

DATELINE PHILIPPINES

Villar, Aquino join presidential forum

by AUREA CALICA
Philstar.com

MANILA—Senators Manuel Villar Jr. and Benigno Aquino III joined a televised forum for the first time where they discussed their plans with local executives along with other presidential hopefuls, Sen. Francis Escudero and Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr.

The four laid bare their ideas on pork barrel, the Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA), Charter change, peace in Mindanao and other issues concerning local autonomy. Villar, who was first to declare

his intention to run for president under the Nacionalista Party, said he had not been avoiding debates but would now participate in them since the number of presidential wannabes has trimmed down.

"Before it was 18 (people declaring their intention to run). Now it's clearer who I have to face," Villar said.

Villar has been topping various polls until Aquino entered the race. One of the criticisms against him was that he was not participating in debates.

Aquino declared his bid for the presidency in September after Liberal Party president and Sen.

Manuel Roxas II gave way to make him as party standard-bearer.

Teodoro has been nominated as the administration's Lakas-KampinUCD candidate for president while Escudero, who is said to be the most likely standard-bearer of the Nationalist People's Coalition, would make an announcement regarding his plans for 2010 after turning 40 on Oct. 10.

During the ANC forum dubbed *Face to Face: 100 Local Government Champions versus Four Presidential Contenders*, the four aspirants assured the local government officials of support in furthering their autonomy but with

greater accountability as well.

Teodoro, Villar and Aquino said they could see nothing wrong in local government units benefiting from pork barrel or the Priority Development Assistance Funds (PDAF) as long as they would be spent accordingly.

Escudero, for his part, said he was in favor of abolishing pork barrel funds to avoid corruption in the grant of lump sum allocations.

He and Aquino agreed that the problem with pork barrel system was that only those allied with the administration were getting allocations easily and that the funds were being used for political purposes.

Teodoro said the use of pork barrel could be guided for major concerns like disaster risk management and agriculture.

"I think the concern is pork barrel funds never follow our short medium and long term plans," he said.

Villar argued that these funds could be tools for development and he was even thanked by some local executives for giving them his pork barrel.

"Pork barrel was not utilized to ensure the loyalty of members of Congress. Now the power of the purse has been relegated to the President which is against the Constitution," he said.

Villar said the funds could be used for education purposes for the first year to wipe out classroom backlogs, adding that these could be used as strategy for national development. (Philstar.com)

4 presidential bets grilled by local gov't execs

MANILA—Amid the government's slow and inadequate response to the devastation wrought by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" (international codename: Ketsana), local officials pushed for greater fiscal autonomy and more discretionary powers that could clip Malacañang's powers.

In a forum dubbed *Face to Face: 100 Local Government Champions versus Four Presidential Contenders* at the Asian Institute of Management, local chief executives grilled four presidential contenders on local autonomy.

Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro Jr. and Senators Manny Villar and Benigno Aquino III refused to give additional authority to local government units (LGUs), while advocating more help to poor towns and provinces and pushing for a stronger and accountable national leadership.

Sen. Francis Escudero was well applauded for saying what the local chief executives wanted to hear—more Internal Revenue Allotment (IRA) funds and wider discretion to exploit and extract revenues from natural resources for LGUs.

However, Escudero said that LGUs had no right to fully extract natural resources in their localities.

Small vs big gov't

The four-hour forum, televised by ABS-CBN, sparked a debate over small-versus-big government, a crucial issue in the 2008 US presidential election in America that Barack Obama won.

The forum was organized by Synergeia Foundation, Galing Pook Foundation, Ateneo School of Government and the Local Governance Support Program in Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Except for Escudero, who wanted a line-item budgeting in lieu of the present lump-sum allocation for pork barrel funds, the other three aspirants apparently scored points for supporting the continuation of the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) to lawmakers.

Escudero advocated the abolition of the graft-ridden pork barrel of lawmakers.

But Villar, Teodoro and Aquino called for the retention of the present setup in which lawmakers identify the priority projects financed by their respective PDAF allocations, thus making the fund "a development tool."

"It's impossible to scrap it," Teodoro said, adding that he favored retention "as long as you have a prioritized list of what should be done."

Formula for progress

The local executives composed of provincial governors, mayors, vice mayors and board members also proposed:

- Changing the sharing scheme between the national and local governments in the IRA, from 60-40 in favor of national government to 50-50, and changing the current formula of computing the share of each level of LGU.
- Amending the rules in utilizing the calamity funds of LGUs which, at present, limit them to relief and rescue and prohibit allocation for disaster preparedness activities.
- Overhaul of the pork barrel system.
- Fiscal autonomy, such as independent transactions with private institutions and foreign donors.

Issues such as Charter change, Mindanao peace process, reproductive health bill, political dynasties and accountability of government officials were also discussed.

Teodoro acknowledged that coordination between local governments and national leadership was crucial to governance.

"You can't have a successful enterprise where local government opposes it," he said.

Selective enhanced autonomy

Pointing out that autonomy was nothing new, Teodoro said that Congress should be "empowered to determine what region should be given enhanced autonomy."

He was against giving more autonomy "to areas which are not ready."

Escudero favored increasing the IRA, which is the share of local governments of taxes collected from their constituents.

"We have options in utilizing additional 10 percent. It can be across the board, separate fund for incentives to local government units which are performing," he said.

Escudero applauded

Escudero struck down suggestions for the "self-grading" of LGU performance.

