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A bunch of liars

The League of Provinces of the Philippines (LPP) has claimed responsibility for giving cash to governors who had been called to a meeting in Malacañang. This belated statement--given two weeks after all the finger-pointing and disclaimers issued on the brazen bribery--serves no other purpose than to save Arroyo from accountability.

Gloria Arroyo's minions have been dishing out all sorts of contradictory statements. The LPP initially claimed that not one of its members received any money. Its latest admission has all the more convinced the people that Malacañang is behind the bribery.

In fact, the LPP's admission raises more questions than answers. For one, why was the cash-giving done in Malacañang and not at the LPP office? And why did the congressmen who had been called to an earlier meeting at the Palace receive identical paper bags full of money?

Seven former governors have said that it came as a surprise to them to learn that LPP had that much in funds. Compounding this, the LPP failed to show any receipts for the "assistance" they had allegedly given to newly elected governors as a "confidence-building measure."

Malacañang has also been hard put fending off disclosures by Gov. Jonjon Mendoza of Bulacan that the cash-giving took place inside a room at the Palace, and that it happened in the presence of Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) Undersecretary Austere Panadero and Edward Plaza, an official of the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp (Pagcor).

Meanwhile, Arroyo's party Kampi has claimed responsibility for doling out cash to the congressmen called to the Palace. The admission was made by House Deputy Speaker and Kampi leader Ma. Amelita Villarosa a month after the bribery scandal was exposed. The cash was supposed to be financial assistance to Kampi congressmen. Villarosa, however, could not explain why Kampi also gave "assistance" to Lakas congressmen.

Gloria Arroyo also allegedly knew about Kampi's plans. This therefore raises the question of why Arroyo even bothered to order an investigation of the cash-giving incident.

Kampi chair, DILG secretary and Arroyo political adviser Ronaldo Puno was also reportedly aware of everything. AB