NINETEENTH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
Third Regular Session)



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Introduced by Representative Rufus B. Rodriguez

House Bill No. 10506

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to enhance the physical and digital interconnectivity and integration of the Philippine archipelago by mandating the immediate planning and construction of two long-span physical and digital interconnectivity projects: one connecting Sorsogon and Samar provinces, and the other connecting Leyte and Surigao provinces. The projects may be in a founded in a form of bridge, tunnel, or any engineering solution that would maximize socio-economic benefits for the country.

These projects will facilitate efficient transportation, logistics, ICT, power, and water distribution systems, thereby increasing the overall competitiveness and economic growth of the country. The proposed infrastructure projects are crucial for reducing travel time and costs, improving accessibility and mobility, increasing digital connectivity, and fostering economic development across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

By implementing these projects, the Philippine government aims to create a more integrated and competitive national economy, which will benefit all regions and promote sustainable development.

To ensure the success of these projects, the full collaboration of the Local Government Units (LGUs) of the provinces involved is essential. The LGUs will play a critical role in supporting and facilitating the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the projects, as well as engaging with local communities to address any concerns and maximize the benefits.

Furthermore, all government agencies are mandated to provide the necessary support and resources to facilitate the earliest planning and implementation of the projects. This includes the issuance of permits, right-of-way acquisitions, consultations with indigenous peoples, and the implementation of environmental protection safeguards. By working together, these agencies can ensure the timely and successful completion of the two projects, which are vital for the nation's development.

An additional measure to ensure the efficient and timely implementation of these projects is the creation of the Physical Backbone Interconnectivity Authority (PBIA). The PBIA, governed by an inter-agency board, will concentrate on planning, fund sourcing, and implementing these projects, thereby ensuring that all necessary steps are taken promptly and effectively.

Moreover, exploring the possibility of pursuing the projects through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) modality, either in whole or in part, will allow for efficient and effective allocation of resources, leveraging private sector expertise and investment to expedite project completion.

In view of the foregoing, immediate approval of this measure is earnestly requested.

RUFUS B. RODRIGUEZ

NINETEENTH CONGRESS)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
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AN ACT
MANDATING THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS (DPWH), DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, TO IMMEDIATELY PLAN AND IMPLEMENT THE CONSTRUCTION OF TWO LONG-SPAN PHYSICAL INTERCONNECTIVITY PROJECTS CONNECTING SORSOGON AND SAMAR PROVINCES, AND LEYTE AND SURIGAO PROVINCES TO ENHANCE CONNECTIVITY IN TRANSPORTATION, LOGISTICS, ICT, POWER, AND WATER, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. Short Title. — This Act shall be known as the "Bagong Pilipinas Highway Act".

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is the policy of the State to promote and enhance the interconnectivity and integration of the Philippine archipelago through the development of infrastructure that facilitates efficient transportation, logistics, information and communication technology, power, and water distribution systems. This policy aims to increase the overall competitiveness and economic growth of the Philippines by improving the connectivity between Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

SECTION 3. Objectives. — The objectives of this Act are: a) To mandate the immediate planning and implementation of two long-span interconnectivity projects: one connecting the provinces of Sorsogon and Samar, and the other connecting the provinces of Leyte and Surigao. b) To enhance the transportation and logistics networks between Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. c) To improve the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure across the connected regions. d) To ensure the efficient distribution of power and water resources between the connected regions. e) To boost economic growth and competitiveness by reducing travel time and costs, and improving accessibility and mobility.

SECTION 4. Mandate and Responsibilities. —

a) The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) shall be responsible for the planning, design, and construction of the long-span physical interconnectivity projects and explore the best engineering solutions (e.g. bridge, floating tunnel) that will maximize overall interconnectivity objectives and impact;
b) The Department of Transportation (DOTr) shall coordinate with the DPWH to ensure the integration all possible transportation modes (e.g. land, rail) that can be integrated in the projects and provide a seamless multi-modal interconnection related to the two projects, contributing to the enhancement of the entire national transportation network;

c) The Department of Information and Communication Technology (DICT) shall ensure the inclusion of ICT infrastructure in the projects, facilitating enhanced digital connectivity and communication;

d.) The Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) shall collaborate with the DPWH to incorporate power and water distribution systems into the projects.

e.) The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and its attached agency, the Construction Industry Authority of the Philippines (CIAP) shall support the trade, logistics, and construction development planning aspects of the two projects. They shall harness the expertise and experience of the private sector to obtain the best business and engineering solutions for the projects.

SECTION 5. Creation of the Bagong Pilipinas Highway Authority. —

a) There is hereby created a Bagong Pilipinas Highway Authority (BPHA) to oversee the planning, fund sourcing, and implementation of the two long-span interconnectivity projects.

b) The BPHA shall be governed by an inter-agency board composed of representatives from the DPWH, DOTr, DICT, DOE, NWRB, DTI, and the Department of Finance (DOF).

c) The PBIA shall have the authority to:

1. Formulate and implement a comprehensive plan for the two projects.
2. Source and manage funds from domestic and international sources.
3. Oversee the coordination and collaboration among all involved agencies and LGUs.
4. Ensure compliance with all legal, environmental, and social safeguards.
5. Engage with stakeholders, including indigenous peoples and local communities, to address concerns and maximize benefits.

SECTION 6. Collaboration with Local Government Units. —

a) The Local Government Units (LGUs) of the provinces of Sorsogon, Samar, Leyte, and Surigao shall fully collaborate with the national government to support and facilitate the success of the two long-span interconnectivity projects.

b) The LGUs shall assist in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the projects, including the provision of necessary permits, right-of-way acquisitions, and local resources.

c) The LGUs shall also engage with local communities to ensure their participation and address any concerns related to the projects, ensuring that the benefits are maximized and any adverse impacts are mitigated.

SECTION 7. Support from All Relevant Government Agencies. —

a) All government agencies are mandated to support the requirements and provide the necessary resources to facilitate the earliest planning and implementation of the two interconnectivity productivity projects.

b) This support shall include, but not be limited to, the issuance of permits, right-of-way acquisitions, consultations with indigenous peoples, and the implementation of environmental protection safeguards.

c) Relevant agencies shall work in coordination with the DPWH, DOTr, DICT, DTI, and LGUs to ensure compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements, and to expedite the processes necessary for the timely completion of the projects.

SECTION 8. Funding. —

The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of the year following its enactment and thereafter. The DPWH, DOTr, and DICT are also authorized to seek and receive grants, donations, and other forms of financial assistance from both domestic and international sources.

Additionally, the possibility of pursuing the projects through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) modality, either in whole or in part, shall be explored to ensure the efficient and effective allocation of resources.

SECTION 9. Implementing Rules and Regulations. — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the DPWH, in coordination with the DOTr, DICT, DOE, NWRB, DTI, and other relevant government agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 10. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 11. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, or parts thereof inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 12. Effectivity. — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,