

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



22 JUL 27 P 4 :40

SENATE
S. B. No. 901

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator SONNY ANGARA

AN ACT
CREATING THE PHILIPPINE RISE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (PRDA),
DEFINING ITS POWERS AND FUNCTIONS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Philippine Rise (previously Benham Rise) - a 13-million-hectare undersea plateau around 250 kilometers off the coastline of Aurora province - is touted to have vast natural gas deposits and mineral resources, such as manganese. Estimated to be a much larger landmass than Luzon, Philippine Rise is also the natural breeding ground and habitat for several marine species - making it a prime fishing spot.

Discovered in 1933, Philippine Rise officially became part of the Philippines in 2012 when the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf ruled that under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), the undersea landmass was contiguous with the country's continental shelf and hence, fell under its exclusive economic zone. In short, it is undisputedly part of Philippine territory.

In spite of the lapse of 9 years since its award, Philippine Rise remains largely unexplored, however. While many champion its immense benefits particularly to the country's energy and food security, the underwater geographic feature needs to be subjected to further scientific scrutiny. Last May 2016, scientists and marine researchers have discovered a vast and pristine coral reef ecosystem in Philippine Rise.

There is a pressing need to scale up and sustain the scientific study and exploration of Philippine Rise. A proper inventory of the undersea plateau would surely prove crucial in crafting a roadmap on how the country can develop and ultimately benefit including as a potential energy source from the dwindling Malampaya natural gas resource. As such, the extensive participation of several government agencies and other stakeholders will have to be coordinated meaningfully.

Hence, we propose that a Philippine Rise Development Authority (PRDA), attached to the Office of the President, as the lead agency in conducting scientific research and exploration in Philippine Rise should be created immediately.

Once equipped with such information, the PRDA shall take the lead in formulating and implementing a development roadmap for Philippine Rise, ensuring that it is aligned with the country's Philippine Development Plan.

As such, swift passage of the foregoing measure is earnestly sought.



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

1 Section 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the "Philippine Rise
2 Development Authority Act" or "PRDA Act".

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared a policy of the State to
4 tap and accelerate the sound management and sustainable development of the
5 Philippine Rise, particularly on its potential to be a rich source of alternative energy
6 and marine resources, and as a possible tourism destination. Towards this end, an
7 effective institutional mechanism with due regard to the precautionary principle, as
8 well as ecosystem-based and science-based approaches, shall be established to
9 address the need for a coordinated and integrated approach in the formulation and
10 implementation of various development plans, programs, and projects that will
11 optimize the full potential of the Philippine Rise while conserving its ecology and
12 resources for the benefit of future generations.

13 Sec. 3. *Creation of the Philippine Rise Development Authority.* – There is
14 hereby created a body corporate to be known as the Philippine Rise Development
15 Authority, hereinafter referred to as the Authority, which shall promote, coordinate
16 and facilitate the active and extensive participation of all sectors to effect the

1 exploration, study, and development, as well as the conservation and protection, of
2 the natural resources within the Philippine Rise.

3 The Authority shall also be the lead agency in conducting scientific research
4 and exploration and shall secure the rights of the State over the area. Explorations
5 must be done in partnership with the Department of Environment and Natural
6 Resources–Biodiversity Management Bureau (DENR-BMB), Department of
7 Agriculture–Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (DA-BFAR), and academic
8 institutions with the necessary competence to conduct rigorous and comprehensive
9 studies in the Philippine Rise area.

10 The Authority shall be organized within one hundred eighty (180) days after
11 the approval of this Act. It shall have a term of fifty (50) years from its organization
12 and may be renewed for another fifty (50) years, unless otherwise provided by law.
13 It shall be an attached agency to the Office of the President. It shall establish its first
14 office in the Aurora Pacific Economic and Freeport Zone and may put up such other
15 offices as may be necessary to achieve the objectives of this Act.

16 Sec. 4. *Coverage.* – The PRDA shall cover all natural resources located in the
17 undersea feature known as the Philippine Rise Region, within the Philippine exclusive
18 economic zone and continental shelf, as well as the outer limits of the extended
19 continental shelf pursuant to the recommendations of the Commission on the Limits
20 of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) issued on April 12, 2012, and bounded by the
21 coordinates 12⁰30'N to 20⁰30'N latitude and 122⁰30'E to 129⁰30'E longitude,
22 excluding the fifteen-kilometer municipal waters of adjacent coastal areas.

