

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 4927



Introduced by Rep. Estrellita "Ging" B. Suansing

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Saint John the Baptist is the patron saint of Brgy. Bibiclat, Aliaga, Nueva Ecija. The devotion to St. John the Baptist in Bibiclat traces its roots during the Japanese occupation in World War II. It is said that when Japanese soldiers were to execute all the men in the barangay in retaliation for the death of their compatriots, the villagers prayed hard for their loved ones to be saved. When the men were to be executed, it rained so hard that the captives had to be herded into the church, where later, some of the Japanese soldiers were convinced that the rain was a sign of disapproval from heaven. The residents attributed this miracle to St. John the Baptist and have vowed to pay homage to the saint since then.

On the saint's feast day, celebrated every 24 of June, Bibiclat welcomes thousands of tourists, pilgrims, and devotees. These people participate in the unique religious event called *Pagsa-San Juan*, or more popularly known as the Taong Putik Festival. This event is covered by national news and wire media every year.

On August 29, 2013, Saint John the Baptist Church was declared a diocesan shrine; the declaration rite was led by Cabanatuan City Bishop Sofronio Bancud, together with parish priest Rev. Fr. Carlos Padilla and other members of the clergy.

Being declared a diocesan church means that Bibiclat's patron saint, St. John the Baptist, is a miraculous patron. With this declaration, it is estimated that more pilgrims and tourists will visit Bibiclat, Aliaga not only during the feast of St. John the Baptist and religious occasions, but also the whole year round.

This bill, therefore, aims to declare the Diocesan Shrine of St. John the Baptist Church (Taong Putik Dambana ni San Juan Bautista) in Brgy. Bibiclat, Municipality of Aliaga, Province of Nueva Ecija as a pilgrimage site and tourist destination mandating the Department of Tourism and its attached agencies, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways, and in consultation with the local government units of Aliaga, to come up with a comprehensive development plan for the improvement of the Taong Putik Dambana ni San Juan Bautista, all areas attached to it, and all roads leading to and from it.

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


ESTRELLITA "GING" B. SUANSING
1st District, Nueva Ecija

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AN ACT

DECLARING THE DIOCESAN SHRINE OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH (TAONG PUTIK DAMBANA NI SAN JUAN BAUTISTA) IN BARANGAY BIBICLAT, MUNICIPALITY OF ALIAGA, PROVINCE OF NUEVA ECIJA AS A PILGRIMAGE SITE AND TOURIST DESTINATION, PROVIDING FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

SECTION 1. The Diocesan Shrine of St. John the Baptist Church (Taong Putik Dambana ni San Juan Bautista) is hereby declared a pilgrimage site and a tourist destination. As such, it shall be accorded with priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and other concerned agencies subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of pilgrimage sites and tourist destinations.

SEC. 2. The DOT, in coordination with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and other concerned agencies of the government shall, immediately after approval of this Act, prepare a development plan involving the construction, installation, and maintenance of such appropriate facilities and infrastructure that shall improve the overall feature of the area thereby ensuring the accessibility and security of the pilgrims and tourists; *Provided,* That the said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the historical significance of the area.

SEC. 3. The DOT and its attached agencies shall take immediate steps in implementing the tourism development plan that will suit the needs of the

Diocesan Shrine of St. John the Baptist Church (Taong Putik Dambana ni San Juan Bautista) and shall incorporate the same in its overall development plans and programs for national implementation.

SEC. 4. The DOT, in consultation with the local government unit of Aliaga, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

SEC. 5. The Secretary of the DOT shall include in the Department's program the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be charged against the internally generated funds of the Philippine Tourism Authority and/or the appropriations in the Annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

Approved,