



Sen. Manny Villar lashes out at Sen. Panfilo Lacson (inset) and other senators who insisted he answer an ethics complaint over corruption allegations. Photo courtesy of Philstar.com

# Villar decries Senate 'kangaroo court'

by AUREA CALICA  
Philstar.com

SENATORS threw mud at each other as tempers flared in a showdown last April 20 over whether Sen. Panfilo Lacson and other presidential hopefuls in the ethics committee could continue to investigate Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. despite allegations from the minority that they were out to convict him for political purposes.

A visibly enraged Villar declared he would not submit himself to an investigation by the ethics committee that Lacson chairs, saying it was a "kangaroo court" that had prejudged the charges of plunder and budget insertion for the C-5 road project filed against him.

He also turned the tables on Lacson and his colleagues calling for the investigation, saying they must look at themselves first as they too might have to face the ethics committee for violations of the law.

It was Villar's emotional outburst on the Senate floor, which

he said was the venue for him to air his side and not the ethics committee which Lacson chairs and with members who are also possible contenders for the presidency.

Villar repeatedly said "I am not afraid of anybody" and that "I also know a lot of things" as he fired off tirades against his colleagues.

Villar also mentioned a case in Bukidnon which could involve Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri that he said the Senate should consider looking into.

He likewise took a swipe at Sen. Jamby Madrigal, who had been fighting for human rights but was apparently violating his rights.

Villar maintained he did not make any money on the C-5 project.

Villar said he has maintained his silence in the past few months hoping that the issues against him would die down. But he admitted he was shocked to learn about the April 14 order for him to answer

the charges even without a hearing.

He said he was ready to defend himself but that he felt disrespected when Lacson tried to serve him the order at the session hall and even noted for the record that Villar refused to accept it.

Villar also hit Lacson's way of delivering his attacks against him since the C-5 controversy broke out, saying Lacson had been doing it "in a very loud voice."

Villar said his reputation had

been destroyed by the allegations and that he could not take the attacks anymore.

The 'order' that started it all

The order was exposed by Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, a member of the minority and the Nacionalista Party of which Villar is president.

Lacson assailed the "leak" of the order, which he said was a draft and should not have been circulated since it could still change, depending on the outcome of the

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# Bishop urges Estrada to give up presidential bid

by EVELYN MACAIRAN  
Philstar.com

A MINDANAO-BASED Catholic bishop last April 21 urged former President Joseph "Erap" Estrada to give up his presidential ambitions, saying unity would only be obtained if he abandons his political plans next year.

Basilan Bishop Martin Jumoad told the Church-run Radio Veritas in an interview that he was against the idea of Estrada joining the 2010 presidential derby.

After Estrada was released from detention and pardoned by President Arroyo on plunder charges in 2007, he set out on a series of "Lakbay Pasasalamat" visits all over the country to thank his supporters for their continued support.

However, political observers viewed his

tours to the provinces as part of an early election campaign for next year.

But Estrada has not made formal announcements on his decision to run for president in next year's elections. All he said was that he would run for president if the opposition does not unite and come up with one candidate.

Bishop Jumoad believed that unity in the country would only be obtained if the 72-year-old actor-turned-president abandons his political plans next year.

But it seems that not all officials of the Catholic Church share Jumoad's opinion on Estrada's possible presidential bid.

Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines-Public Affairs Committee (CBCP-PAC) chairman Kalookan Bishop Deogracias Ini-

guez said he is leaving it up to Estrada to assess himself as leader and for the Filipinos to discern his capability for themselves.

"While I have no objections to his running for president, I do have a question mark... We have to observe him closely. But personally, I am looking for a candidate who would be able to promote what is good and would work for the interest of the people," Iniguez said.

"Estrada has to assess for himself his own situation, make his own decision, assess his track record, and determine if he is capable of leading our country to the next chapter in history. If he thinks that he could help solve the country's problems then he could run for president. After all, it is still the people who will decide," Jumoad said. ■

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