

HEADLINES

Coliform levels down but swimming still banned in Manila Bay

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SCENIC VIEW, TOXIC WATERS Aside from putting up this sign, authorities will soon fence off a portion of Manila Bay to further deter bathers who might think it's already safe to go for a swim after a major cleanup drive recently cleared the coast of trash. —RICHARD A. REYES

The government's crackdown on establishments polluting Manila Bay has already yielded positive results, with fecal coliform levels dropping in some areas, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said on Wednesday.

Despite the improvement, however, the DENR discouraged people from going for a swim, warning that the bay's waters were still unsafe.

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Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu said in a press briefing that the cleanup activities, which officially began around two weeks ago, had only addressed surface trash.

“We have not yet gotten rid of pollutants such as those from untreated wastewater being discharged into the bay, so we strongly advise the public, especially children, to refrain from swimming in the bay for now,” he told reporters.

On Tuesday morning, an 11-year-old girl nearly drowned after she went for a swim with her friends.

The victim was rushed to the Ospital ng Maynila where she remains confined at the intensive care unit of the pediatrics ward.

According to Rose, the girl's older sister, the victim left their house in Malate before 8 a.m.

She said they had yet to find out what happened to her sister.

“Her friends just went to our house to inform our mother that my sister nearly drowned,” Rose told the Inquirer.

According to Dr. Jilliane Pardo of the hospital's pediatrics ward, if the girl's condition continues to improve, they would remove the tube sucking water out of her lungs either on Wednesday night or Thursday morning.

BAY WATCHERS Policemen warn promenaders about the dangers of swimming in Manila Bay after a girl nearly drowned on Tuesday. —Richard A. Reyes

Fence eyed to deter bathers

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Still in line with the massive rehabilitation project, Cimatu said that the DENR would fence off a portion of the shoreline in the next few days — from the US Embassy to Manila Yacht Club — to make way for the installation of a diversion drainage.

The proposed 4-foot-high fence, Cimatu added, was also expected to deter swimmers. While bathing was prohibited, there was no ban on viewing the bay's famous sunset, he said. —*With a report from Aie Balagtas See*

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