

# GMA to stay away from Gibo sorties

A Lakas-Kampi-CMD official disclosed yesterday that President Arroyo has given the administration's standard-bearer Gilbert "Gibo" Teodoro

Je. a free hand in running his campaign after turning over to him the leadership of the ruling party.

Lakas-Kampi-CMD secre-

tary general Francis Manglapus said Mrs. Arroyo, who is now the honorary president of the party, gave Teodoro the

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freedom and independence to run his own campaign because she believes that the former defense secretary is capable of fighting his own battles to win the presidency.

"We have to emphasize the fact that it is Gibo who is running in 2010 and not President Arroyo. So it is just natural and a matter of protocol for the Chief Executive to fade away during the Lakas-Kamp CMD convention at the Philippine International Convention Center (on Thursday)," Manglapus said.

Manglapus assumed his party post from Presidential Adviser for Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio. Sarangani Gov. Miguel Rene Dominguez as new Lakas-Kamp CMD president replaced Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

Teodoro's running mate Edu Manzano and Misamis Oriental Gov. Oscar Moreno are now the party's vice chair-

men, replacing Speaker Prospero Nograles and Interior and Local Governments Secretary Ronaldo Puno.

Ermita was appointed chairman of the party's National Advisory Body with Nograles, Puno and Claudio as members.

"(The) event (convention) was clearly a passing of the torch, and those who want to make an issue of the President not raising the hand of Gibo should be thankful that this early she is passing on the mantle of authority to her successor," Manglapus said.

He was reacting to critics who were making an issue out of Mrs. Arroyo not raising the hand of Teodoro during his official proclamation as the party's standard-bearer for the 2010 national elections.

"Those who make an issue out of that matter clearly do not understand protocol. Having full confidence in the in-

tegrity and competence of Gibo to run the country in 2010, the President is giving him full rein to run his campaign," he said.

He said Teodoro, the Harvard-educated 1989 bar topnotcher, fought hard for the nomination by joining the party and deservedly won it in a decisive vote taken last Sept. 16 by the National Executive Committee following a four-hour meeting marked by an open debate on who should be the ruling party's presidential candidate.

"Gibo won the nomination on his own. In the convention, which was a continuation of the process, he clearly showed to party mates why he deserved it," Manglapus said.

"The President herself wanted to focus the convention on Gibo and his vision for the country," he said. "She emphatically endorsed the two candidates, whom she praised for their youth, idealism and confidence, and asked the par-

ty to support them."

Palace officials meanwhile said Mrs. Arroyo does not begrudge the defections of some high-profile members of the party, including Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte and former Sen. Ralph Recto.

Cabinet Secretary Silvestre Bello III, who is also a party official, said transferring from one political party to another should not be seen negatively but taken on a case-to-case basis.

He said the Palace is giving Recto full respect for his decision to join the opposition. "We wish him well," Bello said.

He said Belmonte is known to be very close to the Aquino family so it was understandable that he joined the Liberal Party.

"His (Belmonte's) sentiments (for the Aquinos) may have subordinated his political principles," he said.

Bello said he was still undecided on whether to run for senator or for a congressional

seat in his home province of Isabela.

Meanwhile, Albay Gov. Joey Salceda along with 85 local elected officials pledged their support to the Gibo-Edu tandem in the May 2010 elections.

Salceda, who filed his certificate of candidacy for the second term as governor of the province, declared that all party members and officials of Lakas-Kamp CMD will go out to ensure victory of Teodoro and Manzano in Albay.

Teodoro, who met local Lakas-Kamp CMD leaders in the province yesterday as part of the program to revitalize the party, accompanied Salceda in filing the governor's certificate of candidacy at the Commission on Election (Comelec) office in Legazpi City.

"The meeting was attended by 85 elected officials from the provincial down to the municipal and barangay level who gave their all-out support for the Gibo-Manzano tandem," Teodoro's camp said.

- Teodoro's camp urged critics to simply focus on issues and not revive old political drama of raising hands as what happened during the party convention the other day.

During the press conference, which was also attended by Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman and Tabaco City Mayor Krisel Lagman, Salceda explained that based on history all those who ran for president and were former defense secretaries and were supported by the administration, like Ramon Magsaysay and Fidel Ramos, won. — Paolo Romero, Jaime Laude, Celso Amo