- Environmental movement

Belmonte calls for dialogue over Masungi development

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Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte yesterday called for an open dialogue and collaboration to resolve the issue regarding the development of Masungi Georeserve in Rizal.

In a statement, Belmonte noted how Masungi has been a symbol of hope as it demonstrated "what community-driven conservation can achieve."

"Through reforestation, biodiversity protection and sustainable ecotourism, the foundation has safeguarded vital ecosystems while inspiring people to take part in environmental stewardship," she said.

"We believe that the spirit of conservation and the urgent need to protect our dwindling natural resources must guide the way forward," she added.

Belmonte issued the statement after the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) canceled its contract with the private contractor and developer of the ecotourism site.

Belmonte, who was previously hailed by the United Nations Environment Program as a "Champion of the Earth" for policy leadership, said the country should not reverse decades of progress "at a time when deforestation and climate change threaten our natural resources."

The mayor called for a dialogue to reach a resolution, which will uphold the law while ensuring that conservation initiatives continue.

"Masungi stands as proof that restoration is possible when communities, organizations and leaders work together," Belmonte said.

Members of indigenous peoples in Tanay, Rizal backed the DENR decision canceling the joint venture agreement with Masungi's contractor.