

Brief on India-Philippines Bilateral Relations

India and the Philippines share warm and multifaceted bilateral relations rooted in historical ties and shared democratic values. Cooperation spans various sectors, including defense, trade, investment, and cultural exchange. India and the Philippines formally established diplomatic relations on 26 November 1949, shortly after both countries gained independence.

2. There have been four Presidential level visits from Philippines to India - President Ferdinand E. Marcos in 1976 (stop-over visit); Presidents Fidel Ramos in 1997; President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo in 2007 and President Rodrigo Duterte in Jan 2018. From India, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited the Philippines in 1981; President R. Venkatraman in 1991; President Abdul Kalam in 2006, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in 2007; Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2017 and President Shri Ram Nath Kovind visited Philippines in 2019.

3. Year 2024 marked the completion of 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and the Philippines. As part of the ongoing celebration of 75th Anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations, Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Pabitra Margherita visited Philippines from 13-15 January 2025. Recent high level interactions include brief conversations between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. on sidelines of 21st ASEAN-India Summit [Oct 2024, Vientiane]; visit of Mr. Nityanand Rai, Hon'ble Minister of State (Home) to Philippines to attend Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction [Oct 2024]; visit of Department of Transportation's Secretary Mr. Jaime J. Bautista to India to attend the 2nd Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference (APAC-MC) on Civil Aviation [Sep 2024, New Delhi]; bilateral meeting between EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Enrique A. Manalo on the sidelines of ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting [July 2024, Vientiane]; Secretary of Department of Health, Dr. Teodoro Herbosa addressed the Health Minister's Session of 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS 3.0) through a video message [Aug 2024]; visit of EAM to the Philippines [March 2024]; bilateral meeting between EAM and Secretary Manalo on the sidelines of NAM Summit [Jan 2024, Kampala].

4. The umbrella bilateral mechanism is the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) co-chaired by EAM and the Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, which has met 5 times so far, in 2011, 2013, 2015, 2020 and on 29 June, 2023 in New Delhi. Official level Policy Consultation Talks/Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and Strategic Dialogues (SD) have been held regularly from 1994 and from 2004 respectively. The 14th FOC and 5th SD were held on 9 September 2024 in New Delhi.

5. Defence cooperation is one of the strong pillars of bilateral relations and a promising area for future collaboration between India and the Philippines.

6. A Defence Cooperation Agreement was signed between the two countries in 2006. Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) at the Joint Secretary level was set up under this MoU, which has met five times so far. The 5th JDCC was held on 11 September 2024 in Manila at the Defence Secretary level for the first time. Along with the 5th JDCC, both sides also held the 3rd Service to Service (STS) Meeting in Manila. The two countries signed an MoU on Defence Industry and Logistics cooperation in Nov 2017 and have also set up a separate Joint Defence Industry and Logistics Committee (JDILC) under the MoU. This mechanism has met thrice, the last meeting was held on 11 March, 2022.

7. In November 2024, Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh met Secretary of National Defense, Mr. Gilbert Teodoro on the sidelines of the 18th ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and 11th ADMM Plus in Vientiane, Laos. Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Commandant, CG Admiral Artemio Abu visited India for the first time in August 2023 during which an MOU on Enhanced Maritime Cooperation and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to operationalize the MoU on exchange of White Shipping Information (2019) were signed. Earlier, Philippines Secretary of National Defense, Mr. Delfin Lorenzana visited India for the first ever bilateral Defence Ministerial visit in March 2018.

8. Given the objective of expanding institutional maritime engagement, the Inaugural India-PH Track-1 Maritime Dialogue held in Manila in Dec 2024. during which both sides exchanged views on prevailing maritime challenges and discussed ways to enhance maritime cooperation between the two countries. Earlier, IN-PH Maritime Track 2 Dialogue, co-chaired by National Maritime Foundation and Stratbase ADR Institute of the Philippines, was held in September 2023 in Manila.

9. Indian Navy and Coast Guard ships regularly visit the Philippines and hold consultations with their counterparts as recently three Indian Navy(IN) Ships of the Eastern Fleet INS Delhi, Shakti & Kiltan visited Manila in May 2024. Earlier visit/port calls include ICG Samudra Paheredar in March 2024; INS Kadmatt in Dec 2023; INS Satpura in June 2022; INS *Ranvijay* and INS *Kora* in August 2021; INS Kiltan in Jul 2021; INS *Sahyadri* and INS *Kiltan* in Oct 2019 and ICGS *Shaunak* in Feb 2019.

