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Manila seeks vote for Tubbataha Reef

By Barbara Mae Dacanay, Bureau Chief
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Manila: Filipinos must vote online so that several tourist destinations in the Philippines can be included in the list of 'New Seven Wonders of Nature', a local paper said.

"We Filipinos love to vote. So why not make our votes count in something [that] can help to promote one of the tourist destinations in the Philippines?" Numero Lim, councillor of Manila told the Inquirer.

Lim's top choice is Tubbataha Reef in Palawan, southwestern Philippines, saying it qualifies to be one of the 'New Seven Wonders of Nature'.

Tubbataha has two atolls that lie on a line of extinct underwater volcanoes from northern Sultana Shoal to the southern San Miguel Islands, a perfect sanctuary for marine life in the middle of the Sulu Sea.

On August 11, 1988, the government proclaimed the Tubbataha Reef as a National Marine Park for its very high density of marine species.

In 1993, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) placed the Tubbataha Reef on the World Heritage list, for its protected sanctuaries.

Resolution passed

"Vote at www.new7wonders.com for the sake of the Philippines now," Lim said, adding that the Manila city council has already passed his resolution.

"Making the final cut is not only prestigious but [also] a tremendous boost for the country in terms of tourism gains, and winning has remarkable educational value for highlighting the beauty of nature and the diversity of our natural environment," explained Lim in a resolution that he filed before the city council.

Tubbataha recently ranked 30th on the list of 77 nominees. Another entry, the Chocolate Hills in Bohol, central Philippines ranked 51st. Lim said Filipinos could make the Tubbataha Reef reach the top post.

Long Bay, Phong Nha National Park and Fansipan mountain in Vietnam were top three in the online voting. Cox's Bazar Beach in Bangladesh, Sundarbans Forest and the Ganges River in Bangladesh and India, and Mount Everest in Nepal followed the list of more popular tourist destinations.

Voting will remain open until December 31. A short-list of 77 nominees will be trimmed to 21. The last round of voting is scheduled at the end of next year. Online winners will be declared in 2010.