Enrile to back Estrada if ousted leader runs in 2010

by MIRIAM DESACADA
Philstar.com

TACLOBAN CITY—Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile said last June 30 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 last 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.

Gov't appeals junking of Erap against Estrada

by EDSON C. TANDOR JR.
Inquirer.net

GOVERNMENT lawyers have asked the Sandiganbayan anti-graft court to reconsider its order dismissing the last perjury case against deposed president and convicted plunderer Joseph Estrada and allow him to freely travel abroad.

In a motion for reconsideration, the Office of the Special Prosecutor said the court's resolution, issued about two weeks ago, merely acted on Estrada's motion to lift the hold departure order against him and should not have dismissed the last perjury case.

"It is thus very clear that what was being resolved by this honorable court was the motion to lift the hold-departure order and not the dismissal of Criminal Case No. 26564," it said.

The anti-graft court convicted Estrada of plunder in September 2007 and sentenced him to 40 years in prison. The court also acquitted Estrada in one of two perjury cases.

Estrada never served the prison term, however, as President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo granted him a pardon barely a month after.

Last month, Estrada petitioned the Sandiganbayan Special Division to lift the hold-departure order against him. The court granted the motion, citing the pardon he received and his acquittal in the perjury case.

The court also dismissed the second perjury case against Estrada, Criminal Case No. 26564, ruling that the issue had become moot.

The prosecution argued, however, that Estrada should have first filed a motion seeking to dismiss the case against him before the court could act on it.

Former President Joseph "Erap" Estrada

Just wait for her term to finish, Fajardo says on plots to oust PGMA

MALACAÑANG last June 30 brushed aside reports that a certain group which calls itself Kadamay has been soliciting signatures against the Constitutional Assembly being pushed in Congress and is calling for the ouster of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

"I think, we must just wait for her term to end. She has a few months left before she steps down. This is not going to be productive anymore," declared Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Lorelei Fajardo in response to questions from Malacanang reporters.

"What we need this time is to work together and cooperate. After all, her (PGMA's) programs are very good," she added.

Fajardo said they have the right to express whatever they want but "I don't think that is necessary. As for Con-ass they can appeal to Congress regarding their objections but as to the ouster of the President, I don't think we need to do that at this point in time."

Fajardo also dismissed as "fiction and black propaganda" reports stating that Oplan August Moon is intended to shorten the term of Chief of Staff Victor Ibrado and allegedly replaced by Gen. Delfin Bangit, the commanding general of the Philippine Army, who favors Cha-cha to allow the President to stay beyond 2010.

"This is definitely not true. That is fiction and black propaganda. The President will not allow that to happen. Our military remains loyal to the Constitution, to our nation and to our people," Fajardo said.

"Our military remains loyal to the Constitution, to our nation and to our people. In fact according to them and if I may quote Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner, AFP Spokesman, the AFP leadership remains united and solid behind the Constitution ."

"This kind of news must not be given any attention at all as some might believe it and this can cause confusion. This is not what we need during this time. We need to project that we are stable politically and economically," Fajardo stated.

Fajardo flatly denied that what happened in Honduras, where the president was ousted because of charter change, can happen in the Philippines.

"We are very confident this is not going to happen to us. I just said that the AFP leadership is united and solid behind the Constitution. So we don't need to worry that this might happen to us," Fajardo said.

Fajardo said the President is sensitive to the concerns of the people and all these concerns will be answered in due time. *(PND)*

Guam governor expects Filipinos to fill jobs

THOUSANDS of Filipino workers could be hired in the construction of new military bases on the US territory of Guam, the island's governor said during a visit to the Philippines.

Guam will be hiring between 10,000 and 15,000 workers to support the US military build-up, including the relocation of 8,000 Marines and their families from Okinawa over the next few years, Gov. Felix Camacho told reporters in Manila on Tuesday.

He said he expected skilled Filipino workers to fill job demands that cannot be met by local labor alone.

"It is not exclusive but the likelihood is that most will be from the Philippines," Camacho said. Chinese workers will not be hired because of security concerns related to work on military bases, he said.

The buildup will cost at least $15 billion. Japan is covering $6 billion of the bill.

US Rep. Neil Abercrombie of Hawaii said last week that foreign workers won't be allowed to do more than 30 percent of the work on the projects.

The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act requires the minimum wage for all Guam construction projects be at the prevailing wage level for similar work in Hawaii, he said. *(AP)*

RP to reforest land, create jobs

TENS of thousands of hectares of deforested land in the Philippines have been handed over to farmers in a novel job-creation and reforestation program, the government said last June 30.

It said 33,387 farmers have been given two hectares (4.94 acres) each of either deforested upland areas or coastal mangroves, half of it to be farmed and half to be replanted with "trees suitable to the area."

The target is to create 52,425 jobs, backed by P19,400 ($403) for each beneficiary, the environment and natural resources department said in a statement.

"Such opportunities will help give our upland families economic resiliency in dealing with the impact of the current global financial crisis while enabling them to take active part in fighting global warming," Environment Secretary Joselito Atienza said.

The government did not say how long the farmers will be able to keep the land.

Official data show the southeast Asian archipelago, which once had 16 million hectares of forested land, lost about a third of that in just 15 years to 2005.

With a depletion rate estimated at 1,900 hectares a day, government projections suggest the Philippines' remaining forests could be gone within 16 years.

The Philippines said 9.7 million Filipinos out of a total labor force of 37.8 million were jobless or underemployed as of April. *(Inquirer.net)*