23 Sec. 5. *Powers and Functions of the Philippine Rise Development Authority.*

24 – In the exercise of its mandate, the Authority shall have the following powers and
25 functions:

- 26 a) Formulate and advocate national policies that will foster the integrated,
27 balanced, and sustainable development framework for the Philippine Rise that
28 is consistent with the development initiatives of the national government, as
29 far as practicable;
- 30 b) Develop, plan, program, prioritize, integrate, and implement, whenever
31 allowed and authorized by applicable laws, programs, projects, and activities
32 at the Philippine Rise;

- 1 c) Recommend to or coordinate with the proper government agencies programs,
2 projects, and activities soliciting or requiring their direct or indirect assistance
3 including, but not limited to, technical support and physical assistance for the
4 prioritization of the region's environmental, agricultural, fisheries, marine and
5 non-marine biodiversity, energy, industrial, commercial, infrastructure,
6 tourism, technological, and scientific concerns;
- 7 d) Review Philippine Rise programs, projects, and activities by the national
8 government and donor agencies, subject to existing laws, rules, and
9 regulations, for the purpose of ensuring consistency with national policies and
10 plans, as well as monitor, evaluate, and formulate recommendations in the
11 implementation of such programs, projects, and activities;
- 12 e) Establish a complete, comprehensive, and integrated database on the
13 Philippine Rise prior to the conduct of any exploration activities, whenever
14 possible. For this purpose, the Authority may coordinate with academic
15 institutions concerned to conduct comprehensive survey and assessment and
16 generate resource map of the Philippine Rise which shall be the underlying
17 foundation for all policy and management decisions;
- 18 f) Create an area research plan and coordinate research initiatives and
19 exploration in the Philippine Rise region, establish a repository of research
20 data, and provide incentives for such research and exploration activities;
- 21 g) Promote the protection and conservation of important marine biodiversity and
22 fishery resources, including marine genetic resources, which are important for
23 ensuring climate change resiliency and food security;
- 24 h) Promote and facilitate public and private investments that would enhance the
25 integrated, balanced, and sustainable development of the Philippine Rise, and
26 explore other sources of financing for priority Philippine Rise related
27 programs, projects, and activities, in close coordination with agencies
28 primarily mandated to undertake such functions;
- 29 i) Receive and administer donations, contributions, grants, bequests, or gifts, in
30 cash or in kind, from foreign governments, international agencies, private
31 entities, and other sources, including Official Development Assistance, subject
32 to existing laws, rules, and regulations;

- 1 j) Sue and be sued, and as approved by the Board, enter into contracts,
2 acquire, purchase, hold, lease, transfer, or dispose of properties of any kind
3 or nature to carry out the purposes of this Act;
- 4 k) Issue clearances, including the necessary rules and standards, for all
5 proposals, plans, programs, projects, or any activity involving the Philippine
6 Rise Region including, but not limited to, marine science research,
7 exploration, and exploitation, whether conducted by Filipino or foreign
8 nationals, in accordance with Sec. 7 of this Act;
- 9 l) Request the President of the Philippines and other government agencies for
10 any needed assistance in the enforcement of all applicable laws, rules, and
11 regulations, the exploration and scientific study of the entire region, the
12 sustainable exploitation of its natural bounties, and the protection of national
13 security and national interests, including law enforcement against illegal
14 intruders and poachers; and
- 15 m) Discharge such other functions as may be deemed necessary to carry out its
16 mandate under this Act or as may be provided by law.

17 The Authority, through its Administrator, shall submit to the President and
18 both Houses of Congress annual reports on its accomplishments and activities.

19 *Sec. 6. Board of Directors.* – The power of the Authority shall be vested in
20 and exercised by a Board of Directors, hereinafter referred to as the Board, which
21 shall manage and supervise the overall directions and thrusts. It shall be composed
22 of the following:

- 23 a) The President of the Philippines who shall act as the Chairperson of the
24 Board;
- 25 b) The Administrator of the Philippine Rise Development Authority who shall act
26 as the Vice-Chairperson of the Board; and
- 27 c) Thirteen (13) other members composed of the following:
- 28 1. The NEDA Director-General or the duly authorized representative;
 - 29 2. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
30 Secretary or the duly authorized representative;
 - 31 3. The Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary or the duly authorized
32 representative;

- 1 4. The Department of Agriculture (DA) Secretary or the duly authorized
2 representative;
- 3 5. The Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary or the
4 duly authorized representative;
- 5 6. The Department of Finance (DOF) Secretary or the duly authorized
6 representative;
- 7 7. The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary or the
8 duly authorized representative;
- 9 8. The Department of National Defense (DND) Secretary or the duly
10 authorized representative;
- 11 9. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary or the duly
12 authorized representative;
- 13 10. The Department of Transportation (DOTr) Secretary or the duly
14 authorized representative;
- 15 11. The National Coast Watch Council (NCWC) Executive Director or the
16 duly authorized representative;
- 17 12. The National Security Council (NSC) National Security Adviser and
18 Director General or the duly authorized representative; and
- 19 13. The University of the Philippines (UP) President or the duly authorized
20 representative.