► PAGE A8

Filing of certificates of candidacy starts on

by SHEILA CRISOSTOMO
Philstar.com

MANILA—The Commission on Elections (Comelec) issued yesterday the guidelines on the filing of certificates of candidacy (COC) from Nov. 20 to 30 for the local and national elections on May 10, 2010.

In Resolution 8678, the Comelec said starting Nov. 20 up to midnight of Nov. 30, 2009, Comelec offices would be receiving the COCs.

"For those who are going to run for the position of president, vice president and senator, they should file their COC with the Comelec Law Department in Intramuros, Manila," the commission said in a statement.

Candidates who will run for the congressional districts in the National Capital Region should file their COCs at the office of the regional election director (RED) for Metro Manila.

The office of the provincial election supervisors, on the other hand, would receive the COCs for congressmen of legislative districts in the provinces and for provincial elective posts.

The resolution showed that the COC must be filed in person.

"No certificate of candidacy shall be filed or accepted by mail, telegram, or facsimile. The authority of the authorized representative shall be in writing and under oath and attached to the certificate of candidacy," the resolution stated.

SOUTHERN NEVADA LEGAL SERVICES, LLC

Law Offices of Boris Avramski
Attorney and Staff



**Bankruptcy Chapter 7-13
PERSONAL INJURY
IMMIGRATION
CRIMINAL LAW**

We speak most of the Philippine Dialects

**DEBT WE CAN HELP YOU!
STOP FORECLOSURE NOW!**

NO MORE...

- Annoying Calls • Foreclosure • Repossession
- Garnishment of Wages

GET RID OF...

- Credit Card Debt • Medical Bills
- Pay Day & Auto Loans • 2nd & 3rd Mortgages
- Modify Your First Mortgage • Short Refinance

CALL 685-3619



Be flu smart.

Get a seasonal flu shot. Flu shots are available at several public health centers and from many health care providers.

Practice healthy habits. Wash your hands frequently, cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve, and stay home if you get sick.

Southern Nevada Health District flu shot clinic locations:

- 625 Shadow Ln., Las Vegas
- 560 Nellis Blvd., Suite E-12, Las Vegas
- 520 E. Lake Mead Pkwy., Henderson
- 1820 Lake Mead Blvd., Suite F, North Las Vegas
- 830 Hafen Ln., Mesquite (Tuesday and Thursday, 8 a.m.-12 p.m., 1-4:30 p.m.)

Hours: Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m., unless otherwise noted.
Methods of Payment: Medicaid and Medicare, or \$30 cash.

The seasonal flu shot will not prevent infection with the H1N1 (swine flu) virus. Vaccine for the H1N1 virus is expected to be available in October. Those at highest risk for complications from H1N1 will be vaccinated first, including pregnant women, household contacts/caregivers of infants younger than 6 months, young people 6 months to 24 years old, adults 25 to 64 years old with certain health conditions, and health care and EMS personnel.



For up-to-date information on the H1N1 virus and vaccine availability, go to www.SouthernNevadaHealthDistrict.org or call (702) 759-1000.

"MURANA - MABILIS PA"

A.C.E.
ASSOCIATED CONSOLIDATORS EXPRESS
BALIKBAYAN BOXES DIRECT
NVOCC #17753NF

METRO MANILA

\$45

SUPER SALE

REGULAR BOX
(23" X 20" X 17")

(Kalookan City, Quezon City, Malabon, Pasig, Mandaluyong, San Juan, Muntinlupa, Makati, Marikina, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Navotas, Pateros, Valenzuela, San Jose Del Monte)

LUZON 1 \$50
(Ilocos Province, Bulacan, Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon Province, Bataan, Zambales, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Tarlac, Pampanga, San Mateo, Antipolo, Angono, Calatagan)

LUZON 2 \$55
(Baguio, La Union, Benguet, Abra, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Isabela, Cagayan Valley, Quirino, Nueva Vizcaya, Bicol, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Sorsogon, Albay, Marikina, Catanduanes)

ANYWHERE IN VISAYAS \$60 | **ANYWHERE IN MINDANAO** \$65

\$60 METRO MANILA

JUMBO BOX (24" X 18" X 24")
Outside Metro Manila, Visayas & Mindanao, please call for pricing.

Only for Las Vegas, Nevada • Ad expires October 31, 2009
Pick-up (Everyday) + Free Strapping + Free Replacement Box

CONTAINER SERVICES

- Returning Resident
- Door-to-door
- Port-to-port
- Commercial Cargo
- Motor Vehicles

For box pick-up and inquiries, please call:

NORTH LAS VEGAS 702.471.8962 702.478.7255	SOUTH/WEST LAS VEGAS 702.408.6472	HENDERSON (Joshua Filipino-Oriental Market) 702.435.0031 702.334.2424	EAST LAS VEGAS (Jon's Bakeshop) 702.474.9281
--	---	---	---

OFFICE & WAREHOUSE: PHILIPPINE VILLAGE CENTER
4515 EAGLE ROCK BLVD., STE 133 LOS ANGELES, CA 90041
323.258.0087 • 323.258.0089

Sub-agents and co-loaders are welcome - We accept credit cards. Subject to terms & conditions. Prices are subject to change without notice *Subject to peace & order in some parts of the Philippines *Subject to weather conditions, typhoons, floods & other calamities *Palawan, Puerto Princesa and Mindoro, Calapan only.