

Comelec dismisses petition vs Erap

by SHEILA CRISOSTOMO
Philstar.com

MANILA—The Commission on Elections (Comelec) rejected the petition of lawyer Oliver Lozano seeking the disqualification of former President Joseph Estrada from the presidential elections in 2010.

“There is nothing to oppose since no one has filed a certificate of candidacy,” Comelec chairman Jose Melo said in an interview.

Lozano had asked the Com-

elec to disqualify Estrada from the presidential race, citing the Constitutional provision on the one-term limit for presidents.

Estrada had earlier announced his plan to run for president with Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay as his running mate.

Melo had likened Lozano’s filing of disqualification against Estrada to a lover who had been rejected even before he professed his love for a woman.

He added that the petition was rejected “outright” since it was

done prematurely.

Lozano admitted in the petition that he is also planning to seek the presidency.

He also bragged of having impeached Estrada, questioning the use of the sequestered multi-billion gold and dollar deposits of the late Pres. Ferdinand Marcos.

Lozano accused Melo of lawyering for Estrada when he outrightly dismissed his petition for disqualification.

“Instead of defending the for-

mer president chairman Melo must ask Erap to answer my petition and schedule a hearing to resolve the issue,” he said.

Lozano insisted that his petition is not premature because it intends to prevent the former President from filing his certificate of candidacy.

He said under the election law, anybody can file a petition for disqualification against any person seeking elective post even before the certificate of candidacy is filed with the Comelec.

Lozano said the Comelec must act on his petition and rule if the former president is eligible to run for re-election in the coming election.

Cabinet Secretary Silvestre Bello III, who is also a lawyer, told a news briefing her that Lozano’s move could be premature as Estrada has yet to file his certificate of candidacy (COC).

“What if he (Estrada) doesn’t file at all? So his petition will be rendered moot and academic. My unsolicited advice is he should have waited for Estrada to file his COC then he can question his candidacy,”

Bello said.

Press Secretary Cerge Remonde, however, said he would prefer that Estrada finds out for himself whether the voters think he is qualified to run the country.

“I would rather not be technical about the candidacy of former President Estrada. I would rather adhere to the principle of the voice of the people is the supreme law,” Remonde said.

President Arroyo granted Estrada a conditional pardon in October 2007 that stated he is no longer eligible to seek public office. ■

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More local executives join NP

MANILA—More and more local government executives and key incumbent officials are joining the Nacionalista Party (NP) led by Sen. Manuel Villar.

Local government officials from Negros Oriental led by Vice Gov. Dino Yulo have already expressed intention to join the NP.

Another local official from Batangas will also take his oath with the NP following the recent defection from Lakas-NUCD by Camarines Sur Gov. Luis Raymond “Lray” Villafuerte Jr., who

is the national chairman of the League of Provinces of the Philippines, Surigao del Norte Gov. Robert Ace Barbers, Davao del Sur Gov. Douglas Cagas, and Biliran Gov. Rogelio Espina.

“The formal oath-taking of more of our leaders is expected to take place soon, solidifying their earlier commitment to support our advocacies for the country,” said Villar, who is yet to announce his running mate.

The latest addition of members represents the NP’s strategic build up and strengthening of grassroots support nationwide.

Villafuerte, who promise to deliver over a million votes, stressed that he joined the Nacionalista Party because it is the strongest and most organized.

He also identified himself with Villar’s executive expertise and accomplishments.

Villafuerte recently joined Villar in Tacloban City where Biliran Governor Espina, who was Lakas’ provincial chair for nine years, and Vice-Gov. Lucila Curso were sworn in.

Four mayors, six vice-mayors, and 136 incumbents in Biliran also took their oaths.

Over 100 incumbents from Samar and Leyte also took their oath as NP members.

Espina is an orthopedic surgeon by profession and is on his third term and eyeing a congressional seat in the 2010 elections.

He said he is supporting Villar because of the latter’s proven leadership ability.

Boosting the NP’s influence in Mindanao was the defection of Governors Barbers and Cagas from Lakas.

“We expect more to take their oath from Mindanao in the coming days,” Villar said. (Philstar.com)

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