

Maguindanaon datus with Maranaw ancestors have crossed provincial borders to extend political support to Lanao del Sur gubernatorial candidate Fahad Salic, rekindling centuries-old tradition of upholding “maratabat” whenever family ties are put to a challenge.

The term maratabat means clan pride in Maranaw dialect.

Salic's third and last term as mayor of Marawi City, capital of Lanao del Sur, will end on June 30, 2016.

Datu Bimbo Sinsuat, Jr., scion of the Sinsuat clan in Maguindanao province, and his cousins were in Marawi City on Wednesday to endorse the candidacy of Salic for governor.

They also urged their Maranaw relatives to vote for Salic while in Marawi City.

Sinsuat's great grandmother on the paternal side, Bai Derumbai Usudan, wife of Datu Sinsuat Balabaran, was of pure Maranaw descent, related to big families in Marawi City and in Lanao del Sur.

The late Balabaran was born in 1864 and had a well chronicled political career that spanned through the entire American colonial period.

Among the descendants of the Sinsuat-Usudan couple are Maguindanao's reelectionist vice governor, Datu Lester. His father, Datu Ombra, is the present mayor of Datu Odin Sinsuat, Maguindanao. They both belong to the Liberal Party, however.

Sinsuat on Thursday said he and his relatives, Datu Junie Datukon and Datu Teng Druz Ali, assured Salic, more known as “Pre” in Marawi City, of their support to his candidacy during their meeting on Wednesday.

A member of the United Nationalist Alliance (UNA), Salic, brother of former Marawi City Mayor Solitario Ali, is contesting the candidacy of Soraya Adiong, LP's candidate for Lanao del Sur governor.

"While we are more Maguindanaons in culture and ethnicity, he (Salic) is our candidate for provincial governor of Lanao del Sur," Sinsuat said.

He said there is a strong tradition among related Moro families to readily unite during elections in support of the candidacy of clan members.

"That happens when the maratabat of the clan is placed on the line," Sinsuat said.

There is always a strong connection among related Maranaw and Maguindanaon clans, maintained via intermarriages and nuptial concessions as solution to hostilities among families that become enemies due to land conflicts and political misunderstandings.

There are Moro history books narrating how the sultans in Lanao del Sur helped their relatives in Maguindanao fight the Spaniards, the Americans and, in contemporary time, the Japanese during World War II.

Ali, who is a candidate for mayor of Marawi City, stated on his Facebook that he would focus on preserving Maranaw cultures and arts, particularly those meant to foster unity among Muslims and Christians, if elected.

Ali, a senior official of the Moro National Liberation Front, had served as Marawi mayor for two consecutive terms after the crafting of the government-MNLF peace pact on Sept. 2, 1996.

Ali said it is also important to develop the tourism potentials of Marawi City, an old lakeside

settlement and an icon of Maranaw resilience and hospitality.