

# Talks rife De Castro to run as Villar's VP

MANILA,—By his own declaration, Vice President Noli de Castro is not closing the door to politics in 2010.

At least two sources in the Senate have said that De Castro did not want to run for president under the administration banner because this entailed a "kiss of death" from President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

According to Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, De Castro may seek reelection as vice president.

Santiago apparently knows that something is afoot regarding De Castro.

There is persistent talk that Sen. Manuel Villar, the president of the Nacionalista Party (NP) and its standard-bearer in the 2010 elections, is considering De Castro as his running mate.

Santiago is a close ally of Villar. She has declared that if she were to seek reelection, she would do so under Villar's party.

She said she did not think De Castro would stay on the sidelines in 2010.

Asked why he declined the invitation of the ruling coalition, De Castro said he had his own reasons and would rather not reveal them. (*Inquirer.net*)

# Make stand on VFA, 2010 hopefuls told

by DENNIS CARCAMO  
*Philstar.com*

MILITANT group Bayan called on presidential aspirants to reject the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which is now in review by the Senate.

Bayan's call came a day before the country commemorates the 18th year anniversary of the Philippine Senate's rejection of the US basing treaty on Sept. 16.

"The US forces are back and are again based in the Philippines under the VFA. That is the sad reality. We should ask the Senators who voted against the US bases in 1991 if the current situation is at all consistent with the spirit of their historic 'No' vote. We should also ask those aspiring for the presidency in 2010 if they plan to stop the continuing violation of our sovereignty," Bayan secretary general

Renato Reyes Jr. said in a statement.

Reyes cited that US troops remained in Mindanao through the Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines.

The elite unit under the US Special Operations Command has been in the country since 2002, the Bayan official said.

US Defense Secretary Robert Gates has recently announced that the unit will continue to remain in the Philippines until its mission is completed.

Reyes also believes that potential administration presidential bet and current Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro would simply continue the policy of allowing US troops to retain their bases in Mindanao.

"In his latest trip to Washington, our members in the U.S. report that Mr. Teodoro gave the US government his assurance that he aims to preserve the status quo insofar as US engagement in the country is concerned. This is not unexpected since the present administration has long sought US support and Teodoro will likely seek the same from the US," he said.

In 1991, the so-called "Magnificent 12" who voted against the U.S. base agreement were senators Jovito Salonga, Teofisto Guingona Jr., Aquilino Pimentel, Rene Saguisag, Wigberto Tañada, Victor Ziga, Agapito Aquino, Ernesto Maceda, Orlando Mercado, Juan Ponce Enrile, Sotero Laurel and Joseph Estrada.

Pimentel and Enrile are incumbent senators while Estrada is reportedly eyeing a return to the presidency in 2010. Guingona and Salonga have been active opponents of the VFA. ■

# Don't belittle Lakas bets—Ermita

WITHOUT Vice President Noli De Castro, the ruling administration party Lakas-Kampi-Christian-Muslim Democrats (CMD) could be running as the underdog in the presidential race of May 2010.

But party president, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, doesn't mind having a standard bearer that ranks low in the surveys, warning instead that those on top should not be too complacent because many things could still happen in the run-up to the election.

"The party will live by whoever it will choose, of course, that's the essence of party politics," Ermita said in an interview when asked if

the party can live with either Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro or Metro Manila Development Authority Chairman Bayani Fernando if De Castro does not run under the administration banner.

Both officials have been ranking low in the surveys, but Ermita said party officials are not worried.

In the recent Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey commissioned by businessmen and private individuals in Luzon, Senator Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III emerged as the top choice with Senator Manuel Villar at far second.

Asked to comment on this,

Ermita said, "It's not really that much concern, we know that there's a current hype over the Aquino name and especially the survey was done in Luzon so that is expected, we have known that before and that is really not too much of a worry, in other words it's better to fight uphill rather than be over-confident and be surprised later."

Ermita said he doesn't mind if their candidate is one who is "running scared" in the presidential race, adding that it would push the candidate to do his best to win. (*Inquirer.net*)

# De Venecia: Selection process illegal, void

by JEROME ANING  
*Inquirer.net*

MANILA,—He was chosen, but maybe not.

As far as Pangasinan Rep. Jose de Venecia, president of the Lakas political party, is concerned, Defense Secretary Gilbert "Gibo" Teodoro was elected not by a legitimate group but by a "cabal of a limited few."

The administration-backed Lakas-CMD-Kampi chose Teodoro as its standard-bearer in next year's election over Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando.

De Venecia, who is disputing Lakas' merger with the President's party Kampi (Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino) before the Commission on Elections, said Teodoro's selection was null and void because the group that chose him had met illegally.

De Venecia said the defense chief's selection was not valid from the start because there was no Lakas-Kampi party to speak of. He maintained that Lakas' rules were not followed when it entered into a so-called marriage with Kampi.

De Venecia was ousted as Speaker last year when his son and namesake accused First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo of masterminding the corruption-tainted National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp. Arroyo has denied the

charge.

The process by which Teodoro was elected was also suspect since not all party members appeared to have a voice in the process, De Venecia said.

"Whether mandated or not, it's not the proper thing to do," he said in a phone interview.

### 1998 Lakas convention

De Venecia pointed out that before he ran for the presidency in 1998, Lakas held a convention for two weeks to pick him as standard bearer. He eventually lost to Joseph Estrada, but his running mate, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, won.

For two consecutive Saturdays, thousands of Lakas delegates from all over the country were consulted and made to vote, De Venecia said.

Teodoro's case, he said, "is just a cabal of a limited few."

"According to their (leaders') announcement, this is supposed to be an executive committee meeting of Lakas-Kampi. That's an illegal meeting. How can it be legal when they will be there [Thursday] at Comelec and they're not yet accredited as a political party?" he said.

Thus, De Venecia said, "their choice is also illegal, also null and void."

A national convention, scheduled for next month, would ratify the committee's choice of Teodoro, De Venecia said. "If there will be a convention, that is a matter that may be decided by the

national executive committee. If there is going to be one, that is going to be ratificatory in nature."

This, De Venecia said, would be done "in accordance with the timetable and procedures" of the Comelec.

### Petition pending

The timing of the selection of standard bearer was suspect, he said, coming as it was a day before the Comelec meeting.

He said its members might have scheduled the meeting Wednesday "in order to frighten Comelec with the phantom strength of this monolithic monster called Lakas-Kampi."

De Venecia said he would be coming out with his own show of force before the Comelec on Thursday at the hearing of his petition against the merger. Other original Lakas members would be present, he said.

A Comelec official saw nothing irregular about Lakas-Kampi's decision to pick Teodoro as standard-bearer.

Speaking on condition of anonymity because the case on the merger of the two parties is still pending before the poll body, the official said that in political parties experiencing "intra-party" disputes, all the actions of the factions would be considered valid until the Comelec ruled otherwise.

He noted that the case filed by De Venecia generally pertained to the merger of Lakas-CMD with Kampi. ■

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