

India - Philippines Relations

India and the Philippines formally established diplomatic relations on 26 November 1949, shortly after both countries gained independence [Philippines in 1946 and India in 1947]. Sixty years of diplomatic relations was celebrated in 2009.

The relations between the two countries have been cordial, though the full potential is yet to be realized. It would be fair to say that despite several shared values and commonalities, such as anti-colonialism, South-South cooperation, a strong democratic polity, an independent judiciary and press, and the wide use of the English language, relations between the two countries have been relatively unexplored and reflects a lack of informed knowledge about one another.

When India launched her Look East Policy and intensified partnership with ASEAN in 1992, this also resulted in intensified relations with countries in the region including Philippines, both bilaterally and as a regional grouping. The relationship with Philippines has intensified since then in political-security; economic and people-to-people interactions. Coupled with current developments in the Philippines, the stage appears to be set for further intensification in bilateral relations, covering the broad canvas of consultations and cooperation on matters related to foreign policy, security, defence, trade, tourism, people-to-people relations and culture. Furthermore, strengthened ASEAN-India relations has had a positive impact on bilateral relations, especially with accelerated impetus given to trade and investment.

Political, Security and Defence: High level visits and interactions between India and the Philippines have seen some intensification in the recent past, especially since the initiation of ASEAN-India Summit level partnership and establishment of East Asia Summit, of which India is a founding member. These annual Summits have provided an excellent platform for regular meetings between leaders from both countries, the most recent being in November 2015 at the Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar where Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi had a bilateral meeting with President Aquino of Philippines. Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited Philippines in 2007 for the ASEAN-India and the East Asia Summit. The Vice President of the Philippines Mr. Jejomar C. Binay led a high-powered delegation, which included Secretary, DFA Mr. Del Rosario, to India in December 2012, for the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi. Prime Minister Modi and President Aquino also attended the ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015 though they did not have a bilateral meeting.

Following the visits of the Philippines Vice President Diosdado Macapagal in 1961 and the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1981, the 'Look East policy' resulted in increased frequency of high-level contacts and saw visits by, Presidents R. Venkatraman [1991] and Abdul Kalam [2006], Cabinet Ministers and other political dignitaries from India. Similarly, from the Philippines, there have been visits by Presidents Fidel Ramos [1997] and Gloria Arroyo [2007], Cabinet Ministers and other high level political dignitaries.

Three meetings of Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC), the highest formalised dialogue mechanism at the level of Foreign Ministers have been held, the last one in October 2015 in New Delhi. Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines Albert F. del Rosario visited India on 14 October 2015 for the 3rd JCBC. During the visit, he called on the Vice-President of India and also delivered the 2nd Nehru-Rizal Lecture. External Affairs Minister Sh. Salman Khurshid visited Manila from 21-23 October 2013 for the 2nd JCBC meeting and delivered the inaugural 'Rizal-Nehru Memorial lecture' at the Foreign Service Institute of Department of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Policy Consultations and Security Dialogue meetings between the two countries have been taking place regularly and the last meeting was held in Manila in March 2015.

The Philippines supported India's candidature for the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the term 2011-12 and there is regular consultation between delegations of both countries in the UN and other multilateral fora. Several Foreign Service officers from the Philippines have attended the ASEAN diplomats' course that is held at the Foreign Service Institute in India.

Indian navy and coast guard ships regularly visit the Philippines and hold consultations with their counterparts. INS Sahyadri visited Manila from 1-4 November 2015; and from 20-23 August 2014; ICGS Samudra Paheredar visited Manila from 19-22 September 2014; a flotilla of four Indian ships from the Eastern Fleet, namely INS Shakti, INS Satupura, INS Ranjit and INS Kirch visited Manila on a goodwill visit from 12-16 June, 2013. The participation of officers of the armed forces of both countries in various specialized training courses in each other's countries has intensified, as have visits by National Defence College delegations, including the first ever NDC visit from the Philippines to India. A delegation from the College of Defence Management of India visited Philippines from 23-31 October 2015; a delegation from Army High Command Course of India visited the Philippines from 10-14 November 2014. INTELLEX meetings have contributed towards sharing and exchanging information on a range of sensitive issues; the last INTELLEX meeting took place in Manila in January 2015 with the previous one being held in New Delhi in February 2013. In recognition of the need to further strengthen defence cooperation, the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee was constituted and had its first meeting in Manila in January 2012.

Government of India sent an Indian Air Force flight with relief material for the victims of super typhoon 'Haiyan, which struck Philippines on 7-8 November 2013. Following the tragic loss of life, livelihood and property as a result of typhoon Pablo/Bopha, which struck southern Philippines in December 2012, the Government of India provided disaster relief assistance of \$200,000 to the Philippines Government and \$ 100,000 as disaster relief assistance following the October 2013 earthquake in Bohol.

