

Sara, Joy Belmonte join forces for 2019 elections

Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte's regional Hugpong ng Pagbabago (HNP) joined forces with Quezon City Vice Mayor Joy Belmonte's Serbisyo sa Bayan Party (SBP) on Friday in preparation for the 2019 midterm elections.

"We chose to form an alliance with Hugpong ng Pagbabago because we have the same advocacies and goals directed towards the development and progress of our constituents," said Belmonte, who is running for mayor of Quezon City in 2019.

The alliance was forged in a ceremony at the Trinity University of Asia in Quezon City and was attended by Duterte, Belmonte, and members of both parties, many of whom are running for positions in the 2019 polls.

As keynote speaker, Duterte said, "We are here in Quezon City because we are looking for supporters who can help push sectors toward advancing the causes of administration of President [Rodrigo] Duterte. We go to different provinces and cities to recruit people to back the President in his remaining three years in office."

Duterte said that the HNP-SBP alliance would be an example of "how people can unite for the country" and will be based on collaboration, knowledge sharing and benchmarking of best practices.

The alliance, she said, is also committed to endorse the senatorial candidacies of 14 candidates as well as the local campaigns of SBP's forerunners.

Present at the ceremony were HNP senatorial candidates Sen. Cynthia Villar, former senator



SEALED ALLIANCE (From left) Senatorial candidate Jiggy Manicad, Quezon City vice mayoralty candidate Gian Sotto, Councilor Dorothy Delarmente, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte and mayoralty candidate Joy Belmonte pose for a photo during the pledge of alliance of Hugpong ng Pagbabago and Serbisyo sa Bayan Party held at the Trinity University of Asia in Quezon City on Friday. PHOTO BY ROGER RAÑADA

Jingoy Estrada, Maguindanao Rep. Zajid Mangudadatu, Taguig City Rep. Pia Cayetano, Ilocos Norte Gov. Imee Marcos, Sen. Sonny Angara, former presidential spokesman Harry Roque Jr. and television reporter Jiggy Manicad.

Candidates Ronald "Bato" dela Rosa and former special assistant to the President Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go were unable to attend but were represented by Presidential Communications Secretary Martin Andanar.

The SBP delegation was led by Belmonte, Councilor Gian Sotto, who is running for vice mayor in the 2019 elections, Rep. Feliciano Belmonte, and SBP candidates from Quezon City's six districts.

About 3,000 SBP and HNP members and supporters flocked to the signing.

Duterte and Belmonte met on July 23 for the renewal of sister city ties between Davao City and Quezon City and the launch of the

"Tapang at Malasakit" volunteers' movement in Quezon City.

Last November 5, President Duterte endorsed the candidacies of Belmonte and Sotto when they paid a courtesy call at Malacañan Palace.

QC top honchos

Vice Mayor Belmonte admitted that she has not been on speaking terms with Mayor Herbert Bautista for quite sometime now.

"Where are you? You are the reason why my boss does not want to talk to me," said Belmonte, referring to District 3 Councilor Allan Benedict Reyes at the launch early this week of the smartphone application "Batas QC" where constituents are given the chance to access city ordinances.

Belmonte was looking for Reyes who filed his certificate of candidacy for the congressional seat of his district.

Bautista, who is on his last term,

was supposed to run for representative of district 3.

"I could not be blamed. I told you several times not to run for that position. Despite that, I was blamed for pushing you to run," the vice mayor said.

Reyes, who was at the launch of "Batas QC," just smiled and did not comment.

Bautista, did not attend the event.

Because of Reyes's unexpected filing of candidacy, a speculation surfaced that Bautista would instead run for vice mayor, which would put the candidacy of Councilor Gian Carlo Sotto, running mate of Belmonte, in danger.

Even Sotto has been conspicuously absent in several functions at the city hall, including the smartphone app launch on Tuesday.

Until Friday, Bautista remained silent about his next political move. **JAIME R. PILAPIL**