10. High-level training visits remained a priority, in pursuance of which the delegations from the College of Defence Management of India visited Philippines in Oct 2015 and Oct 2018. A 27-member delegation from the Indian Army War College, Mhow also visited Philippines in Sep 2019. NDC delegation visited Philippines thrice in May 2016; June 2022 and June 2024. The participation of officers of the armed forces of both countries in various specialized training courses in each other's countries has also intensified.

11. Bilateral trade between the two countries had grown steadily to reaching US\$ 3.5 billion in 2023-24 (Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GOI). To facilitate bilateral trade, both countries signed Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Custom Matters in April 2022 (ratified in June 2023).

Financial Year	India's Export to Philippines	India's Imports from Philippines	Trade with Philippines
2020-21	1457.30	572.47	2029.77
2021-22	2107.24	729.08	2836.31
2022-23	2094.15	959.59	3053.73
2023-24	2097.17	1,433.60	3530.77
2024-25 (Apr – Nov)	1461.08	736.84	2197.92

[in US\$ million]

12. The major items of export from India to the Philippines include engineering goods; automobiles part and accessories, transmission apparatus, electric transformers, petroleum products, semi-finished products of iron and steel; drugs and pharmaceuticals, organic and inorganic chemicals; electronic goods; plastic and linoleum: rice; bovine meat, oil seeds; tobacco; groundnuts and others. (As per Trading economics data-set, the Indian Pharmaceutical products accounted for 15.96% of the total Philippine Pharmaceutical imports in 2023). The major items of import from the Philippines include Electrical machinery; semi-conductors; ores, slag and ashes; copper, lead; plastics; pearls and precious stones; residue and waste from food industry; animal fodder and others.

13. Indian investment in the Philippines has over the years been mainly in the areas of IT& ITES [BPO]; pharmaceuticals and healthcare; yarn and textiles; chemicals; automobiles; agriculture; biomass energy; FMCG and others. Estimated Indian investment in the Philippines is valued around US \$ 5 billion.

15. Philippine investments in India have been modest in the past and mainly comprise of companies like V. Merida (processing of waste), Ayala's (Renewable energy, construction & ITES); SPI Technologies (ITES); Del Monte & Liwayway (Food processing); Atlantic Gulf & Pacific Company (AG&P); Lloyd Laboratories, IPI (Pharma). Major investments have been made by Atlantic Gulf & Pacific (AG&P) and AC Energy Corporation in India.

16. Financial Technology (Fintech) is one of the focused sectors identified by the leaders of both the countries. MOU for constitution of JWG on Cooperation in Financial Technology was signed on 19 June, 2023. 1st JWG meeting on Fintech was held on 12 September 2024 in New Delhi.

17. India and the Philippines signed an agreement on Indian grant assistance for implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIP) in the Philippines on 7 Feb 2023. On 15 July 2024, the implementing agencies of the two countries (Embassy of India in Manila and Department of Interior and Local Government of the Philippines) signed individual MOAs for 6

QIPs valued at US\$50,000 each, in the sectors of Agriculture, Disaster Risk Reduction & Management, Healthcare and Livelihood Support (a total outlay of approx. USD 300,000).

18. Agriculture is another focused sector identified by the leaders of both the countries. Revised MoU on Cooperation in Agriculture and Related Fields between India-Philippines was signed on 13 November 2017. The 2nd meeting of the India-Philippines Joint Working Group (JWG) on Agriculture was held on 18 May 2018 at Manila.

19. Health & Medicine is one of the important sectors for bilateral engagement. Philippines was the first ASEAN Member State to grant Emergency Use Authorization for Bharat Biotech's Covaxin. India continues to be one of the largest suppliers of pharma products to the Philippines. An MOU on Cooperation in Traditional Medicine between Philippines Institute of Traditional Medicine and Alternative Health Care (PITAHC) and National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur was signed on 19 April 2022. The 3rd JWG Meeting on Health was held on 19-20 April 2018 in Manila, under the overall framework of India-Philippines MoU in the field of Health and Medicine signed in New Delhi on 5 October 2007.

20. An MoU on Tourism Cooperation was signed on 18 October 2019 under which 1st meeting of India-Philippines JWG on Tourism was held on 8 October, 2020. The 2nd JWG meeting was held on 21 May, 2024 in Manila. Tourism Minister of India Shri Gajendar Singh Shekhawat held bilateral meeting with Philippines Tourism Secretary Ms. Christina Garcia Frasco on the sidelines of the India- ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting on 20 January 2025 in Malaysia which was focused on improving tourism potential and expanding connectivity.

