

Enrile dares Villar to bring case to court

by CHRISTINA MENDEZ
Philstar.com



Senator Juan Ponce Enrile

SENATE President Juan Ponce Enrile dared Sen. Manuel Villar Jr. last May 19 to question before the Supreme Court the jurisdiction of the Senate committee of the whole on the ethics case against him.

"I will encourage them to go to the Supreme Court, and if the SC will issue a temporary restraining order, we'll respect the SC," he said.

Enrile said the hearing might last for several months because the Senate has to give Villar the chance to submit his evidence.

"We'll give him a reasonable time to present his defense," he said.

Enrile said he does not see anything wrong with Villar's move to make an ocular inspection of the C5 Road extension.

"They are free to do anything they want," he said. "I don't know if they will present that as a defense."

Enrile said the Senate will also conduct its own ocular inspection if needed, although "we have not come to that point."

"We are just in the preliminaries," he said.

"Later on when there is a need to do that, if there is a doubt on the factual setting of the inquiry like whether there is realignment and where is the realignment. Let the committee make the decision."

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, who exposed the C5 Road "double insertion," said Villar can do as he pleases, and if he wants to conduct an ocular inspection, "that is his prerogative."

He also said that he'd rather Villar bring his case before the chamber instead of the media.

Lacson, chairman of the Senate ethics committee which initially handled the complaint filed by Sen. Jamby Madrigal,

At the House of Representatives, two lawmakers called on senators intending to run for president next year to inhibit themselves from participating in the Senate ethics investigation against Villar, who is also a presidential aspirant.

Representatives Teddy Casiño of Bayan Muna and Risa Baraquel of Akbayan urged the presidential hopefuls to heed the call of former Senate president Jovito Salonga, chairman emeritus of the Liberal Party which also has a potential presidential candidate in the Senate.

Meanwhile, Baraquel said the Senate should also inquire into the supposed "personal benefits" of El Shaddai leader Bro. Mike Velarde of Amvel Holdings and Henry Sy of SM Properties from the C5 project as per Ernesto Francisco, the lawyer of Madrigal.

Baraquel said Madrigal must push for the inquiry since it was her camp that exposed the issue.

"So if it came from her lawyer then perhaps Senator Madrigal will be speaking to the public about it sometime soon," she said. ■

Rescuers continue search for missing miners in Compostela landslide

COTABATO—Rescuers continue to search the missing gold-miners in a rain-immersed hilly zone in Compostela Valley after a landslide that killed 26.

Regional military spokesman Major Randolph Cabangbang told Xinhua by phone that 21 bodies have been recovered under tons of mud and debris by three platoons of soldiers who were helping local rescuers in the township of Pantukan.

"We have recovered 21 bodies and five remained missing. That's the latest and official data relayed to us by members of our Philippine Air Force," Cabangbang said. "It's raining now at the site. Our troops are still there looking for those missing."

Local officials earlier declared a state of calamity in Pantukan to facilitate the rescue operations, which was hampered a combination of blocked road access and unfavorable weather conditions in the mountainous region.

Wilfredo Montano, spokesman of state Mines and Geo-Sciences Bureau in the region, told a local radio station they have sent a team in Pantukan to probe the incident.

Authorities have blamed spawning unregulated mining for the rise in numbers of fatal mudslides in the province over the past few years.

In last summer, more than 20 people were killed when a landslide buried 28 houses at a mining village in the province. (Philstar.com)

Woman tested for A(H1N1) flu in Iloilo

by NESTOR P. BURGOS JR.
Inquirer.net

ILOILO CITY—The Department of Health (DoH) has placed under observation a 64-year-old woman for suspected Influenza A(H1N1) infection when she exhibited flu symptoms after coming home from the United States.

The woman, a United States immigrant, was brought to the Western Visayas Medical Center (WVMC) here from Aklan province after she devel-

oped fever, cough, and sore throat, said Doctor Ariel Valencia, DoH director for Western Visayas

It was the first suspected A(H1N1) case in Western Visayas region, he said.

The patient was quarantined at the WVMC while waiting for results of laboratory tests, which were done at the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) in Manila, he said. ■

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