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SENATE
S.B. No. 1957

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Introduced by **SENATOR IMEE R. MARCOS**

**AN ACT
DECLARING THE PROVINCE OF AGUSAN DEL SUR AS THE HOME OF THE
GOLDEN TARA**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution, under Article XIV, Section 14 mandates that, "*the State shall foster the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino national culture based on the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression.*"

In 1917, the 21-karat Hindu or Buddhist deity statuette, better known as the Golden Tara was found by a Manobo woman named Bilay Campos on a muddy bank of the Wawa River in Esperanza, Agusan del Sur. The image was believed to have come from the upriver areas of the province and was carried away downstream by a flood to where it was found, at the riverbank of Esperanza.

The Golden Image was alleged to have been created as a trade item for the Buddhist Empire of Sri Vijaya. The image represents early Agurnon craftsmanship and trade links with the early Southeast Asian empire, indicating its historic and cultural significance. In fact, people from Esperanza created a historical marker where the significant cultural relic was found.

The Golden Tara's iconographic attributes may have been a subject of debate as to whether it belongs to the Hindu and Buddhist pantheon, but its certain that it is discovered in Agusan del Sur. In order to promote local tourism in the region, the local community has taken the effort to establish their legitimate claim to the well-known Golden Tara. Thus, this bill seeks to declare the Province of Agusan del Sur as the home of the Golden Tara.

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


IMEE R. MARCOS

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

1 **SECTION 1.** It is the policy of the State to preserve the country's cultural
2 artifacts and promote its rich history and cultural heritage.

3
4 The Province of Agusan del Sur is hereby declared as the Home of the Golden
5 Tara, a 21-karat gold statuette of a female Hindu deity that dates back to the 9th-10th
6 centuries and was found in 1917 on the banks of the Wawa River in the Municipality of
7 Esperanza, Province of Agusan del Sur. Presently on display in the Field Museum of
8 Natural History in Chicago, United States of America, it is considered a testament to the
9 rich cultural heritage of the Province of Agusan del Sur and its commercial and cultural
10 ties with Southeast Asian states before the Spanish colonial period.

11
12 **SEC. 2.** The Department of Tourism (DOT) shall feature the Golden Tara and
13 the rich cultural heritage of the Province of Agusan del Sur in its national and regional
14 promotion programs.

15
16 **SEC. 3.** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the
17 Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,