

# **Brief Embassy Report on Bilateral Relations – ITJ**

## **Division, DGCIS, Kolkata.**

### **India-Philippines Bilateral Relation**

#### **A. Introduction**

1. Indian Trade Journal (ITJ) division of the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS) brings out weekly publication on Embassy Profile Report providing information on recent policy changes and happenings in other countries that may be of interest to the Indian trading community. This is the Embassy Profile Report for 18.03.2026 depicting the Embassy of Philippines.

2. India and the Philippines formally established diplomatic relations on 26 November 1949, shortly after both countries gained independence. Bilateral relations are friendly, based on shared values and commonalities, such as vibrant democratic polity, pluralistic society, rule of law, an independent judiciary, free press and the widespread use of the English language. Similar to many other countries in the region, Philippines also enjoys close cultural and civilizational links with India.

3. With the launch of Look East Policy of India in 1992, partnership intensified with ASEAN and also resulted into stronger relations with countries in the region including the Philippines. India's Act East Policy (2014) and vision for the Indo-Pacific with ASEAN Centrality has great synergy with Philippines own approach to the region aimed at realizing a safe, secure, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific. Philippines is the Country Coordinator for ASEAN- India Dialogue Relations since 26 July 2024 (for a three year term, until July 2027).

4. India and the Philippines are commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations (in 1949). A joint official logo, to commemorate the occasion, was unveiled by the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar and the Ambassador of the Philippines to India, Mr. Josel F. Ignacio, at the reception hosted by the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines in New Delhi on 13 November 2024.

#### **B. Political relations:**

5. Bilateral relations between India and the Philippines have strengthened over the years with regular exchange of high level visits, telephonic conversations, virtual meetings, etc. which continued even during the Covid- 19 pandemic. Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had a brief interaction on the sidelines of 21st ASEAN-India Summit held in Vientiane (Laos) on 10 October 2024.

6. Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri Pabitra Margherita met Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, on the sidelines of the ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in July 2025. He had earlier visited Philippines from 13-15 January 2025.

7. External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Philippines from 25-27 March 2024, and called on President Marcos. He also met his counterpart Secretary of Foreign Affairs (SFA) Enrique A. Manalo; Secretary of National Defense of Philippines Mr. Gilbert Teodoro; National Security Adviser Mr. Eduardo M. Ano, and Secretary of Information and Communication Technology Mr Ivan John Uy. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Secretary Manalo also met on the sidelines of ASEAN-India Foreign Ministers Meeting in Vientiane (25 July 2024), on the sidelines of NAM Summit in Kampala (Jan 2024), and in New Delhi, on 18 March 2025, during the visit of Secretary Manalo to India for the 10<sup>th</sup> Raisina Dialogue.

8. Secretary of Department of Health, Dr. Teodoro Herbosa addressed the Health Minister's Session of 3rd Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS 3.0) held virtually on 17 Aug 2024, through a video message. Philippine Transportation Secretary (Minister) Mr. Jaime J. Bautista visited India to attend the 2nd Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference (APAC-MC) on Civil Aviation held on 11-12 September, 2024 in New Delhi. A nine member delegation led by Under Secretary (Vice Minister) Mr. Salvador Mison visited India from 07-11 February, 2025 to participate in the Aero India, 2025. An Indian delegation led by Mr. Nityanand Rai, Hon'ble Minister of State (Home) visited Philippines to attend Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held on 14-17 Oct 2024.

9. The Philippines has been supportive of a greater role for India in the UN Security Council. They supported our candidature for the non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the term 2021-22 as well as earlier in 2011-12 and India is supporting Philippines candidature for the term 2027-28. Philippines expressed support for the G-4 initiative for Security Council Reform at a meeting by all G-4 HOMs in Manila with SFA on 05 November, 2013 which was reiterated at the Foreign Policy Consultation/ Strategic Dialogue in March 2015. India and Philippines are generally supportive of each other's candidature at the International fora.

10. The umbrella bilateral mechanism is the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation (JCBC) co-chaired by EAM, India 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. The 5<sup>th</sup> JCBC meeting in the chairmanship of EAM Dr.S Jaishankar and SFA Manalo reviewed developments in bilateral relations and discussed the future trajectory of engagement in all the areas of mutual interests.

11. Official level Policy Consultation Talks and Security Dialogue meetings have been held regularly from 1994 and from 2004 respectively. The Security Dialogue was upgraded to a 'Strategic Dialogue (SD)' at the 2<sup>nd</sup> JCBC held in Manila. The 14th FOC and 5th SD were co-chaired by Jaideep Mazumdar, Secretary (East) and Ms. Ma. Theresa P. Lazaro, the then Undersecretary for Bilateral Relations and ASEAN Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Philippines on 9 September 2024 in New Delhi.