Trade and Commerce: Economic relations have been relatively slow and uneven to date. Despite the impact of the India-ASEAN FTA in Goods, the India-Philippines trade has, so far, been muted at around \$1.8 billion in 2014-15. However, a number

of growth drivers suggest a major and sustained growth in two-way trade and investment, helped by the conclusion of the India-ASEAN Trade in Services and Investment Agreements, notwithstanding the slightly muted growth of the Philippine economy this year. The Philippines is embarking on a series infrastructural projects, which are likely to be of interest to Indian business and industry. GMR, in partnership with a local company is undertaking the renovation of the Mactan-Cebu International Airport, a Peso 17.7 billion restructuring project. Furthermore, opportunities are open for a more invigorated partnership with the drugs and pharma sector in India, particularly with regard to generics for the provision of quality medicines at affordable prices. The identification of complementarities, rather than competition, particularly in the IT sector could see heightened collaborations for third country intervention. The Philippines-India Business Council, under the Philippines Chamber of Commerce and Industry is also being recast to make it more effective and to respond to the opportunities.

Various Joint Working Groups [JWG] have been set up and their meetings, particularly the JWG on Trade and Investment, on Agriculture, on Health, on Tourism and on Renewable Energy are expected to identify new growth and partnership areas between government and industry in both countries and contribute towards enhanced two-way growth in trade and investment. Additionally, consultations on science and technology, defence, and other areas are also expected to have their flow-on impact. The first meeting of India-Philippines Joint Working Group on Renewable Energy took place in New Delhi on 11 July 2013.

ITEC: Philippines is one of the beneficiaries of programmes under ITEC and Colombo Plan. For 2014-15, 40 slots under ITEC and 15 slots under the Colombo Plan are allocated to the Philippines. We also organize training programme for defence personnel. So far almost a thousand Filipino nationals have benefited under these schemes, covering a wide range of technical courses, such as rural development, agriculture, renewable energy, small scale industries, banking, finance and management, quality control and marketing, planning and public administration, textiles, parliamentary studies and legislative practices, computer software, water resources management, defence, etc.

Culture: We have a Cultural Exchange Programme between the two countries and an Executive Programme on Cultural Exchanges (2016-18) was signed between the two sides in October 2015. An Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsored 6-member Odissi dance troupe led by Ms. Nandini Ghosal visited Philippines in June 2015 and performed at the Asia Pacific College, Makati, Manila on 27 June 2015; and at the Davao Medical School Foundation Auditorium on 28 June 2015; a 5-member musical troupe Krosswindz visited Philippines from 19-22 November 2015 and performed in Manila. A five-member group sponsored by ICCR of renowned Dhrupad vocalists, Gundecha Brothers, visited Philippines from 29 September to 2 October, 2013. An 8-member cultural troupe, Rondalla Ensemble participated from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) of Philippines in the Grand Finale of IIC Experience organised by the India International Centre in New Delhi from 17-24 October 2013. University of Philippines staged a

musical adaptation of Indian epic, 'Mahabharata' in their theatre in February-March 2014 and buoyed by the success, this was staged again in July 2014.

We have regular Indian cultural events in Manila and other parts of Philippines, especially with an Indian community of around 70,000 present in the Philippines. We also have local Indian clubs, who also organize cultural events in the Philippines, including a Flute Concert by Shashank in March 2014 and by vocalist Ashwini Bhide Deshpande in October 2014.

The Philippines is also beginning to emerge as a destination for Indian students. There are more than 4000 Indian students pursuing medical courses in various universities in the Philippines. Currently nearly, 50 per cent of the students at the prestigious Asian Institute of Management in Manila are from India. The flying schools are also attractive as instructions are in English and students do not have to learn the local language. Several universities in the Philippines, such as, the University of Santo Tomas, the University of the Philippines, the University of the Visayas, Adamson University, the University of Mindanao and others have opened special 'India chapters' in their prestigious libraries, which houses collection of books on India [gifted through the Public Diplomacy division of the Ministry of External Affairs]. A bust of Mother Teresa has been installed in the University of Santo Tomas, gifted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Significant effort is also exerted to further deepen the people-to-people cooperation between India and the Philippines. Under the ASEAN-India rubric, journalists from the Philippines have been regularly visiting India, the latest being in August, when Indian journalists visited the Philippines and March 2015 when journalists from Philippines visited India. In addition, every year 25 Philippine students in the 17-28 age group visit India, the latest being in November 2015, under the ASEAN-India Students Exchange Programme; and 3 school children visit India to participate in the National children Science Congress. Shri Yashovardhan Azad, Central Information commissioner of India delivered lectures in the Philippines on 1-2 December 2014 under the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Lecture Series and Undersecretary for Policy in the Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines Mr. Evan P. Garcia visited India under the same programme from 15-17 July 2015. In addition, we have regular interaction between the parliamentarians, think tanks, farmers and diplomats.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Manila website:

<http://www.indembassymanila.in>

Embassy of India, Manila Facebook

page: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInPhilippines>

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