21 The members of the Board shall receive a per diem at a rate to be
22 determined by the Governance Commission for Government Owned or Controlled
23 Corporations (GCG), in accordance with existing rules and regulations: *Provided,*
24 *however,* That the per diem collected per month does not exceed the equivalent per
25 diem of four (4) meetings: *Provided, further,* That the amount of per diem for every
26 Board meeting may be increased by the President or GCG but such amount shall not
27 be increased within two (2) years from its last increase.

28 The Board shall have the following functions:

- 29 a) Provide direction and guidance for the Authority's work and thrusts for the
30 Philippine Rise;
- 31 b) Ensure that the goals and policies of the Authority are consistent with the
32 overall national development goals and objectives, and that the programs of

- 1 the Authority are consistent with regional and local development plans,
2 programs, and projects, and vice versa, for purposes of harmonization;
- 3 c) Explore sources for financing of priority Philippine Rise plans, programs,
4 projects, and activities;
- 5 d) Create committees or task forces as may be deemed necessary in the
6 accomplishment of its functions;
- 7 e) Determine schedules, establish voting procedures, criteria for the constitution
8 of a quorum, and other rules and regulations in the conduct of Board
9 meetings;
- 10 f) Approve contracts and enter into agreements to carry out the purposes of this
11 Act, except when authority to sign such contracts and/or agreements is
12 vested in a specific government officer or entity; and
- 13 g) Perform such other functions as may be necessary to carry out the purposes
14 of this Act.

15 *Sec. 7. Issuance of Clearances by the Authority.* – No proposals, plans,
16 programs, projects, or activities involving the Philippine Rise Region including, but
17 not limited to, marine science research, exploration, and exploitation, whether
18 conducted by Filipino and foreign nationals, shall be carried out, nor shall any license
19 or permit be issued in relation to the same, without the clearance of the Authority.

20 The Authority shall issue the necessary clearance for all approved proposals,
21 plans, programs, projects, or activities within twenty (20) calendar days from
22 submission thereof. In cases where the Authority fails to act within the same 20-day
23 period, the submissions shall be deemed approved. Any decision of disapproval by
24 the Authority may be appealed within fifteen (15) calendar days from receipt thereof
25 to the Office of the President whose decision shall be final.

26 The Authority shall issue rules and standards concerning the clearance
27 required under this section: *Provided*, That such clearance must be secured before
28 all other permits and/or licenses required under existing and applicable laws shall be
29 issued: *Provided, further*, That the grant or denial of an application for clearance
30 shall be made on the basis of this Act, other laws and regulations applicable to the
31 Philippine Rise, and the integrated, balanced, and sustainable development
32 framework formulated under Sec. 5(a) of this Act.

1 *Sec. 8. Accrual of Revenues and Receipts to the General Fund.* – All revenues
2 and receipts from any and all sources including the government share representing
3 royalties, rentals, production share on service contracts, and similar payments on the
4 development, exploration, and exploitation of energy resources within the Philippine
5 Rise shall be remitted to the National Treasury and shall accrue to the General Fund.

6 *Sec. 9. Advisory Panel of Technical Experts.* – The Authority shall constitute
7 an advisory panel of technical experts consisting of practitioners in disciplines that
8 are related to oil and gas extraction and processing, hydrography, marine ecology,
9 surveying, hydrology, including, but not limited to, oceanography.

10 The Advisory Panel shall perform research and development and provide
11 technical advice to the Authority in maritime science, technologies, and best
12 practices for the extraction and development of oil and gas fields.

13 The Authority shall set the qualifications and compensation for the technical
14 experts. It shall provide resources for the operations and activities of the Advisory
15 Panel.

16 *Sec. 10. Administrator.* – The Authority shall have an Administrator who shall
17 be appointed by the President of the Philippines, upon recommendation of the
18 Board. The Administrator shall serve a term of six (6) years from the date of his/her
19 appointment unless sooner separated from service due to death, voluntary
20 resignation, or removal for cause: *Provided*, That no person shall be appointed as
21 Administrator unless he/she is a Filipino citizen, holder of a degree in law or a
22 masters degree in any of the following fields: economics, business, public
23 administration, law, management, or their equivalent, and have at least ten (10)
24 years of relevant experience in said fields: *Provided, further*, That he/she shall be a
25 resident of the Philippines for at least five (5) years before the appointment.

