

Puerto's "Underground River" no. 1 in new7wonder search

PUERTO PRINCESA CITY, Sept. 24 (PNA) -- The Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP), which houses the world's longest navigable water, is currently number one among more than 300 nominees to become one of the "New Seven Wonders of Nature" in the ongoing worldwide search.

Mayor Edward Hagedorn attributed to the present ranking of PPSRNP, famously known as "Underground River" in sitio Sabang, barangay Cabayugan, located some 81 kilometers north from city, to his continuous campaign to make the park known among domestic and foreign tourists.

Recently, Hagedorn launched the "U R a Wonder of Nature" (URAWN), the promotional program of the city government that provides free tours to the park.

The program aims to make Puerto Princesa and Palawan residents not strangers in their own city, and to invite more votes to the PPSRNP as a nominee in the search.

Hagedorn said he is not surprised with the current ranking of the park, citing it is regularly visited by an average of 400 domestic and international tourists a day.

"Imagine 400 people visited the park everyday and voted for the park," he said.

"I am thankful to all Filipinos in the country and abroad who continue rally their support and vote to the Underground River," the official said, as he also appealed to Filipinos worldwide to support the city government's efforts to include the park in the group of 21 finalists before the internet voting closes Dec. 31, 2008.

In the live ranking as of today, Palawan's Tubbataha Reef, which has been designated by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site is on the fourth spot.

Chocolate Hills in Bohol and Mayon Volcano currently rank No. 5 and 11, respectively.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has earlier urged the public to vote for the Philippines' four entries.

The "Seven Wonders of Nature" search is organized by the non-profit New Seven Wonders Foundation which also undertook the "New Seven Wonders of the World" search.

Voters have until December 31, 2008 to cast their votes from the among 77 entries through www.new7wonders.com

The top 21 sites will be announced in January 2009 and from which the top seven wonders of nature will be declared in 2010. (PNA)