GMA signs Tourism Act

By MARVIN SY

MACTAN, Cebu – President Arroyo has signed into law the National Tourism Policy Act of 2009, which aims to solidify the status of the tourism industry as an engine of growth and development.

The President chose to sign Republic Act 9593 at the new Imperial Palace Waterpark Resort and Spa here to emphasize the emergence of Cebu as the country's premier tourist destination.

Under the new law, the Department of Tourism (DOT) and its attached agencies will be strengthened in order to

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effectively and efficiently implement the

national policy of tourism.

The Philippine Convention and Visitors Corp. (PCVC) will be reorganized as the Tourism Promotions Board (TPB), a corporate body responsible for the marketing and promotion of the Philippines as a global tourism destination, highlighting its tourism products and services.

The Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA) would now be known as the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), a corporate body mandated to designate, regulate and supervise tourism enterprise zones (TEZs) as well as develop and supervise tourism projects in the country.

Duty Free Philippines will also be reorganized and renamed the Duty Free

Philippines Corp. (DFPC), a corporate body mandated to operate the duty- and tax-free merchandising system in the country.

R.A. 9593 provides that the TPB and TIEZA will each have capitalization of P250 million subscribed by the national government.

Funding for TPB will be sourced from investment earnings from the Tourism Promotions Trust; appropriation from the national government of not less than P500 million annually for at least five years from the time of its constitution; 70 percent of the 50-percent net income of the DFPC accruing to the Department; at least 25 percent of the national government share remitted by international airports and seaports to the National Treasury.

On the other hand, the funding for TIEZA would come from 50 percent of travel tax collections; a reasonable share from the collections of the Office of Tourism Resource Generation; income from projects managed by the TIEZA; and subsidies or grants from local and foreign sources.

The capitalization for DFPC was set at P500 million and funding for its operations will be sourced from internally generated income and other receipts.

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President Arroyo signs into law Republic Act 9593, or the Tourism Policy Act of 2009, during the One Visayas Summit on Climate Change at the Imperial Palace Waterpark Resort Hotel in Lapu-Lapu City yesterday. With her are Tourism Secretary Ace Durano (far right) and the authors and sponsors of the law led by Sen. Richard Gordon (left front).