

Enrile to back Estrada if ousted leader runs in 2010

by MERIAM DESACADA
Philstar.com

TACLOBAN CITY – Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile said on June 29 he would support former President Joseph Estrada in case he decides to run again for president in 2010.

Enrile, who attended the Sangyaw Festival together with Senator Manuel Villar, told local reporters that as a member of Estrada's party Puwersa Ng Masang Pilipino (PMP), he would definitely support the former president if he seeks another term in the presidential elections next year. Enrile, however, declined to comment on the legality of Estrada's bid for re-election, which is prohibited by the Constitution.

Enrile said he is a PMP member, but if Estrada will not run, he has the option to support another presidential candidate who can properly run the country.

"These are all my friends

(presidential bets), but I will support only one and it is still too early to announce who I will support," Enrile said.

He also announced that he would seek re-election for another term in the Senate under the PMP banner but this would probably be his last term.

Enrile also clarified that he has no plan to run for a higher position like vice-president or president because of his advanced age and health. He added that he will give younger aspirants the chance to run for higher office.

He said Estrada still has popular support in the provinces.

Enrile said when he recently accompanied Estrada to Marinduque, the residents ran out of their house to meet the former president.

"I will not talk about chances. Everyone (presidential bets) has a chance to win, that is the function of the people; let them judge each one of them, all of them."

Enrile expressed hope that people will elect the most capable candidate to run the country.

Villar, who is the presidential candidate of the Nacionalista Party, said he respected the decision of Enrile.

Villar said that the Nacionalista Party would soon release the complete line up of candidates for the 2010 polls down to the local level.

He said that affiliation in the party has been expanding in the past months and that they are having a hard time picking candidates for the Senate.

"Many are joining the party (Nacionalista). There are more than 12 aspirants who want to run for senator," he told reporters on June 29 at the Balyuan Amphitheater.

He said that all positions in the local level will be filled up by members of the Nacionalista Party and other parties allied with it. ■



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