

# GMA move a party tradition – Teodoro

By JAIME LAUDE

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City - The move of President Arroyo to resign as chairman of Lakas-Kampi-CMD is part of a tradition to allow the standard

bearer to steer the party to victory in the elections, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said yesterday.

"This is already a tradition in the party. This is not extraordinary," Teodoro told reporters here when asked to comment

on Mrs. Arroyo's stepping down as party chief.

Teodoro also sought to dismiss reports that Mrs. Arroyo

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is distancing herself from his position but in her decision to quit the chairmanship of the administration party.

Macalintal has confirmed Mrs. Arroyo's decision.

Provincial Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio, an secretary-general of Lakas-Kampi-CMD, said Mrs. Arroyo would not be leaving the party but would only pave the way for Trodano's taking over the chairmanship.

"She has been the moving spirit behind the merger of the Lakas-CMD and Kampi and the party's achievements, not only in the political arena, but in pro-people governance," Claudio said.

"She will maintain her presence and influence over Lakas-Kampi members, particularly in educating and inspiring them to work hard for the victory of Secretary Gibo (Trodano) in his bid for the presidency," he said.

The move of the President has been seen by many as part of her reported plan to seek an elective post in next year's elections.

Mrs. Arroyo's term ends next year and according to election lawyer Romulo Macalintal, there is no legal impediment to her seeking another elective position, except the presidency.

Her frequent visits to Pampanga further fueled speculations that she is bent on seeking a congressional seat to represent her district in 2010.

There are also reports that Mrs. Arroyo would be putting up with Trodano as his vice presidential candidate for the next year's elections.

However, Mrs. Arroyo kept her cards close to her chest, refusing to give any statement regarding her political plans after she steps down next year.

Asked to comment on reports that Mrs. Arroyo might end up as his running mate, Trodano said he could not comment on the issue.

Trodano said he is not aware of Mrs. Arroyo's political plans for 2010.

The Lakas-Kampi-CMD leadership is still scouting for Trodano's running mate as well as his senatorial lineup.

There were reports that the administration party is eyeing several key contenders to be Trodano's running mate among them: Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC) Sen. Loren Legarda, administration Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla and former Optical Media Board (OMB) chairman and television host Eda Manzano.

"Wala pa, wala pa (There's none yet)," Trodano told reporters when asked who would be his running mate.

Trodano said he would soon have a running mate after his resignation as defense secretary on Nov. 16.

The administration party is slated to officially announce Trodano's candidacy after resigning from the Cabinet on Nov. 15.

Trodano was guest speaker in the 110th foundation anniversary of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) here, his last official act as defense secretary.

Press Secretary Corge Remonde said the decision of Mrs. Arroyo to step aside as party chair should not be viewed as anything other than her "passing the torch of leadership to Secretary Gibo (Trodano)."

Remonde said the issue has been discussed by the President to her Cabinet members, the party officials, allowing her decision to allow Trodano to hold the same position on the road to victory.

"That is a tradition of Lakas that wherever will be the standard bearer more or less becomes also the head of the party," Remonde said.

"It's really passing the torch of leadership to the person chosen by the party as the next president of the country," he added.

Pampanga Rep. Carmelo Lazatin revealed the presidential intention during a closed-door meeting of local officials at the Clark Freeport zone in Pampanga last Thursday.

Lazatin said Mrs. Arroyo had left she was "not contributing positively" to the candidacy of Trodano so she decided to give way.

Lazatin also bared Mrs. Arroyo lamented the negative attitude of the media towards her, which she thought was adversely affecting the chances of Trodano in the presidential elections.

Macalintal, for his part, pointed out Mrs. Arroyo's political plans would be confirmed on the last day of the filing of the certificates of candidacy at the end of this month.

- With Marvin Sy