21. The new Air Services Agreement was signed on 27 September 2021 (ratified in June 2023) to facilitate improved air connectivity between India and Philippines.

22. Bilateral Programme of Cooperation (POC) in Science and Technology, for the period 2019-2022 was signed in October 2019 outlining five broad areas of cooperation, namely agricultural biotechnology; health, pharmaceutical & medical sciences; Information and Communication Technology (ICT); Material Science & Technology; and Ocean & Atmospheric Science.

23. The Joint Consular Consultations Meeting (JCCM) has met four times so far, the 4th meeting held on 12 April, 2024 in Manila. Both countries have signed Extradition Treaty on 12 March 2004. Philippines Government fully implemented e-VISA facility for the Indian nationals w.e.f. 28 October 2024.

24. A new area of engagement is Space Cooperation which is progressing well with the participation of Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA)'s scientists in different training programmes in India.

25. Philippines is one of the beneficiaries of India's flagship capacity building programme- Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC). To date, over 1000 Filipino professionals

have availed of courses offered. Courses on Electoral Technology, Environmental Impact Assessment, Renewable Energy, Natural Resource Management and Public Health Management Development and Introduction to Ayurveda were among the popular courses in the Philippines. ITEC Day is celebrated every year by the Embassy that brings together ITEC alumni across the Philippines. In the FY 2023-2024, 15 Filipino participated in ITEC Regular courses; 12 in e-ITEC courses and 31 defence personnel participated in ITEC defence courses. In current FY 2024-25, 14 Regular ITEC and 25 Defence ITEC courses have been availed by the Filipino participants so far.

26. The Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between the two countries was renewed for the period 2019-2023 during the President of India's visit to the Philippines in October 2019. Indian cultural events are organised regularly in the Philippines in commemoration of Indian national days, Indian festivals and other important days such as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas, Constitution Day, Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas, etc. As part of the 75 year anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and the Philippines, Mission has organized several activities such as Blood donation camp, free screening of 1000 Filipino women for breast and cervical cancer and India-Philippines @ 75 Friendship Golf Tournament.

27. India has been offering humanitarian assistance to the Philippines from time to time. In February 2006, following a devastating rockslide in Southern Leyte that claimed 1,126 lives, the Government of India (GOI) dispatched approximately 28 tons of relief material valued at \$260,000. Later, in December 2006, India contributed \$250,000 for relief efforts after Typhoon Reming/Durian resulted in 1,399 fatalities. The GOI continued its support in December 2012 with \$200,000 in disaster relief following Typhoon Pablo/Bopha. In response to the October 2013 earthquake in Bohol, India provided an additional \$100,000. The aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) in November 2013 saw India sending 15 tons of relief supplies. Furthermore, in July 2017, India allocated \$500,000 for rehabilitation efforts in Marawi City during a siege by armed groups. In April 2020, the Embassy with support of leaders of Indian Community organisations handed over nearly US\$ 250,000 worth of face masks for COVID19 frontlines to then Secretary of National Defense Delfin Lorenzana and Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process Secretary Carlito Galvez.

28. Indian Diaspora is estimated to be more than 70,000 in the Philippines majority of which is concentrated in and around Metro Manila, City of Davao and Cebu. There has been a growing number of Indian professionals, estimated around 800, who are working in Indian and multinational corporations in the Philippines,. The major Indian business associations in the Philippines are the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines (FICCI-Philippines); Indian Business Forum (IBF) and Indian Women in Enterprise (I-WE) Philippines.

29. The total number of Indian students currently enrolled in the Philippines is around 9,800. Most of them are studying medicine but there are few others who are pursuing Management, Information Technology, Nursing, Christian Theology & Divinity, Church Music and Pilot training courses.

30. The Indian diaspora has established several places of religious worship [31 Gurudwaras (including Khalsa Diwan) and 8 Hindu temples] in the Philippines. There are cultural associations such as Indian Ladies Club, Bharati Indian Expats women's Association, Indian Cultural Association of the Philippines (ICAP) and several spiritual organizations like Sri Satya Sai Organization, Art of Living, Brahma Kumaris, Siddhi Yoga, which actively celebrate Indian festivals and engages closely with the Indian Embassy and Filipino Community in supporting social, cultural and welfare activities.

February, 2025