

Aquino tops Luzon...

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"If he had any intention (to run) at all, he would have given indications, not only to the party, but also to the public," Claudio added.

No comment

The *Inquirer* tried but failed to get a comment from De Castro or his top aides on the report at press time.

Nelson Victorino, Teodoro's spokesperson, said he was unaware of De Castro's reported

decision.

"We are not aware about the meeting, but what I hear from people close to him and his drum beaters is that he will really not run for president," Victorino said.

Claudio noted the apparent absence of any effort by De Castro to present himself as a presidential aspirant.

"This is not something to be expected of any candidate," he said. "There are no efforts such as whetting the people's app-

te or giving clues about what his intentions are."

Fernando confident

Fernando, 63, has expressed confidence that he would be chosen over Teodoro, 45, considering his status as an original member of the old Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, which merged with Kampi (Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino) in May.

But when asked if Teodoro, a former Tarlac representative, might instead be named standard-bearer, Claudio cited the "need to have young, bright, dynamic, and idealistic candidates."

"There's excitement building up for young candidates," he said.

Claudio said the standard bearer would be officially known after the meeting of the Lakas-Kampi executive committee on Tuesday. The party had earlier given De Castro until Tuesday to make up his mind.

"One doesn't just make any decisions abruptly," he said of the possibility of De Castro still joining the selection process.

"Usually, he would come up with teasers or any effort to stay in the public consciousness. Without these, he would kill his own chances. But he has not done any of these things," he added.

Party leaders slammed

Fernando, who as a mayor transformed Marikina City into a clean and orderly community, has expressed disgust at some party officials who have announced their preference for Teodoro. He mentioned Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Puno, who is running for vice president, has brought up the "winnability" of a "Teodoro-Puno" tandem.

"Party leaders and members should look beyond their personal preferences and interests and select only the best candidate," Fernando said in a statement on Saturday.

He said that instead of naming favorites, the leaders should unite behind a "clear and winnable candidate whose performance in the government has been proven."

Fernando agreed with former President and Lakas party chair emeritus Fidel V. Ramos' call for a consultation of regional and local chapters to ensure that the voice of the party majority would be heard. ■

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