### **C. Commercial Relations (Trade and Foreign Investment) – Recent facts & figures**

12. As per the official trade figures of Department of Commerce, GOI, bilateral trade between India and Philippines (in terms of value) has crossed USD 3 billion mark, increased from USD 3.27 billion in 2021-22 to \$3.52 billion in 2024-25.

#### **Export-Import statistics from 2021-22 to 2025-26 (up to Dec'25)**

(USD Billion)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total trade</b>	<b>Import</b>	<b>Export</b>
2021-22	3.27	1.34	1.93
2022-23	2.83	0.72	2.11
2023-24	3.05	0.96	2.09
2024-25	3.52	1.43	2.09
2025-26 ( up to Dec'25)	3.34	1.18	2.16

(Source: Department of Commerce, India)

13. 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 Department of Pharmaceuticals, the Indian Pharmaceutical products account for 12% of the total Philippine Pharmaceutical imports, next only to United States)

14. 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.

15. Indian investment valued around US\$ 5 Billion in the Philippines has mainly been in the areas of IT & ITES [BPO]; pharmaceuticals and healthcare; yarn and textiles; chemicals; automobiles; agriculture; biomass energy; FMCG and others. Notable companies are Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Wipro, HCL Technologies, HGS in IT-BPM Sector; Madras Security Printers, People Strong, Ramco Systems Ltd (ITeS); TVS, Bajaj, Mahindra, Tata Motors in automobile sector; Lupin, Torrent, Zydus Cadila, Sun pharma, Hetero Drug, Claris Life sciences etc. in pharmaceutical sector; Nephroplus in healthcare sector; Splash Corporation (Wipro) in FMCG sector; Prasad seeds, Advanta Seeds, Bio seeds (DCM Group), Agri Exim in agriculture; Thermax Instrumentation Ltd, ISGEC in biomass energy; Sun Source Energy in solar energy; UPL, RM Chemicals in chemical sector; Shri Ram Group (insurance) and others. GMR Group has recently sold its stake in the Cebu International airport to a Filipino company.

16. 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.

#### **D. Defence and Security Cooperation:**

17. Defence cooperation is a key component of India-Philippines bilateral cooperation. On 22 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) in Vientiane, Laos. Earlier, the first ever visit by Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Commandant, CG Admiral Artemio Abu to India held in August 2023 during which two MoUs were signed - MOU on Enhanced Maritime Cooperation, and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to operationalize the MoU on exchange of White Shipping Information (2019). The 8th IN-PH Intelligence Exchange (INTELEX) meeting was held in India in July 2023.

18. High-level training visits: 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 (22-25 May 2016, 05-10 June 2022, and 02-08 June, 2024). Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr., Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) visited India from 17-19 March 2025 to participate in the Raisina Dialogue.

19. India and Philippines have signed an MOU on Defence Cooperation in 2006. Under this MoU, a Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) (at Joint Secretary level) was set up and met five times so far. The 5<sup>th</sup> JDCC was held in Manila on 11 Sept 2024. The Indian delegation was led by Sh. Giridhar Aramane, Defence Secretary of India and the Philippines delegation was headed by Mr. Irineo C. Espino, Undersecretary of National Defense.

20. The Inaugural India-PH Track-1 Maritime Dialogue was held in Manila on 13 Dec, 2024. A 4-members delegation led by Ms. Muanpuii Saiawi, Joint Secretary (D&ISA) visited Philippines from 11-13 Dec, met the Philippine delegation led by Mr. Marshall Louis Alferez, Assistant Secretary of the Maritime & Oceans Affairs in the DFA. Indian Navy and Coast Guard ships regularly visit the Philippines and hold consultations with their counterparts. Three Indian Naval (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.

21. The participation of officers of the armed forces of both countries in various specialized training courses in each other's countries has intensified. An Indian Armed Forces officer has been regularly attending the prestigious Master in National Security Administration (MNSA) course in the Philippines National Defence College in the last several years. There is also regular participation at the Command and General Staff Course (CGSC) of the Philippines.

## **E. Other Major Areas of Cooperation:**

➤ An MoU for constitution of JWG on Cooperation in Financial Technology was signed on 19 June, 2023 to facilitate partnership between India and Philippines in the fields of digital payments, financial inclusion, fintech and related areas. 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the JWG on Fintech was held on 12 September, 2024 in New Delhi. 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, which for the first time opened a regular grant funding window for the Philippines. On 15 July 2024, the implementing agencies of the two countries (Embassy of India in Manila and Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) of the Philippines) signed individual MOAs for 6 QIPs in the sectors of Agriculture, Disaster Risk Reduction & Management, Healthcare and Livelihood Support.

