

Belmonte: Casino entry fee for residents only

THE Quezon City government on Wednesday clarified that the approved entry fee to the projected Solaire casino in the city is for its residents only.

"In view of the statement issued by Pagcor (Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.) on the Solaire casino to be built by the Bloomberry Resorts Corp. in the Vertis North complex of Quezon City, I would like to stand firmly on the stance that the local government must care for the well-being of its citizens as expressly stated in the Local Government Code of 1991, Section 16 that says that 'every local government unit shall exercise the powers expressly granted... for its efficient and effective governance, and those which are essential to the promotion of the general welfare,'" Vice Mayor Josefina "Joy" Belmonte said in a statement.

"I would like to clarify that the ordinance that seeks to require entrance fees to casinos in Quezon City for the city's own residents, among other measures to regulate gambling, is not directed only at Solaire but is meant to supervise all gambling operations in the city," she added.

Belmonte said entrance fees

would not be required for all, but just for Quezon City residents as casinos were meant to be tourism destinations for visitors and not for locals.

Solaire casino, owned by billionaire businessman Enrique Razon, purchased a 1.5-hectare lot along EDSA and vowed to build by 2022 a vertical gambling edifice.

The Quezon City Council, under the committee headed by Councilor Ivy Lagman, passed an ordinance allowing casinos in the city provided its residents pay an entrance fee.

"The entrance fee will prompt our constituents to think twice [before] entering the casino. Imagine they have to shell out P1,500," Lagman told *The Manila Times*.

Belmonte said the council moved to pass the ordinance after Mayor Herbert Bautista himself issued a Letter of No Opposition.

Lagman said the Office of the Mayor was forming a committee that would draft the implementing rules and regulations of the casino ordinance, which will also cover eGames now known as Bingo.

Pagcor has issued a statement it would contest before a court the Quezon City entrance fee requirement.

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