



## Ambassador Benedicto is RP's 14<sup>th</sup> Envoy to India

Ambassador Francisco L. Benedicto presented his Letter of Credence to President Pratibha Devisingh Patil on 10 November 2008, becoming the 14<sup>th</sup> Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Philippines to the Republic of India since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1949.

The ceremony was held at the President's Estate, Rashtrapati Bhavan, for five new foreign envoys to India. Aside from Ambassador Benedicto, the Ambassadors of Cote d'Ivoire, Canada, Italy and Ireland also presented their credentials.

Secretary (West) Nalin Surie of the Ministry of External Affairs escorted Ambassador Benedicto and introduced him to the President.

After accepting his Letter of Credence, President Patil asked Ambassador Benedicto to convey her greetings to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, and the Ambassador, in turn, imparted President Arroyo's warm regards to the Indian President.

After the presentation of credentials, the five new envoys held a tête-à-tête with the President, touching on a range of important issues including climate change and women empowerment.

Ambassador Benedicto was accompanied by Mrs. Leontina Benedicto, Deputy Chief of Mission Maria Aileen H.

Bugarin, Second Secretary Iric C. Arribas, Third Secretary Catherine Rose G. Torres, Defense and Armed Forces Attaché Col. Alex C. Capiña, and Administrative Officer Angel D. Espiritu.

India is Ambassador Benedicto's fifth Ambassadorial post, after Singapore, South Korea, Brazil and Canada.



Ambassador Francisco L. Benedicto hands over her Letter of Credence to the Indian President, H.E. Pratibha Devisingh Patil.



President Patil and Ambassador Benedicto together with Deputy Chief of Mission Maria Aileen Bugarin, Second Secretary and Consul Iric Arribas, and officials of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

## MESSAGES



The Yuletide season offers a meaningful occasion for reflection that resonates with a universal message of hope.

The peace and tranquility of the nativity scene reminds us anew of the aspirations we share and the responsibilities we must perform in pursuit of the larger human family's common goals.

In the past year, the men and women of the Department of Foreign Affairs redoubled efforts to build a stronger Republic and a more peaceful, progressive and prosperous world.

We worked with the international community to sustain the onward advance of our nation's interests in regional and global fora. We built more bridges of understanding for the world's peoples through our advocacy of interfaith dialogue. We drew the family of nations closer in promoting, protecting and upholding the rights of migrant workers. We strengthened partnerships and forged new ones. And we sought intensified cooperation for broader democracy, wider growth, deeper reforms for good governance and sustainable development and freer, more transparent and equitable trade. In all of the Department's undertakings, service to the Filipino remained at the very core.

The year ahead offers opportunities and challenges for the Filipino nation and the world; yet we are confident of responding to and surmounting obstacles.

Working as one united team, the men and women of the Department can harness international diplomacy to the fullest to help ensure a safer and more secure future for our people.

In this season of joy and hope, we renew our faith in humanity's goodness and reaffirm our resolve to work for the peace, progress and prosperity that the entire human family deserves.

Isang Makabuluhang Pasko at Mapayapang Bagong Taon sa ating lahat!

ALBERTO G. ROMULO  
Secretary of Foreign Affairs



Anyone who visits the Philippines at Christmas time would notice something different in the air: not only the hint of *hanging amihan*, but more importantly, a palpable sense of joy and excitement. Christmas lights and other decors brighten up the houses, carols fill the air, and colorfully wrapped presents accumulate beneath beautifully trimmed Christmas trees.

Here in India, Christmas is a much more muted affair. So it was all the more heartwarming to see how the Filipino community brought the Christmas spirit here in Delhi—by welcoming their kababayans to their homes for Christmas get-togethers, by preparing tasty delicacies to be shared with those who miss the taste of home-cooked Filipino food, and by greeting and embracing each other at church as they gathered together to pay homage to the baby Jesus in the manger. That they were able to recreate the fiesta atmosphere of our Pasko here abroad shows what a vibrant and close-knit Filipino community we have here in Delhi.

In an interview on Christmas Eve, our President said that her Christmas wish is for the Filipinos to look with unshakeable hope and optimism in a bright future, for the nation to be united, and for the people to strive as one for prosperity for all.

The unity and vitality demonstrated by the Filipino community here in Delhi this Christmas is already a step in that direction. It is my hope, therefore, that we can carry on in that course this coming 2009, and thereby contribute to an even brighter future for our country and people.

Maligayang Pasko at manigong bagong taon sa ating lahat!

