

BELMONTE TO 'STRIKE BALANCE' ON VENDORS' CONCERNS

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Despite continuous clearing operations in Quezon City's streets, Mayor Joy Belmonte said she would "strike a balance between ensuring the livelihood of illegal vendors and in maintaining order" in the city's roads and sidewalks.

"We have started holding dialogues with organized vendor groups in the city to ensure their livelihood and to find sustainable solutions to the problem of illegal hawkers," Belmonte said.

Belmonte said she would ensure that alternative livelihood opportunities would be available to them. This includes her negotiations with private markets to provide illegal vendors with affordable terms until they have the capacity to pay rent.

Intensified campaign

Since assuming office, Belmonte has ordered an intensified campaign to clear sidewalks and major roads of illegal vendors and settlements "to allow the smooth flow of traffic and pedestrian."

Meanwhile, 270 households in the urban poor community of Sitio San Roque, Quezon City, had been spared from a demolition scheduled on Aug. 7 after residents engaged Belmonte in a dialogue on Monday.

On July 18, the National Housing Authority (NHA) announced that informal settlements in Agham Road will be cleared to make way for the proposed Solaire North complex, a private casino hub scheduled to be completed in 2020 within the planned Quezon City Business District.

According to Jmar Atienza of the Save San Roque Alliance, the NHA had ordered the demolition even with an expired certificate of compliance (COC).

Validity expired

The COC for the San Roque demolition, which was issued by the Local Housing Board, was signed by former mayor Herbert Bautista on June 19 and had already exceeded the 30-day validity period, said Atienza.

After waiting for 10 hours at the city hall, the residents were able to get the mayor's commitment that no demolition would occur and that they would be provided with in-city relocation.

"There can be no demolition on Aug. 7. You cannot be demolished until the Certificate of Compliance is renewed. I should be the one convening the Local Housing Board," Belmonte said.

The demolition was supposed to cover Area J and parts of Area I in Sitio San Roque.