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DENR

IN THE NEWS

Strategic Communication and Initiative Service



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INIABOT ni Environment Secretary Roy A. Cimatu (kanan) ang plaque of recognition kay dating Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno sa pagkakaloob ng inaugural lecture sa mahigit 100 participants mula sa DENR bilang bahagi ng Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources Distinguished Lecture Series na suporta sa Manila Bay at Boracay rehabilitation projects. Ang first leg ng lecture series ay idinaos sa Seda Hotel, Vertis North sa Quezon City noong Abril 15, 2019.



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MANILA BAY REHAB

DPWH WANTS DREDGING OVER BY JULY

By Jovic Yee
@jovicjeeINQ

The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said on Wednesday said that it wanted to finish dredging a 1.5-kilometer-long portion of Manila Bay by July in time for the rainy season.

According to Public Works Undersecretary Emil Sadain, the deployment of two more heavy-duty amphibious dredging machines will help fast-track the DPWH's efforts to remove debris, plastics and other solid waste from the section of the bay between the US Embassy and Mani-

la Yacht Club in Malate.

The DPWH earlier said that work on the bay would be divided into five sectors, each one lasting up to 120 days.

Since dredging began last month, "improvements" have been observed in the bay, Sadain noted, adding that the DPWH has so far removed an estimated 18,000 cubic meters of muck and silt.

He said that water tests conducted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources also showed that the average amount of dissolved oxygen in the bay had improved to a level that would allow aquatic life. INQ



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More effort needed Playing in the sand with its mystery elements at Baseco Beach could be as hazardous as taking a dip in the still toxic water.

BOB DUNGO JR.



Trusted Since 1898

The Manila Times

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Boracay 'better' a year after closure

BY NEIL JAYSON N. SERVALLOS

BORACAY Island is back to its pristine state almost a year after it was ordered closed for rehabilitation, the Department of Tourism (DoT) said.

Tourism Secretary Bernadette Romulo Puyat said the Department of Public Works and Highways had finished repairing all roads there.

The Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone was also on track in finishing the construction of a sewerage system, part of the Boracay Inter-Agency Task Force's (BITF) Phase 2 of the island rehabilitation.

Businesses had also started to boom, Puyat said.

"Together with Aboitiz Foundation, we're doing a wetland [project], we are making it into a park, eco-tourism zone. There are so many

places to go to in Boracay, not just the beaches," she added.

The Tourism chief said coliform bacteria levels in Boracay waters were now down to zero from the very high level of one million most probable number.

The DoT attributed the progress to the relentless efforts of the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The DENR is also regularly doing the tests on the coliform level every two weeks to maintain the present condition of Boracay Island, especially

during the peak season.

As of April 8, more than 339 hotels and tourism establishments have been reopened, accounting to more than 12,000 rooms.

Puyat also said respective hotels and resorts were told to supply potable water for both domestic and foreign travelers while local government officials were religiously monitoring the garbage.

"Garbage is continuously being monitored by the LGUs (local government units), we have ground enforcers who ensure that the tourists will dispose trash properly. Receptacles have also been placed everywhere," she said.

While the BITF and the local government of Boracay have allowed parties since the reopening of the island last October, Puyat said there would be no more LaBoracay or any other beach parties this year.

LaBoracay is an annual summer beach party held in the island, dubbed as southeast Asia's own "spring break."

"*Bawal ang LaBoracay ngayon, no drinking and no smoking in public places. So, that still stands. Actually there's a law — no smoking is an executive order and there's a local ordinance *na bawal talaga 'yung ganun sa beach*," she said.*

She clarified, however, that some parties were allowed on Boracay "provided that establishments follow laws and existing ordinances that were in place even before the closure and rehabilitation."

Under existing local ordinances and national laws, smoking and drinking are not allowed in the public beach; parties must not be held within "25+5" easement; and the maximum allowed noise level is 55 decibels in nighttime for open areas.



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Kampanya vs prostitusyon sa Boracay, pinaigting pa ng PNP

LALO pang pinaigting ng kapulisan ang kampanya laban sa prostitusyon sa isla ng Boracay.

Ito ay kasunod sa pagkaaresto sa anim na bugaw at pagkaligtas sa 33 babae sa isinagawang raid sa apat na establisyemento ng pinagsanib na pwersa ng Malay Police Station, Aklan Port-based Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force, MSWDO-Malay, 2nd Aklan Provincial Mobile Force Company,

at 605th Maritime Police Station.

Ayon kay Capt. Jose Mark Anthony Gesulga, hepe ng Malay PNP, kinasuhan na nila sa paglabag sa RA 9208 o Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 ang anim na bugaw na kinilalang sina Richard Sausa, 42; Kevin Martin, 26; Mark Vincent Faulan, 23; Matias Male, 23; Fernando Fajardo, 43; Rebecca Cainglet, 56, at Karen Belonio, 22.