26 *Sec. 11. Powers and Duties of the Administrator; Secretariat.* – The
27 Administrator shall have the following powers and duties:

- 28 a) Direct and manage the affairs of the Authority in accordance with the policies
29 of the Board;
- 30 b) Call and preside over meetings of the Board in the absence of the
31 Chairperson, and supervise and direct its Secretariat;

1 A Secretariat is hereby established to serve and assist the Board in the
2 effective implementation of this Act. The Head of the Secretariat shall be
3 appointed by the Administrator upon recommendation by the Board:
4 *Provided*, That no person shall be appointed as Head of the Secretariat unless
5 he/she is a Filipino citizen, holder of a degree in any of the following fields:
6 economics, business, public administration, law, management, or their
7 equivalent, and have at least five (5) years of relevant experience in said
8 fields: *Provided, further*, That he/she shall be a resident of the Philippines for
9 at least five (5) years prior to his/her appointment and has the requisite
10 eligibilities for third level career service position pursuant to the career
11 executive rank system;

12 c) Ensure the proper implementation of applicable policies, programs, and rules
13 and regulations, including the resolutions of the Board;

14 d) Identify solutions to key issues and concerns, taking into account related
15 risks, affected parties, and impact, in coordination with the Board and key
16 stakeholders;

17 e) Advocate the Authority's work among the various concerned sectors and
18 stakeholders;

19 f) Call on any agency, group, individual member of the Board, local government
20 unit, and host community to address issues and concerns relating to the
21 implementation of major programs, projects, and activities;

22 g) Supervise the monitoring and timely implementation of Philippine Rise related
23 programs, projects, and activities;

24 h) Endorse to the Board all policy recommendations, plans, and programs for
25 approval;

26 i) Accept, on behalf and upon approval of the Authority, donations,
27 contributions, grants, gifts, bequests, or devises, in cash or in kind, from
28 members, foreign governments, international agencies, private entities, or
29 any individual for purposes that will realize the functions of the Authority;

30 j) Supervise administrative operations, including disbursement of any fund of
31 the Authority, subject to the usual accounting and auditing procedures, and
32 submit reports thereon;

- 1 k) Execute and administer the policies and measures approved by the Board;
- 2 l) Appoint all employees of the Authority, and remove, dismiss, or otherwise
3 discipline for cause, such employees in accordance with the standard
4 guidelines for recruitment, employment, and discipline under civil service law,
5 rules, and regulations;
- 6 m) Represent the Authority in all dealings with other offices, agencies, and
7 instrumentalities of the government and with all persons and entities, public
8 or private;
- 9 n) Sign agreements and/or contracts, on behalf of the Authority and upon the
10 Board's approval, including those for expert and consultant services and other
11 reports of accountabilities emanating from the Authority, except when
12 authority to sign such agreements, contracts, or reports is vested in a specific
13 government entity; and
- 14 o) Perform such other functions that the Board may direct to carry out the
15 provisions of this Act or which are necessary or incidental to his/her office.

16 *Sec. 12. Organizational Structure.* – The Administrator shall determine the
17 organizational structure, staffing pattern, and pay scales of the Authority subject to
18 existing civil service and compensation laws. Subject to the approval of the Board,
19 the Administrator may reorganize the Authority and may create or abolish divisions,
20 units, or branches therein as the exigencies of the affairs of the Authority may
21 require.

22 *Sec. 13. Merit System.* – All officials and employees of the Authority shall be
23 selected and appointed on the basis of merit and fitness in accordance with civil
24 service law, rules, and regulations. The recruitment, transfer, promotion, and
25 dismissal of all its personnel, including temporary workers, shall be governed by a
26 merit system that will be established by the Authority in compliance with existing
27 laws, rules, and regulations.

28 *Sec. 14. Appropriations.* – Such amounts necessary to finance the initial
29 implementation of this Act shall be sourced from the unprogrammed funds in the
30 current General Appropriations Act (GAA). Thereafter, such amounts necessary for
31 its continued implementation shall be included in the annual GAA.

1 Sec. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The Authority, subject to the
2 approval of the Board and in consultation with other stakeholders shall, within sixty
3 (60) days from the date of effectivity of this Act, promulgate and publish the rules
4 and regulations for the effective and faithful implementation of this Act: *Provided,*
5 That the failure of the promulgation of the said rules and regulations shall not
6 prevent the implementation of this Act upon its effectivity.

7 Sec. 16. *Separability Clause.* – If any portion or provision of this Act is
8 subsequently declared invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are
9 not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

10 Sec. 17. *Repealing Clause.* – All other laws, acts, presidential decrees,
11 executive orders, presidential proclamations, issuances, rules and regulations, or
12 parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with any of the provisions of this
13 Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

14 Sec. 18. *Effectivity.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
15 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,