

# GMA, Ermita, Claudio leave Lakas-Kampi

President Arroyo, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, and Presidential Adviser for Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio resigned yesterday as top officials of the Lakas-Kampi-CMD.

Mrs. Arroyo resigned as party chairman, Ermita gave up his post as president while Claudio quit as secretary-general during the party's three-hour national executive committee presided by the President in Malacañang to finalize the selection of the administration's vice presidential candidate as well as address internal issues.

It was the last time Mrs. Arroyo would preside over such a meeting as she formally resigned but she was given the honorary post of president

By PAOLO ROMERO

emerita of the party.

Presidential Vet Defense Secretary Gilberto "Gibo" Teodoro Jr., now chairman of Lakas-Kampi-CMD, was present during the meeting.

The resignation of the three party officials will take effect on Nov. 19, the day of the party's national convention.

Claudio said the resignations of the top party officials would pave the way for a new set of officers to be led by Teodoro.

"So we hope to be able to tap for these positions with the concurrence of the National Executive Committee and the entire party member-

ship during the assembly of the convention on Nov. 19, young, dynamic, not necessarily more handsome leaders of the party to replace us for those positions," he said.

Ermita also clarified that Interior Secretary Ronaldo Pano remains as the Lakas-Kampi-CMD vice chairman despite reports that he was disgruntled with other top leaders of the party.

He also said the position of chairman emerita remains available for former President Fidel Ramos, who earlier publicly opposed the merger of Lakas and Kampi.

The Commission on Elections has upheld the merger, and party officials are hoping that Ramos would accept the post, Claudio said.