OFF-LIMITS, UNDER REHAB SINCE 2004

BANAHAW: MOUNT OF RITUALS GIVEN MORE TIME TO HEAL

By Delfin T. Mallari Jr.
@dtmallarijrINQ



PILGRIMS Devotees visit “holy spots” on Mt. Banahaw to pray for forgiveness of sins, seek divine intervention to overcome life’s challenges, experience mystical moments or have a moment of peace. —PHOTOS BY DELFIN T. MALLARI JR.

DOLORES, QUEZON—For pilgrims and nature trippers, Mount Banahaw is a sanctuary and a bottomless well of holiness, mysticism and ineffable peace.

During the Holy Week, believers trek to “puestos,” or “holy spots,” to pray for forgiveness of sins, seek divine intervention to overcome life’s challenges, experience mystical moments or have a moment of peace.

Banahaw straddles the municipalities of Lucban, Tayabas, Sariaya, Candelaria and Dolores in Quezon province and parts of Rizal, Nagcarlan, Liliw and Majayjay towns and San Pablo City in Laguna province.

There are now more than 100 puestos, mostly found in Dolores, 170 kilometers southeast of Manila, particularly in the villages of Kinabuhayan and Santa Lucia.

Pioneer

Magtanggol Barrion, 56, a member of the Suprema de la Iglesia del Ciudad Mystica de Dios, or Mystica, one of several religious sects based on Banahaw, says the mountain had to be revered because of its mystics and natural spring of deeper spiritualism and faith.

Its best known “religious hermit” was Agripino Lontok or “Mamay Pinong,” who discovered the mountain as a sacred ground for those in search of

spiritual strength and righteousness, according to Barrion.

Lontok pioneered the formation of puestos, guided by a huge bird known as “Ibong de Custodio,” he says.

Some puestos are landmarks, caves and waterfalls named after saints.

Barrion names some of the early puestos in Santa Lucia as “Santo Pepe” (huge stone), “Santa Lucia” (waterfall), “Hilamusan” (basin-like stone with water), “Balon ni San Isidro” and “Balon ni Santong Jacob.”

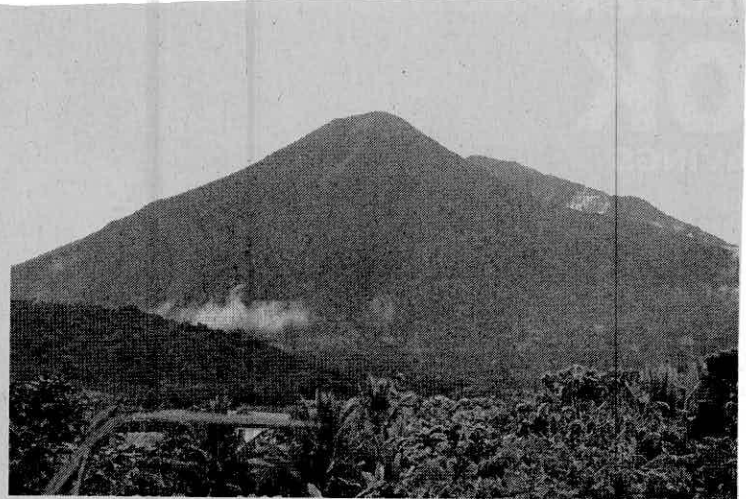
Another, “Prisintahan,” is a cave with two small caverns known as San Pablo and San Pedro.



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HOLY SPOT One of the "puestos" or holy spots on Mt. Banahaw that pilgrims visit during Holy Week. Most pilgrims spend a whole day of prayers at different puestos in a ritual called "pamumuesto."

MYSTIC MOUNTAIN Pilgrims and mountaineers still manage to climb Mt. Banahaw despite its closure to the public. Forest guards, aided by volunteers, policemen and soldiers, will continue to impose the ban this Holy Week to help wildlife recover from years of abuse.

"This is where [devotees] introduce [themselves] and make a wish that their names be included in the 'listahan ng buhay' (life's list)," Barrion said.

Others bear names that reflect the trials and tribulations of Jesus Christ, such as "Pinaggapusan," "Kinadapaan," "Yapak" and "Tubig ng Kinabuhayan."

Majestic panorama

As a pilgrim ascends the mountain, he has to pass by the waterfalls of "Kristalino" and "Suplinang Tubig," a small pond of still water called "Salaming

Bubog," and the "Kuweba ng Diyos Ama."

At the summit are "Una," "Ikalawa" and "Ikatlong Dunggaw," and more puestos are below the deep mountain crater, such as "Pitong Maria," "Tubig ng Dugo at Gatas" and "Tubig ng Apdo."

According to Barrion, modern-day pilgrims have added places and gave saintly identifications.

Most pilgrims spend a whole day of prayers in different puestos in a ritual called "pamumuesto."

A true believer must bring a canister for his own urine and waste as a gesture of respect to

the sacredness of prayer sites, Barrion says. "After praying, we will be leaving the spot without any piece of our dirt behind. Not even a morsel of rice."

Once the rituals are completed in the different "holy spots" in Kinabuhayan and Santa Lucia, devotees should climb the mountain to pray at the peak to cap the spiritual journey.

