

## DENR deploys mission team to save Boracay

By LOUISE MAUREEN SIMEON and RHODINA VILLANUEVA

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has deployed a mission team to Boracay to address the environmental issues hounding the resort island.

Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said the mission team is composed of 50 personnel from six regional offices of the DENR. The island will be divided into six areas and each of the six regional offices will be assigned an area to work on.

"The mission of the team is to rehabilitate and restore Boracay in becoming a paradise again. We are given six months by the President," he said. "We will be using all DENR assets and personnel to do this job. Those who will be deployed will be on a rotation basis.

"Expect that the DENR will be there, about 50 personnel from all over the regions and from the central office. We will start right now so our presence is immediately felt in Boracay," he added.

President Duterte has

warned that he will "close" the popular beach island, which he called a "cesspool."

Only 50 to 60 percent of all establishments in Boracay are compliant with the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, while the rest direct their pipes to the canals, which drain to the sea.

The DENR has issued notices of violation to 51 out of 300 business establishments found to have violated some conditions in their environmental compliance certificates (ECCs), including connection to the sewage treatment plant

or installation of their own wastewater treatment facilities.

The DENR earlier gave commercial establishments in Boracay two months to shape up or face closure of operations.

Cimatu said the DENR will also go after resort owners who constructed buildings within areas classified as forestlands which are no-build zones in violation of the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines.

The DENR has issued a directive that no new ECCs will be issued in Boracay to prevent

the construction of new buildings in the area.

Meanwhile, the local government of Malay, Aklan frowned on television networks' use of photos showing a "very dirty Boracay," saying these do not portray the current state of the island.

"We do accept the constructive criticisms of our President and use it as the fundamental aspect of our improvements," the local government said in statement yesterday.

"However, the online news scoops of GMA and ABS-CBN attached a photo of the sea-

sonal algal bloom in Boracay Island in order to increase the magnitude of their articles and hook people into it, thinking that the waters of Boracay Island are entirely full of algae.

"These news institutions gain profit from their news that ultimately degrades the image of Boracay Island, which is highly dependent on the tourism industry... The media is sensationalizing the algae phenomenon which ultimately hurts the industry of Boracay," it added.

- With Jennifer Rendon

\* Dept. of Environment and  
Natural Resources (DENR)

\* environment