

Headline: House urged to approve bills pushing for blue economy

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Camiguin has been attracting divers who want to experience the volcanic island's underwater treasure. (PHOTO COURTESY OF DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM REGION 10)

MANILA, Philippines — A lawmaker has urged his colleagues at the House of Representatives to support and approve bills that push for a blue economy , or a framework that pushes for the responsible utilization of marine resources amid the looming threat of climate change.

In a statement on Friday, Bicol Saro party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan said that the passage of different bills seeking for a Blue Economy Act should be prioritized — given that it is a priority legislation of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.

“The passage of this Act is among the key legislative priorities under the guidance of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. The reason behind this focus is evident: as an archipelagic country, it is high time that the Philippines prioritize its marine resources and leverage them to cultivate a robust economy, while contributing meaningfully to global efforts in sustainability,” Yamsuan said.

Yamsuan sponsored their version of the proposed Blue Economy Act, as contained in House Bill No. 8708 — which he co-authored with Camarines Sur Reps. LRay Villafuerte, Miguel Luis Villafuerte, and Tsuyoshi Anthony Horibata.

A technical working group has been formed to consolidate seven other similar bills.

Under the still unnumbered substitute bill, the National Coast Watch Council will be reconstituted as the National Maritime Council, which will be tasked to formulate an “integrated development plan on marine spatial planning, the determination of investments to enhance maritime domain awareness and the preservation of value and sustainability of the Philippines’ ocean resources”.

Yamsuan said this bill would also allow people to have a better scientific understanding of the Philippines’ marine and coastal ecosystems, so that informed decisions would be made when deliberating issues involving the country’s waters and coastlines.

“A quick look at the numbers show how important bodies of water are to the Philippines. The country’s territory is mostly marine, covering 2.2 million square kilometers. We rank 11th in the world in both capture fisheries and aquaculture fish production. We have the second highest coastline of 32,289 kilometers after Indonesia, an average precipitation rate of 4,604mm,” Yamsuan and the other lawmakers said in the explanatory note of their bill.

“Our rich bodies of water enable our people to also make a living on sea transportation, oil and gas, and tourism among others. It is thus imperative for us to preserve and protect our waters, our national patrimony,” they added.

According to assessments, the bill would require an initial funding of P100 million, to be sourced from the Office of the President's contingency fund. Succeeding budgets would then be provided under the General Appropriations Act.

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