

## Belmonte backs Gatchalian's move vs NLEX Corp.

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Valenzuela City Mayor Rex Gatchalian has found an ally in Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte after he suspended NLEX Corporation's business permit until issues on the radio-frequency identification (RFID) system are fixed.

On Monday night, Gatchalian personally served the executive order to the managers of six toll plazas in the city after NLEX failed to submit an action plan to solve the traffic jams reportedly caused by its RFID toll collection system.

With the directive, NLEX Corporation will not be allowed to collect toll fees from motorists entering through Valenzuela City.

Belmonte in a statement pointed out that the implementation of the RFID system is flawed, citing severe traffic congestion caused by it on the Quezon City side of NLEX Mindanao Smart Connect tollway.

"I fully support cashless transactions, especially as this is part of the new normal. But if implementation is flawed, then the purpose of this technology, which is to promote convenience and speed up the flow of vehicular traffic, will not be achieved. In the case of Mindanao Avenue, traffic has in fact worsened," she said.

Belmonte also expressed his gratitude to Caloocan Mayor Oca Malapitan, who also acknowledged the problems on the expressway and offered to cooperate with NLEX Corporation to address them, particularly those that occur at the Balintawak toll plaza in Caloocan which affect the vehicular traffic in Quezon City.

In fact, traffic enforcers from the Quezon City government have to be deployed at the intersection of NLEX Smart Connect tollway and Mindanao Ave. just to ease the traffic congestion, said Dexter Cardenas, head of the Quezon City Traffic and Transport Management Task Force.