

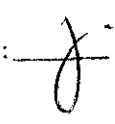
16TH CONGRESS OF THE REPUBLIC)
OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



Senate
Office of the Secretary

15 SEP -7 P5:04

SENATE
Senate Bill No. 2938

RECEIVED BY: 

Introduced by SENATOR SONNY ANGARA

AN ACT
DECLARING PAG-ASA ISLAND CLUSTER IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF KALAYAAN,
PROVINCE OF PALAWAN AS AN ECOTOURISM DESTINATION AND PROTECTED
AREA, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to declare the Pag-asa island and its adjoining islands of Parola, Kota and Panata, collectively referred to as the Pag-asa Island Cluster in the Municipality of Kalayaan, in the province of Palawan which sit well within the territory of the Republic of the Philippines, as a special ecological tourism zone to promote and develop the area as a tourist destination for domestic and international tourists while protecting its natural resources and diverse flora and fauna species. In addition, it also seeks to declare the islands of Parola, Kota and Panata as protected area under the National Integrated Protected Areas System (NIPAS).

The Pag-asa island, located 480 kilometers off southwestern Palawan, is the largest that is effectively occupied by the Philippines, and the second largest island in the whole of Kalayaan Island Group (Spratlys) in the West Philippine Sea. It is the only Philippine-occupied island in the Spratlys that is inhabited by civilians. With its impeccable beauty, the island is an ideal tourist destination. However, Kalayaan Mayor Eugenio Bito-onon Jr., who has been leading the far-flung island for six years, still dreams to turn the Pag-asa Island Cluster to a tourist destination and fisheries zone.¹

The rich biodiversity and truly Filipino heritage of the island truly reflects the beauty of a paradise that our country should be proud of.

This proposed measure seeks to provide the necessary support to such efforts of the municipal government of Kalayaan by declaring it an ecological tourism area. By this, there shall be created the Pag-asa Island Ecotourism Cluster Governing Board which shall be composed of the Governor of Palawan as Chairperson, the Congressional Representative of the First District of Palawan as Co-Chairperson, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Regional Executive Director for Region IV-B as Vice Chairperson, the Department of Tourism (DOT) Regional Director for Region IV-B as Co-Vice Chairperson, the Mayor of the Municipality of Kalayaan, the Barangay Chairperson of Pag-asa, the commander of the AFP Western Command, a member of a nongovernment organization whose advocacy is environmental preservation, a member of the academe, a representative of the business sector, and a representative of the private sector. This Board shall rationalize

¹ <http://globalnation.inquirer.net/119101/pag-asa-island-come-hell-or-high-water-this-is-ours>

all efforts pertaining to environmental protection and making the tourism industry a major source of livelihood and an avenue for the generation of employment.

This proposed measure also mandates the Pag-asa Island Ecotourism Cluster Governing Board in coordination with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) to prepare an eco-tourism master plan to ensure the promotion of tourism, the generation of employment and most importantly, the protection and preservation of its environment and ecosystem.


In view of the foregoing, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly requested.



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*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representative of the Philippines in
Congress assembled:*

1 SECTION 1. **Declaration of Policy.** – It is hereby declared the policy of the
2 State to promote a sustainable ecotourism industry to attract local and foreign tourists to
3 secure the country's share in the world tourism market and to make it an avenue for
4 generation of employment while ensuring the environmental protection and preservation
5 of the area.

6
7 SECTION 2. **The Pag-asa Island Ecotourism Cluster and Protected Area.** –
8 The Pag-asa island and its adjoining islands of Parola, Kota and Panata are hereby
9 declared an ecotourism destination and the islands of Parola, Kota and Panata are
10 hereby declared as protected areas under the National Integrated Protected Areas
11 System (NIPAS). The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) shall
12 within ninety (90) days after the approval of this Act, make inventory of the existing flora
13 and fauna in Pag-asa Island Cluster that shall serve as the basis for the creation of the
14 master plan as provided in this Act.

15
16 For the purpose of this Act, ecotourism shall refer to a form of sustainable
17 tourism within a natural and cultural heritage area where community participation,
18 protection and management of natural resources, culture and indigenous knowledge
19 and practices, environmental education and ethics as well as economic benefits are
20 fostered and pursued for the enrichment of host communities and satisfaction of visitors.

21
22 SECTION 3. **Pag-asa Island Ecotourism Cluster Governing Board.** – For the
23 purpose of Section 2 of this Act, an ecotourism governing board, to be known as the
24 Pag-asa Island Ecotourism Cluster Governing Board, is hereby created. The Board
25 shall be composed of the following:

- 26
27 (a) Governor of Palawan as Chairperson;
28 (b) Congressional Representative of the First District of Palawan as Co-Chairperson;
29 (c) DENR Regional Executive Director for Region IV-B as Vice Chairperson;
30 (d) Department of Tourism (DOT) Regional Director for Region IV-B as Co-Vice
31 Chairperson;
32 (e) Mayor of the Municipality of Kalayaan;
33 (f) Barangay Chairperson of Pag-asa Island;
34 (g) Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Western Command Commander;
35 (h) One (1) member of a nongovernment organization whose advocacy is
36 environmental preservation;
37 (i) One (1) member of the academe;

- 1 (j) One (1) representative of the business sector; and
2 (k) One (1) representative of the private sector.
3

4 The governing board shall prepare the rules and regulations necessary for the full
5 implementation by the concerned local government unit of the provisions of this Act and
6 shall, as the need arises, amend, modify or revise such rules and regulations to meet
7 the needs of changing times.
8

9 **SECTION 4. Pag-asa Island Cluster Ecotourism Master Plan.** – The Pag-asa
10 Island Ecotourism Cluster Governing Board, in coordination with the Tourism
11 Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), shall within one hundred twenty
12 (120) days from approval of this Act, prepare, develop and implement the Ecotourism
13 Master Plan to be approved by the President of the Republic of the Philippines.
14

15 **SECTION 5. Appropriation.** – The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the
16 Department's program the implementation of this Act, and the amount necessary to
17 carry out the provisions of this Act shall be taken from the current appropriation of the
18 Department and shall be included in the General Appropriations Act of the year
19 following its enactment into law and thereafter.
20

21 **SECTION 6. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, rules, regulations, executive orders,
22 presidential decrees or any other issuance contrary to or inconsistent with any of the
23 provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or modified accordingly.
24

25 **SECTION 7. Separability Clause.** – If any provision or part of this Act shall be
26 declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions which are not affected shall remain
27 in full force and effect.
28

29 **SECTION 8. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
30 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,