It usually takes several years to finish the "pamumuesto" ritual.

Sects

According to Barrion, Lontok did not establish his own religious sect, but his faith in the

spirituality of Banahaw has inspired followers to form their own groups to continue his teachings and spiritual practices.

Aside from Mystica, several religious communities have been established in Dolores, Tayabas and other parts in Laguna, with their own beliefs, spiritual theories and practices.

In 1936, Agapito Illustrisimo founded the religious sect Tatlong Persona Solo Dios and established a settlement with a church in Kinabuhayan.

"Since the time of my grandfather, whenever we were ordered by a 'message' from the

Supreme Being, we've always been collectively praying in different puestos in Banahaw," says Obet Cabalag, 45, one of the sect members.

Mar Fermin, a member of the Sagrada de Familia from Binangonan, says his group goes to Banahaw every year "to pray and say our thanks, ask for forgiveness and to heal our illnesses." Members pitch tents and stay on Banahaw until Palm Sunday.

In 1927, Anghel Lorenzo, or "Apo Anghel" to his followers, formed the Kapatiran ang Likas na Kaliwanagan (KALK) in Barangay Camaysa at the foot of Banahaw in Tayabas. He named

the site "Templo Rizal."

"KALK is a native faith comprising God the Father, nature and the love for the heroes of the country," says John Valdeavilla, a historian and researcher from Tayabas.

Other pilgrims aim to fulfill their vow to kiss Banahaw's hallowed ground and scale its peaks as a sacrificial act in exchange for blessings.

Supernatural

Believers in the supernatural also come to Banahaw in search of "amulets." They want to experience paranormal or mystical moments while in meditation or to recharge their "gifts" to heal the sick.


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BANAHAW: MOUNT OF RITUALS

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Urbanite nature trippers make a beeline to escape from the stressful ways of the metropolis.

"It indeed left a lasting impression. I would say a spiritual experience, where a kind of inner peace descended on me," said Noel Suministrado, 59, a pastor, in a recent online interview from Canada.

He first scaled Banahaw from the Dolores side in 1993, and remembered it as where he "wrestled life's questions and found answers as well."

In 2004, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sealed off the bosom of Banahaw to rehabilitate the mountain after years of abuse by pilgrims and trekkers. It declared the peaks off-limits to the public.

Before its closure, more than half a million visitors had climbed Banahaw every Holy Week, leaving behind tons of trash and destruction.

In 2009, Congress passed Republic Act No. 9847 declaring Banahaw and nearby Mount San Cristobal a protected landscape in Quezon and Laguna provinces.

The Protected Area Management Board (PAMB) has designated the villages of Kinabuhayan and Santa Lucia as a "multiple-use zone," where camping, praying and other religious activities are allowed in certain areas.

Last year, the number of visitors who came for their annual commune with nature and "spirits" reached more than 40,000.

The closure was supposed to remain in effect until Feb. 19, 2019. But the PAMB decided to extend the prohibition until such time that local governments and villages on Banahaw's slopes "are fully prepared, trained and ready."

Despite the prohibition, some managed to sneak in via new trails established by unscrupulous villagers and mountaineers, says Salud Pangan, park area superintendent. INQ



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Breathtaking beauty Residents of Sagada, Mountain Province are requesting visitors and tourists to help them conserve its natural beauty.



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SJ cites EnviroKid, EnviroTeen 2019

San Juan City Mayor Guia Gomez led the awarding of the city's Best EnviroKid, EnviroTeen, and EnviroTeacher Coordinator for the SY 2018-2019 on April 8.

Bagging the Best EnviroKid award was Grade 6 student Curby Francisco of N. Ibuna Elementary School while the Best Enviro Teacher Coordinator award went to Rowena Sanchez also of the same school.

Graduating high school student Kathleen Mae Marcos, herself a former EnviroKid at the Pinaglabanan Elementary School, won the Best EnviroTeen award.

Assisting Mayor Gomez during the awards rites were Barangay Addition Hills chairman Herbert Chua, councilors Ariel Atad, , Allen

Silvano, Boyet Aquino, and former councilor and now City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO) head Dante Santiago

The contest included unannounced home visitations. The awardees were chosen based on relevant school activities, examination results and final interview. The home visitations revealed how the winners were actually applying the proper solid waste management techniques taught to them by CENRO personnel throughout the year.

There were 10 EnviroTeen finalists who each received a medal and P2000 cash award from Mayor Gomez.

Winners Marcos, Francisco, and Sanchez each received P5,000 cash

award.

Mayor Guia Gomez and the city government launched EnviroKidz project in 2011 to help public elementary school students to increase their awareness of environmental protection and preservation. The program addresses issues like waste segregation, conservation, recycling and climate change.

Best EnviroKid for SY 2018-2019
Grade 6 student Curby Francisco of N. Ibuna Elementary School poses after receiving the award from Mayor Guia Gomez. With Gomez are Barangay Addition Hills chairman Herbert Chua, councilors Ariel Atad, Allen Silvano and Boyet Aquino and City Environment and Natural Resources Office head Dante Santiago.

