

IALAYA (May 31, 2006, WEDNESDAY)

Aboitiz happy with South Harbor

ABOITIZ Equity Ventures (AEV) chairman and chief executive officer Jon Ramon Aboitiz said the company is not interested in bidding for the North Harbor happy as it is with its dock at the South Harbor.

"We see no need to bid for North Harbor even if other shipping lines are *planning to do so* as we are based comfortably in South Harbor," he added.

Aboitiz added that its present setup in Asian Terminal Inc.'s *super terminal* at the South Harbor is more convenient, secure and accessible.

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) earlier said that it is thinking of allowing shipping lines to bid for the North Harbor project.

The earlier approved terms of reference (TOR) for the privatization of North Harbor explicitly *forbids private shipping lines from bidding in the project* as they could use it as a "tool" against competitors.

"We know for a fact that they (shipping lines owners) can use a dummy if they really want to (operate

the North Harbor). So I said, why not open it to everybody and if we disallow them, we may have to *face bigger problem rather than allowing them to operate it.*" PPA general manager Oscar Sevilla said.

Sevilla also explained that the winning operator could not just favor or bar a shipping line from using North Harbor as the PPA still monitors its day-to-day operation. He also added that the PPA could revoke the license of the operator if they see any irregularity in their operation of North Harbor.