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## **MNTC opens doors to tourism in the North**

Tourism in areas north of Manila received a much needed shot in the arm with the launching of the “Rediscover the North” tourism promotions campaign and the organization of local convention and visitors bureaus (CVBs) spearheaded by the Manila North Tollways Corporation (MNTC).

“It is only natural that MNTC, operator of the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), the gateway to the north, should play a key role in boosting tourism in northern Philippines,” Jose de Jesus, MNTC president and CEO said.

A private sector-led effort, “Rediscover the North” combines both tourism promotions and organizational network formation through the establishment of the CBVs and aligning their objectives and operations under an umbrella organization called the North Philippines Visitors’ Bureau (NPVB).

Expected to be established within the year are CBVs for the areas of Clark, Subic, Pangasinan, Baguio and Cagayan Valley.

The local CVBs are composed of operators or owners of tourism sites and facilities, such as hotels and resorts and other tourism-related establishments from the private sector, who will be assisted by the Department of Tourism and its agencies such as the Philippine Convention and Visitors Corporation (PCVC).

To help boost the “Rediscover the North” campaign, the CVBs will not only identify tourism programs for their local areas but will exert extra effort to provide tourist information, assistance, tips and generally make local tourist destinations and events more attractive, under the orchestration of the NPVB.

The first CVB to be formally accredited with the NPVB was the Greater Subic Bay Tourism Bureau (GSTB). Its formal recognition was announced at the first assembly of the NPVB at Manila Pavillion Hotel where the organization’s functions and programs were presented and its articles of incorporation signed.

Organizers of the CVBs said that the Pinatubo eruption in 1991 and the big earthquake the year before have slowed down the tourism industry in the North and now is the best time to “bring back the glory of tourism in North Philippines.”

De Jesus observed, however, that even Mt. Pinatubo itself has become a tourist site, a popular trekking destination.

“Tourism is the world’s window to a region’s cultural wealth, natural beauty and economic potential,” de Jesus said.

He also pointed out that local products, delicacies, cuisine from northern Philippines are as interesting as ever, and there are year-round activities and events. “So what is badly needed now is a strong and concerted marketing and promotions initiative,” de Jesus said.

“The rehabilitation of the northern gateway with the construction of the world-class NLEX has countered the devastation by Pinatubo,” de Jesus also said.

“The MNTC, through NLEX as the central northern artery for the movement of people, products and investments, is a strong proponent of tourism revitalization,” he concluded.

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