

Negros ruins among world's most fascinating

by CARLA GOMEZ
Inquirer.net



The Ruins in Talisay City, Negros Occidental

BACOLOD CITY—A blog with over 2.5 million worldwide visitors a month has featured The Ruins in Talisay City, Negros Occidental as among the 12 of the world's most fascinating ruins.

Oddee at www.oddee.com, a blog that "features, odd, strange and bizarre things" in the world, ranked The Ruins in the 12th place among the world's fascinating ruins.

The blog described The Ruins as "a mansion built by a sugar magnate at the turn of the last century that not once, but twice, was destroyed in the Second World War in order to prevent Japanese forces from using it."

The US Armed Forces in the Far East (Usaffe) bombed and strafed the mansion and Filipino guerrillas burned it to keep it from falling into Japanese hands, according to the blog.

The Ruins, built in the early 1990s by sugar planter Mariano Ledesma Lacson (1865-1948), is now a tourist attraction ran by his great grandson Raymond Javellana.

Javellana said he did not know how The Ruins got included in Oddee or who ran the blog, but he was grateful for the publicity it was giving the place.

"I just hope that this can spur tourist arrivals to Negros," he said.

While he admitted that the Filipino guerrillas set fire to the mansion to prevent Japanese forces from using it as their headquarters earlier in the Second World War, Javellana denied that the Usaffe also bombed and strafed the home as stated on Oddee.

Topping the Oddee list of fascinating ruins is Machu Picchu, the most famous of all the Inca ruins built in the mid-15th century. ■

Lakas-Kampi-CMD bares list of interim national officers

by DELON PORCALLA
Philstar.com

THE so-called "powerhouse" Lakas-Kampi-CMD announced last June 10 the officers of its national executive committee, in preparation for the May 2010 presidential elections.

Quezon City Mayor Feliciano "Sonny" Belmonte, who was designated senior vice president for external affairs, said the interim appointments of the national officers will take effect immediately, and will be effective three months until after the 2010 polls.

"Together, they represent some of the best leaders of both former Lakas-CMD and Kampi (Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino)—now merged into a political powerhouse," he told newsmen at a news conference.

President Arroyo is the ruling party's chairperson while former President Fidel Ramos is chairman emeritus.

Speaker Prospero Nograles and Interior and Local Government Secretary Ronaldo Puno were both designated as vice chairmen, while Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was appointed as the party's president.

"Under the leadership of these senior members, the party is in excellent hands—and will henceforth move firmly forward, propelled by its founding ideals and principles and the vision for the Filipino people that it strives to achieve," added Belmonte.

Deputy Speaker Pablo Garcia was designated senior vice president for internal affairs,

neophyte Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez was appointed senior vice president for finance, while presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio will sit as secretary general.

Treasurer is House Deputy Speaker Raul del Mar while there are four senior deputy secretaries general—Reps. Jose Solis of Sorsogon, Danilo Suarez of Quezon, Cabinet Secretary Silvestre Bello III and Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan.

Deputy treasurer is Pasig City Rep. Roman Romulo while Metro Manila Development Authority chairman Bayani Fernando—who has been offering himself as the party's presidential candidate—was designated vice president for the National Capital Region.

The vice presidents for Luzon are Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. and Benguet Gov. Nestor Fongwan; for Visayas, Reps. Arthur Defensor of Iloilo and Nerissa Ruiz of Cebu; for Mindanao, Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri and Rep. Francisco Matugas of Surigao del Norte.

Former Justice secretary and now Chief Presidential Legal Counsel Raul Gonzalez is vice president for legal affairs, former Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay (now Local Water Utilities Administration chairman) was appointed vice president for membership and recruitment.

Pichay said the unification of Lakas-CMD and Kampi was a



The merged Lakas-Kampi-CMD announced yesterday the officers of its national executive committee at a press conference in Quezon City. In photo are members (from left) Ray Roquero, Rep. Jose Solis, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, Lakas-Kampi chairman Prospero Pichay, Rep. Amado Bagatsing and Reggie Velasco. Philstar Photo by Boy Santos

welcome development for the administration, since the merger can now address the problems they had in the 2007 senatorial elections.

"In the last elections, the candidates of Lakas and Kampi were fighting, so the senatoriables were ignored. This merger will solve that problem so that we'll have no problems anymore," said Pichay, a defeated senatorial candidate in the 2007 elections.

Deputy secretaries general Ray Roquero and Reggie Velas-

co said the arbitration committee would most likely be headed by Pichay, who said the arbitration process might take a few months, just in time for the filing of certificates of candidacy in November.

Pichay told *The STAR* that they would again be observing the "equity of the incumbent" policy in the grassroots level, but pointed out the declaration of "free zones" would be inevitable, but only in worst cases, where all local officials are members of the merged party. ■

Senate, House extend CARPer coverage to 5 years, raise funding

by AUREA CALICA
Philstar.com

THE Senate and the House of Representatives have resolved all major issues concerning the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP) bill and agreed to extend the coverage for five more years plus an allocation of up to P150 billion.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. expressed confi-

dence that the bicameral conference committee would be able to reconcile all conflicting provisions of the Senate and House versions of the bill and come up with a consolidated proposal.

Pimentel, a member of the Senate panel in the joint committee, also said a provision that would authorize additional appropriation for the CARP was approved.

The funds would be primarily

used to acquire and distribute agricultural lands and provide support to beneficiaries to make the lands productive.

The Senate, in its version of the bill, approved funding of P147 billion for CARP in the next five years while the House allotted P100 billion.

Before Congress went on recess last June 3, the House approved on third reading the five-

year extension of CARP, or until 2013, amid protests and lightning rallies staged by militant farmers picketing the House at the Batasan complex.

The bicameral committee later agreed to restore the compulsory land acquisition and voluntary offer to sell modes in the measure and dropped the "flawed and anomalous" voluntary land transfer scheme. ■

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