

CONGRESSMEN TO ERAP

Give other presidential bets a chance to serve RP

by DELON PORCALLA
Philstar.com

GIVE others a chance. This was the unsolicited advice of administration lawmakers to former President Joseph Estrada, who announced his senatorial ticket Monday, April 13, and warned warring factions within the opposition that he would run for president if they remain divided.

"Just allow others who are equally qualified to run (for president)," Manila Rep. Bienvenido Abante suggested, adding the deposed president should just stay on the sidelines and retire from politics in order to give others an opportunity to run the country.

public officials is "not about non-vindictiveness" and that "the rule of law should prevail and should not be hinged on the character or inclinations of the president."

Borrowing a line from the moral force movement, Abaya said that transformational politics, not transactional, is needed in the country.

Estrada earlier said that if he is elected president next year, he would not influence the filing of criminal charges against Mrs. Arroyo and would leave it to the public to decide on what to do with her.

"It must be decided by the people. Unless charges are filed against her, I will not lift a finger to influence charges against her," Estrada said.

Mrs. Arroyo's administration has been dogged with a series of corruption scandals and she was even implicated, with her husband First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo, in the scrapped \$329-million national broadband network project with China's ZTE Corp.

Poll officials, meanwhile, declined to comment on Estrada's announced plan to run for president in 2010.

"We don't want to express any opinion on that because we'll be ruling on that when the time comes. We don't want to express anything," Commission on Elections Chairman Jose Melo said at a press briefing with Comelec commissioners.

Under the 1987 Constitution, a president is not allowed to seek re-election. But Estrada's camp said he is not covered by the ban because he was not able to finish his six-year term.

A Comelec official, who declined to be named, said an SC ruling has underpinned the ban on Estrada's running again for president.

"Based on the Supreme Court ruling, he resigned so although he was not able to finish his term, it was a full term," the official said.

He said that accountability of

public officials is "not about non-vindictiveness" and that "the rule of law should prevail and should not be hinged on the character or inclinations of the president."

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Villar told to answer ethics rap

by MAILA AGER
Inquirer.net

SENATOR Manuel Villar was asked to answer, within five days, the ethics complaint filed against him by a colleague after it was found sufficient in form and substance.

The finding was ratified by the Senate ethic committee on Wednesday, April 15 its chairman, Senator Panfilo Lacson said.

The ratified document was signed by Lacson, Senators Juan Miguel Zubiri and Gregorio Honasan.

Present at the hearing were Lacson and Senators Loren Legarda and Manuel Roxas II.

"It was adopted during the meeting earlier that [the complaint] was sufficient in form and substance, but that's not a pre-judgment," Lacson said after the hearing.

The complaint concerns the double allocation of the P200-million budget for the C-5 road extension project.

Villar admitted asking extra funding for the project but said he never specified any amount.

He said he expected the decision of the ethics committee and that he could not count on being given a fair trial by the body given its present composition.

Lacson's committee is composed of members of the majority



Sen. Manuel Villar

bloc formed after Villar's ouster as Senate president.

The Senate minority has agreed not to participate in the proceedings against Villar.

"So 'yang nangyari naman ay expected, inaasahan na natin 'yan na hanggang 2010 ganyan ang mangyayari [So what happened was expected, and we expect it to be like this until 2010]," he said.

Villar has declared his intention to run for president in next year's elections.

He said he would still have to think about whether or not to comply with the committee's request.

"Titingnan ko muna, hindi ko pa lam kung ano ang nangyari. Sino bang uma-attend? Loren, Mar [Roxas] at Ping [Lacson]? Ah mga presidentiables? E alam na na natin yan [I will see, I don't know what will happen. Who at

tended? Loren, Mar and Ping? Ah, presidential hopefuls? Well, we know what that means]," he said, referring to the reported intention of Legarda, Roxas and Lacson to also run for president.

Villar maintained his innocence on the charges leveled against him.

Earlier, during the committee hearing, Lacson clarified that an earlier report on the finding was based on a copy of a "draft order"

that was circulated to committee members on Tuesday, April 14.

"Without necessarily undertaking a complete discourse of the whole complaint, we believe that there is substance in the complaint that warrants a full blown proceeding in order to accord the complainant a venue to express her grievance against the respondent and for the latter to put forth his defense," the four-page document said.

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