

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session  
981

House Bill No. \_\_\_\_\_

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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REGISTRATION UNIT BILLS AND INDEX SERVICE

Introduced by Rep. LAWRENCE LEMUEL H. FORTUN

#### EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution provides, to wit:

“xxx

*Section 15. xxx. The State shall conserve, promote and popularize the nation’s historical and cultural heritage and resources, as well as artistic creations.*

*Section 16. All the country’s artistic and historic wealth constitutes the cultural treasures of the nation and shall be under the protection of the State which may regulate its disposition. xxx.”*

This bill is consistent with and in pursuance of the foregoing provisions of our Constitution.

Butuan City has a vibrant history and rich cultural heritage. Before its colonization, it was called the Kingdom of Butuan and was known for its metallurgic industry and sophisticated naval technology. Located in the northeastern part of the Agusan Valley and across the Agusan River, Butuan was a center of economic and cultural activities since the 4<sup>th</sup> Century as evidenced by artifacts from that period found in the area. Ancient historical accounts, including those of the Chinese anal Song Shih, indicate that Butuan City had been engaged in trade relations not only with Vietnam, but also with China as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> Century.

Proof to its advanced maritime technology is the discovery of the Balangay Boat, otherwise known as the Butuan Boat. The boat is the first wooden watercraft excavated in Southeast Asia and is found only in Butuan where a flotilla of such ancient boats exists. The extant boats found in the excavation sites in Butuan date back to 320 A.D., 990 A.D. and 1250 A.D. The utilization of these boats to maintain trade relations with neighboring islands and neighboring empires prove robust trade and commercial activities in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century in the area. Further, numerous artifacts have been excavated by archeologists such as gold jewelry, death masks, weighing scales and porcelains that lead to the conclusion that Butuan was then a center of trade and commerce.

During the colonial period, historical accounts show that on March 31, 1521, an Easter Sunday, Ferdinand Magellan ordered the celebration of a mass in Butuan. In remembrance of this important historical Christian event that is claimed to be the first in the country, the Bood Promontory, an eco-park located at the very site of the mass, was built. Also related to the rich cultural history of Butuan is the Banza Church Ruins. The ruins consist of a part of bell tower of a church built by Spanish friars in 1625 and said to be the first Christian church in Mindanao.

Even far older than the foregoing are the Bequibel and Bitor shell middens in Brgy. Bonbon of Butuan City that prove human habitation and civilization in Butuan as early as the Neolithic Age or about 7,000 years ago. Artifacts recovered at the shell middens demonstrate past human presence, their culture and activities in the area.

Butuan City's cultural heritage need to be preserved and made known to our people and peoples of the world. Butuan City is a center of learning and discovery for its rich heritage and historical past. It is hoped that with the passage of this bill, the Department of Tourism and other appropriate agencies can implement institutionalized and sustained programs for the introduction of the necessary facilities, infrastructure, information and promotion mechanisms for the preservation and promotion of Butuan's rich heritage. The National Historical Institute and the National Museum will likewise continue with its mandate to preserve, conserve and protect the archeological findings and artifacts in the area in accordance with the provisions of RA 10066 otherwise known as the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009.

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



**LAWRENCE LEMUEL H. FORTUN**  
1st District of Agusan del Norte

**SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS**

First Regular Session

House Bill No. **981**

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Introduced by **Rep. LAWRENCE LEMUEL H. FORTUN**

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**AN ACT**

**DECLARING THE CITY OF BUTUAN A HERITAGE TOURISM ZONE,  
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

**SECTION 1.** The City of Butuan is hereby declared as a heritage tourism zone. As such, it shall be accorded priority development by the Department of Tourism (DOT) in coordination with the National Historical Institute, the National Museum and other government agencies. It shall be subject to the rules and regulations governing the development of tourist zones.

**SECTION 2.** The City of Butuan is rich with historical and cultural landmarks, rivers and mountain resources, indigenous communities, and other areas full of potentials for heritage, historical and cultural tourism industry.

**SECTION 3.** The DOT, in coordination with the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) and other concerned agencies of the government, including the National Historical Institute and National Museum, shall prepare the necessary tourism spots development plan, providing for their development and maintenance, including improvement and restoration of sites, where appropriate, in conformity with set forth standards, construction of hotels, resorts, restaurants, recreational facilities and other appropriate facilities and infrastructure; *Provided*, That the said development plan shall ensure the preservation of the cultural, heritage and the historical significance of the area/s concerned.

**SECTION 4.** The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), in coordination with the DOT, shall set forth in place the necessary construction and/or improvement of roads and other infrastructure upon the promulgation of this Act and incorporate it in its infrastructure program.

**SECTION 5.** The DOT shall take immediate steps to implement the development plan and incorporate it in the Department's overall tourism development program for the ensuing year. The DOT shall likewise promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act.

**SECTION 6.** The Secretary of the DOT and the Secretary of the DPWH shall include in their respective programs the implementation of this Act, the funding of which shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act and/or charged against the internally generated funds of the DOT.

**SECTION 7.** All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with any of the provisions of this Act shall be deemed repeal or modified accordingly.

**SECTION 8.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

*Approved,*