➤ A bilateral MoU on Tourism Cooperation was signed on 18 October 2019 under which 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of India-Philippines JWG on Tourism was held on 8 October, 2020. The 2<sup>nd</sup> JWG meeting held on 21 May, 2024 in Manila and the Indian side was led by Ms. Anita Baghel, Additional DG, Ministry of Tourism and Ms. Verna C. Buensuceso, OIC Undersecretary, Department of Tourism led the Philippine side.

➤ The new Air Services Agreement was signed on 27 Sept 2021 and ratified in June 2023 to facilitate direct air connectivity between India and Philippines. In Sept 2024, a Philippine delegation led by Department of Tourism Secretary Jaime J. Bautista visited New Delhi to attend 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia & Pacific Ministerial Conference for Civil Aviation. Recently, Tourism Minister of India Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat held bilateral meeting with Philippines Tourism Secretary Ms. Christina Garcia Frasco on the sidelines of the India- ASEAN Tourism Ministers Meeting in Malaysia (20 Jan 2025) which was focused on improving tourism potential and expanding connectivity.

➤ Philippines Government fully implemented e-VISA facility for the Indian nationals w.e.f. 28 October 2024.

➤ Bilateral Program of Cooperation (POC) in Science and Technology (S&T), for the period 2019-

2022 was signed in Oct 2019 outlining five broad areas of cooperation, namely agricultural biotechnology; health, pharmaceutical & medical sciences; ICT; Material Science & Technology; and Ocean & Atmospheric Science. In its first Joint Committee Meeting (JCM) in July 2021, implementing guidelines on the call for Joint Research Projects (JRP) were finalized and signed. Subsequently, 3 JRP proposals identified for implementation: (i) Virology (ii) Artificial Intelligence, and (iii) Additive manufacturing of new materials.

➤ On 5 March 2024, Embassy hosted the First India-Philippines Tech Summit (IPTS) in partnership with Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and Department of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) from Indian side and Philippine Department of Information & Communication Technology (DICT) and Philippines Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PCCI). The event showcased innovative digital products and solutions from India's vibrant digital ecosystem focusing on 3 key sectors: Agriculture, Finance, and Health. More than 300 Filipino representatives and 50 Indian companies participated in the 1st IPTS.

➤ 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 programs in India such as 7th Edition of Bengaluru Space Expo [September 2022]; ISRO's UNNATI Training program for nanosatellite building [October 2022]; CSSTEAP's 5<sup>th</sup> Short Course on Weather Forecasting Using Numerical Weather Prediction Models [July-August 2024].

➤ Philippines is one of the beneficiaries of India's flagship capacity building program—Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC). To date, over 1000 Filipino professionals have attended the courses. Electoral Technology, Environmental Impact Assessment, Renewable Energy, Natural Resource Management, 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 Regular courses; 12 in e-ITEC courses and 31 defence personnel participated in defence courses. In FY 2024-25, 24 Regular ITEC (including 2 Executive courses) and 26 Defence ITEC courses have been availed by the Filipino participants. India also offers scholarships, tuition fee waivers to students from the Philippines under its 'Doctoral Fellowship for India in ASEAN' and 'Study in India' programs.

➤ Indian cultural events are organized regularly in the Philippines in commemoration of Indian national days, festivals and other important days such as Rashtriya Ekta Diwas, Constitution Day, Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas, etc. In 2024, Mission launched a compendium of useful resources about the introduction to yoga, yoga therapy and yogic practices on 21 June 2024 on the occasion of International Day of Yoga. Mission also launched a compendium of Indian restaurants in the Philippines filled with fun facts and trivia about the Indian Cuisine and its influence on Filipino food.

➤ As part of the 75<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and the Philippines, Mission organized community welfare activities such as screening of 1000 Filipino women for breast and cervical cancer, Blood donation camp, and India-Philippines @ 75 Friendship Golf Tournament to celebrate the friendship between the people of two countries. The said celebration is a year long event in the Philippines.

➤ About 70,000 members of the Indian community reside in the Philippines, majorly in and around

Metro Manila, City of Davao and Cebu, The 19th century saw people from Sindh and Punjab traveling to the Philippines. The Sindhi community, which made its humble beginnings in retail sector, has now established itself as an influential and affluent segment of the Filipino society.

- The total number of Indian students currently enrolled in the Philippines is around 8800. Most of them are studying medicine and few are pursuing Management, Information Technology, Nursing, Christian Theology & Divinity, Church Music and Pilot training courses.
- The Indian diaspora has established 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 regularly celebrate Indian festivals and engages closely with the Indian Embassy and Filipino Community in supporting social, cultural and welfare activities.

***Source: [www.mea.gov.in](http://www.mea.gov.in)***