comelec.gov.ph/invi-2bid/2009/Bid_Bulletin_No6_041309.html) also contains the following clarifications:

- The Comelec requires 82,200 units, of which 80,136 units will be deployed in various precincts nationwide and 2,064 units for standby.

- Although the machine allocation provided in the RFP does not cover the overseas absentee voting areas, the system must accommodate configurations for participating OAV countries if Comelec decides to implement the same system there.

- The machine must reject fake, spurious, and previously scanned ballots, including other sheets of paper without the required security

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Left groups to unite for 2010 elections

To end status quo of traditional politicians

by LIRA DALANGIN-FERNANDEZ
Inquirer.net

MILITANT party-list groups, progressive organizations, and their allied forces have forged a grand coalition to push for "politics of change" in the May 2010 election.

Senators, congressmen, and local officials are also expected to show up when the Makabayang Koalisyon ng Mamamayan (Makabayan or Patriotic Coalition of Citizens) is formally launched on April 16 at 9am at the University of the Philippines-Bahay ng Alumni, according to an advisory by the party-list group Bayan Muna (People First).

Bayan Muna Representative Satur Ocampo said Makabayan will evolve on a platform of politics of change and would seek to thrust alternative leaders both in the local and national levels in next year's election.

"The aim is to end the status quo dominated by traditional politicians," he told Inquirer.net in a phone interview last April 14.

Ocampo said progressive forces have achieved a "breakthrough" when three of its party-list groups, Bayan Muna, Gabriela, and Anakpawis, won seats in the House of Representatives.

"But we recognize that this is limited in the local level, we want to expand it to national level," the lawmaker said.

Ocampo said the coalition will endorse party-list groups and may support the candidacy of several local candidates and senatorial bets.

He declined to comment when asked to confirm his plans to seek a senatorial seat. ■