

# Mud-splattered Filipinos pray to saint for blessing and woes

By Bullit Marquez  
The Associated Press

**B**IBICLAT, The Philippines — Hundreds of Filipino villagers donning capes of banana leaves covered themselves in mud in a ritual to thank their patron saint, John the Baptist, who they believe saved residents from killings by Japanese invaders in World War II.

The *Taong Putik* or “mud people” festival in Bibiclat village in northern Nueva Ecija province dates back to the brutal Japanese occupation of the Philippines, according to villagers.

Japanese troops gathered many of the male villagers in a Bibiclat church courtyard for execution by firing squad. But after women and children prayed to Saint John to spare them, a sudden downpour saved the men, villagers say. The residents rolled in the mud in jubilation and have carried on the thanksgiving tradition ever since.

“They’re doing it yearly as a vow,” said Bibiclat’s parish priest, the Rev. Elmer Villamayor. “They’re thanking St. John the Baptist for the many blessings they receive from god.”

A mud-splattered participant said he prayed for sick relatives and another thanked god for curing him of an ailment that has crippled him for years.

During the festival, men, women, and children — some covered with capes from head to foot and with eyes peering from a cake of mud — collect candles from villagers along Bibiclat’s main street on their way to St. John the Baptist’s church to hear mass. They light the candles and make wishes.



**TAONG PUTIK.** Villagers — donning capes mostly of dried banana leaves and covered in mud — attend a mass during an annual ritual to venerate their patron saint, John the Baptist, at Bibiclat, Aliaga township, Nueva Ecija province in the northern Philippines. The Taong Putik or “mud people” festival in Bibiclat village dates back to the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in the 1940s. (AP Photo/Bullit Marquez)

An impoverished country of more than 100 million people, the Philippines is Asia’s largest Roman Catholic nation. The annual spectacle, which draws tourists and

journalists, reflects a unique brand of Catholicism in the Philippines, which merges church traditions with superstitions.

## Malaysian woman dies after airbag ruptures in accident

**KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)** — A Malaysian woman has died after the airbag in her Honda City ruptured in a minor collision, according to a safety official.

The incident came days after Honda Malaysia announced an additional recall of more than 145,000 vehicles to replace defective front-passenger airbag inflators.

Fire and rescue official

Rosdi Hainan said the steering-wheel airbag ruptured when he arrived at the site of the accident, and the victim was bleeding from her chest.

Rosdi said the woman died a short time later.

Honda Motor Co. in Tokyo said it was still checking on the accident and had no immediate comment.

There has been a massive recall involving millions of vehicles around

the world because of faulty inflator and propellant devices that may deploy improperly in an accident, shooting out metal fragments that can injure or kill.

Worldwide, 11 known deaths and more than 100 injuries have been blamed on exploding Takata-made airbag inflators

In November last year, a 43-year-old pregnant Malaysian housewife was killed after a collision activated the airbag in her Honda. Honda also confirmed two other deaths that are linked to airbag issues in April and May this year.

## Cambodia says tests confirm Angkor boat 8 centuries old

**PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP)** — An official at the agency overseeing Cambodia’s famous Angkor Wat temple complex says tests have confirmed that a wooden boat found buried in a dry riverbed is from the early 13th century.

Apsara Authority spokesman Long Kosal said the tests by a research institute in New Zealand confirmed the age of the

42-foot-long boat, which was carved from a single tree trunk. He said it is the oldest boat ever found in Cambodia.

A farmer discovered the boat in April while digging mud from the riverbed, several miles from the temple complex. The boat was sunk in a pond in front of the temple to keep it preserved pending restoration.

## Indonesia’s parliament passes new tax amnesty bill

**JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)** — Indonesia’s parliament has passed a tax amnesty bill aimed at drawing billions of funds from wealthy Indonesians abroad as well as tax evaders at home.

It would impose rates from two percent to 10 percent on tax evaders, compared to much higher standard rates.

Enterprises with up to 10 billion rupiah (\$757,700) in assets would enjoy a 0.5 percent rate, while a two percent rate

applies to enterprises with bigger assets.

Those with wealth abroad can repatriate from July to September and receive a two percent rate, while three percent applies to those who return through December and five percent for those returning by March 31, 2017.


Those declaring assets abroad without repatriating to Indonesia will be imposed four percent, six percent, and 10 percent each for the same deadlines.



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