

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

20th CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 1131



Introduced by REP. ALEXANDER T. PIMENTEL

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Pag-asa Island in the West Philippine Sea is a 37.2-hectare landmass that lies some 480 kilometers northwest of Puerto Princesa City.

Surrounded by shallow coral ranges, Pag-asa has been occupied by the Philippines since 1970.

Pag-asa is the largest landform of the Kalayaan Island Group, which also includes the islets of Likas, Parola, Lawak, Kota, Patag and Panata, and Balagtas Reef, Ayungin Shoal and Rizal Shoal.

The Kalayaan Island Group is at the northeastern section of the disputed Spratly Archipelago.

On June 11, 1978, then President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. issued Presidential Decree No. 1596, which created the Municipality of Kalayaan over the Kalayaan Island Group under the Province of Palawan.

The Kalayaan municipal government is based in Pag-asa, which is also the town's lone barangay.

A sixth-class municipality, Kalayaan is the least populated town in the Philippines, with only 193 residents who all live on Pag-asa, according to the 2020 census.

This bill seeks to declare Pag-asa Island a recreational fishing tourism site for the purpose of:

- Developing the island into a thriving community by attracting both foreign and local tourists, particularly visitors inclined to engage in recreational fishing, including catch-and-release fishing;

- Providing the Municipality of Kalayaan, which currently has little to no income, a new recurring revenue stream from tourism-related activities; and
- Affording small fisherfolk supplemental sources of income from tourism-related activities, such as leasing their boats and services to tourists, including visitors that may wish to fish in and around the island for leisure, exercise or competition.

The ultimate purpose of this bill is to pave the way for the development of Pag-asa, considering that other countries claiming all or parts of the Spratly Archipelago are also increasing their presence on the islands, reefs and shoals that they occupy there.

The approval of this Bill is earnestly sought.


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AN ACT
DECLARING THE PAG-ASA ISLAND IN THE WEST PHILIPPINE SEA
A RECREATIONAL FISHING TOURISM SITE, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR

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

SEC. 1. The Pag-asa Island located in Barangay Pag-asa, Municipality of Kalayaan, Province of Palawan, is hereby declared a recreational fishing tourism site. As such, the island's development shall be prioritized and supported by the Department of Tourism (DOT), subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of tourism sites.

Sec. 2. Within one (1) year after the approval of this Act, the municipal government of Kalayaan and the provincial government of Palawan shall, in coordination with the DOT, Department of Environment and Natural Resources and concerned agencies of the government, prepare a tourism development plan that shall include the construction, installation and maintenance of such appropriate infrastructure and facilities to enhance tourism in the area: Provided, That said development plan shall ensure the preservation and conservation of the natural beauty and resources of the area: Provided further, That the implementation of the tourism development plan shall be included in the budget of the DOT.

Sec. 3. The DOT shall assist the municipal government of Kalayaan and the provincial government of Palawan in the implementation of the tourism development plan by providing technical assistance in tourism capacity building. It shall also include the Pag-asa Island in tourism promotion programs.

Sec. 4. The funding for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual budget of the DOT.

Sec. 5. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the municipal government of Kalayaan and the provincial government of Palawan shall, in consultation with the DOT and concerned agencies of the government, promulgate rules and regulations to implement this Act.

Sec. 6. If any provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 7. All laws, rules, regulations, presidential decrees, and other issuances inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act are hereby deemed repealed or amended accordingly.

Sec. 8. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,