

QC vice mayor: Avoid inviting politicians to speak at moving-up rites

BY **CHITO A. CHAVEZ**

Many school and youth celebrations, like commencement rites, have drawn widespread uproar after these events were turned into political campaign sorties by politicians seeking public office.

With the many complaints, Quezon City Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte has revived her call to local public school officials not to invite political wannabes to commencement or moving-up ceremonies, especially in the months or weeks leading to the May, 2019 midterm elections.

As the upcoming election season

nears, Belmonte said those running for public office would naturally compete for a chance to appear and speak in public events such as schools' graduation ceremonies.

"Perhaps our local Division (Schools Division Office Quezon City) can consider this to maintain order and fairness in 2019 graduation ceremonies," Belmonte said.

"I have suggested this to our Division Superintendent several times: those who are running for public office are not allowed to speak in order to avoid politicking. They can only attend and be recognized," she added.

Belmonte said this issue was raised

to her by DepEd regional directors.

Quoting the DepEd officials, she said that in the provinces, public schools invite credible, non-politicians "who are really inspiring to the youth" to be keynote speakers, instead of politicians.

Last April, DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones reminded school officials to avoid making the graduation and moving up ceremonies as a venue for political forum.

While inviting politicians is not banned, Briones said commencement exercises should be conducted in an appropriate ceremony befitting the students and their parents.