

Earnest Snoops

PUERTO PRINCESA UNDERGROUND RIVER Officially, 1 of new 7 wonders of nature



By ERNEST GONZAGA

Filipinos are proud of the captivating splendor of the Puerto Princesa Underground River (PPUR). PPUR is located some 50 kilometers north of the City of Puerto Princesa in Palawan. It consists of a limestone mountain landscape, several large chambers containing significant formations of stalactites and stalagmites, and an 8.2-kilometer

navigable underground river that winds through a cave before flowing directly into the West Philippine Sea. The exit, a flawless lagoon is framed by ancient trees growing right into the water's edge. Primates, large monitor lizards and squirrels find their niche on the beach near the cave.

The PPUR is now officially one of the new seven wonders of nature after a year of being finalist in the internationally-launched "New 7 Wonders of Nature," and being included in the provisional list since January 2012.

The inauguration rite was held at One Esplanade, SM Business Park in Pasay City with President Benigno Aquino III, who hailed it as a collective success for Filipinos, Interior and Local Government Secretary Jesse Robledo, and the main man of it all, Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn leading the event. In attendance was the founder-president of the 7 Wonders of Nature, Bernard Weber and



Bernard Weber together with President Aquino and Mayor Hagedorn unveils a commemorative plaque recognizing Puerto Princesa



President Benigno Aquino III during the Official Inauguration Ceremonies of the Puerto Princesa Underground River



President Benigno Aquino III with Bernard Weber

some delegates who flew in all the way from Switzerland just for the occasion.

During the event, President Aquino unveiled a 10-kilo bronze commemorative plaque from the competition organizer. The bronze-cast panel measures 130cm x 7cm. and is made of liquid metal, combined with 21st century aesthetics crafted by an old foundry in Munich, Germany. A smaller plaque will be displayed at the entrance of PPUR. Founder Weber formally introduces the 7 Wonders of Nature and Seven Wonders Hymn. The event was likewise attended by representatives of six other countries that made it to the seven wonders of nature's list and members of the diplomatic community.

Also present to witness the event were Tourism Secretary Ramon Jimenez, Presidential Communications Operations Office Secretary Sonny Coloma, Jr., and Natural Resources Secretary Ramon Paje, who was designated by Malacanang as national campaign officer for the Philippines' bid to land PPUR in the winning circle.

The PPUR was the Philippine lone entry to the global search initiated by the Swiss-based organization, the New & Wonders of Nature Foundation. Aside from PPUR, the other six winners are Brazil's Amazon Rainforest, Vietnam's Halong Bay, Argentina's Iugazu Falls, South Korea's Jeju Island, Indonesia's Komodo Island, and South Africa's Table



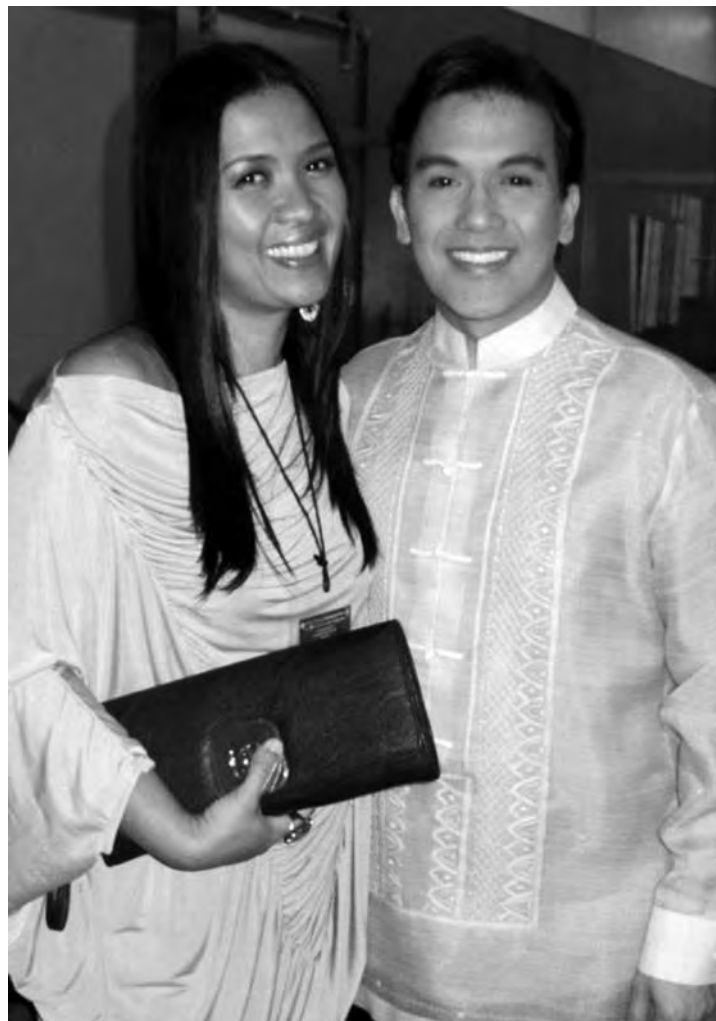
Ayen Munji, Frenchie Dy and Robert Sena



Former USEC of Tourism Cynthia Norton, Cecile Limjoco, Puerto Princesa Mayor Edward Hagedorn, Diana Limjoco, Dave Dewbre



Franco Laurel, Ayen Munji and Bayang Barrios



Gg Lualhati and Franco Laurel



President Aquino receives from the New 7 Wonders of Nature president Bernard Weber the official confirmation of PPUR's entry

Mountain.

The performers at the inauguration were carefully selected for their strong advocacies for the environment and nurturing Filipino pride: the shadow-play group El Gamma Penumbra, which presented an Earth Hour tribute; Joey Ayala; Noel Cabangon; sand artist Dennis Abigan; and HipHop Pinoy. World-class tenor Robert Sena sang the Philippine National Anthem. Singers Franco Laurel, Frenchie Dy, Ayen Munji, Bayang Barrios, KC Concepcion and Sarah Geronimo performed, too.

Deal or No Deal host Luis Manzano, podcast phenomenon and socialite Grace Lee, and Bb. Pilipinas Universe 2010 Venus Raj hosted the grandiose event.

Weekenders were treated to a free concert and the sight of hot air balloons against the backdrop of the Manila Bay sunset. The event was capped by a fantastic display of fireworks and dinner. It was indeed a memorable night to celebrate the Philippines' presence on the world map. (Photos by Marvin Uy. For comments and suggestions email viceernest@yahoo.com)



Randy & Cecile Limjoco, Diana Limjoco, Dave Dewbre and Avic Alcantara