

# DATELINE PHILIPPINES

## Estrada-Binay tandem pushed in grad rites

by GERALD GENE R. QUERUBIN  
Inquirer.net



Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay with Former President Joseph Estrada  
Photo courtesy of Inquirer.net

SANTA CRUZ, Marinduque—The 83rd commencement exercises of the oldest high school in Santa Cruz, Marinduque turned into a virtual *Miting de Avance* for the opposition with no less than the Senate president endorsing the candidacy of ousted president Joseph Estrada for the 2010 presidential elections.

Although Estrada, who was convicted then pardoned for the heinous crime of plunder, was the scheduled speaker during the graduation rites Monday, March 30, of the Malindig Institute, prominent politicians and personalities accompanying the former president were given the chance to give their speeches with Philippine ambassador to Washington and former senator Ernesto Maceda tasked to introduce the guests.

Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile remarked that with the warm reception Estrada gets in his provincial sorties from local resident, he believes that it is only Estrada who can unify the country.

"How come [Estrada] always gets a warm reception from the public despite the negative news about him," said Enrile.

"Erap is destined to become president again. Only Erap can unify Philippine society," Enrile added.

Enrile said it was destined by God that Estrada had suffered in confinement so that if he comes back as president of the country he would know the problems that must be solved to help the country develop.

After Enrile's speech, Maceda remarked that the people should not forget Enrile and Jinggoy, Estrada's son, in the 2010 senatorial elections.

Estrada encouraged the graduates to relive what was taught to them in school which was to love God, family and country.

He, however, gave emphasis on loving the country because most of the Filipinos seem to forget about it.

But what caught the attention of the public was when Estrada said, "Do not lie. Do not cheat. And do not steal."

When a parent was asked for a comment on it, he simply replied with a smile and said, "No comment."

Another parent however said that it reminded her of Estrada's "*walang kamakamag-anak, walang-kai-kaibigan*" speech during his oath taking as president in 1998.

The other prominent personalities present during the graduation rites who gave their speeches were Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, Gina de Venecia, wife of former House Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. and Grace

Poe, daughter of the late presidential aspirant Fernando Poe Jr. De Venecia and Poe were being considered for the senatorial line-up of the opposition while Binay was said to be eyeing the presidency in the 2010 national elections.

However, a Marinduque-based fraternity brother of Binay in the Alpha Phi Omega (APO) said Binay would only be Estrada's vice-presidential running mate, further confirming that it would be an Estrada-Binay tandem in 2010.

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Binay's fraternity brother asked that his name be withheld because he was not authorized to speak on the matter in behalf of their fraternity.

Although De Venecia and Poe congratulated the graduates, their speeches focused more on introducing themselves and their various achievements in the field of public service.

Maceda quipped that the Marinduqueños were lucky because it was only at the graduation rites of the Malindig Institute where the personalities were gathered together.

Mrs. Divina Preclaro, president of the Malindig Institute, said even she was overwhelmed and did not expect that their commencement exercise will be attended by high profile personalities. ■

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