FRANCISCO L. BENEDICTO  
Philippine Ambassador to India and Nepal

## RP and India Successfully Conclude Talks on Trade, Investments

“Despite its shared history and decades of cultural and social interaction, the Philippines and India have yet to fully tap into the vast available opportunities of trade and investment between the two countries.” These were the remarks of the Department of Trade and Industry’s Senior Undersecretary Thomas G. Aquino that gave momentum to the discussions during the 10th RP-India Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment (JWGTI) held last November 21-22 2008 at the office of India’s Ministry of Commerce. Responding to the opening statement that included bilateral trade statistics provided by Indian Commerce Secretary Mr. G.K. Pillai, Aquino lauded the Indian side’s willingness to again seriously sit down and consider means of improving trade and investment between the two countries.

Held as a bilateral forum to facilitate constructive dialogue on enhancing bilateral trade and investments, the 10th RP India JWGTI touched on various agenda including the enhancement of trade, cooperation, and assistance in various areas.

### **Assistance and Cooperation.**

Both parties agreed to expedite signing of the MoU proposal of the Philippine Commission on Information and Communication Technology (CICT) with India’s Department of Information Technology to establish a Joint Working Committee to seek out specific projects of mutual cooperation in the field of ICT.

India responded positively on the Philippine request for specialists who will travel to the Philippines to provide training in two industries which are its main strengths: organic product

certification and accreditation, and advanced training, treatment, preservation, production technology, finishing techniques and design of bamboo products.

The meeting also served as a venue for the Indian side to revive expressions of interest to move forward with its MoA on cooperation in Renewable Energy between the DoE and India’s Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, as India proposed convening a Joint Committee Meeting in March 2009 to discuss and calendar specific areas of cooperation. In the same way, the meeting took up the revival of interest of the Philippine side (DoTC) on the MoU between Indian Railway Construction Company (IRCON) and Philippine National Railways (PNR) to conduct a feasibility study on the Iligan-Zamboanga segment of the Mindanao railways project. The Indian side expressed that they will be seeking alternative funding sources including assistance and grants from international agencies like the Asian Development Bank, which was suggested during the meeting.

The Gas Authority of India (GAIL) likewise expressed its intention to re-establish contacts with the Philippine National Oil Company- Exploration Corporation (PNOC-EC) on the possible renewal of its agreement to explore the possibilities of developing a compressed natural gas (CNG) facility in the Philippines.

**Government Procurement.** The Indian side expressed a positive response to issuing a special dispensation on the Philippine request through the Philippine International Trading Corporation (PITC) to export calibrated volumes of wheat and wheat flour to the Philippines despite a standing ban on India’s wheat exports.

The Indian government also provided PITC with leads and information in sourcing HIV and cancer drugs which is the mandate of the parallel drug importation program under of PGMA’s half-priced medicines initiative.



*Indian Commerce Secretary Mr. G.K. Pillai and Philippine Undersecretary for Trade and Industry Thomas G. Aquino signing the Minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> Joint Working Group Meeting on Trade and Investments.*

**Candid Discussions.** Frank and open discussions were made on issues raised by India regarding the visas of Indian IT professionals/businesspersons traveling to RP and the registration of Indian pharmaceutical products with DoH-BFAD. The DFA was pleased to report the relaxation of Visa rules, particularly the issuances of multi-entry businessmen and tourists under DFA’s Foreign Service Circular No. 144-07 issued on September 24, 2007. Under this circular Philippine Foreign Service Posts in India may now issue one -year multiple entry business visas without prior authorization from DFA Manila.

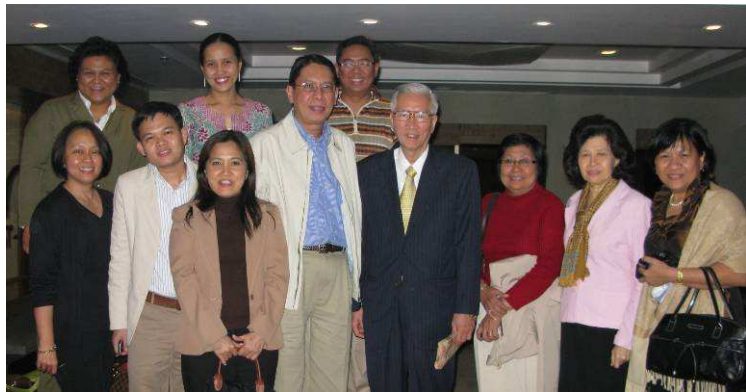
The Indian side expressed optimism and were satisfied with the DoH-BFAD representative's report on forthcoming improvements in pharmaceutical registration as a result of the enactment of RA 9502 (Cheaper Medicines Act). Specifically these are the recognition of the Indian Pharmacopoeia for quality Philippine specifications, the operation of an online registration facility, and the shortening of the registration process time to one month. BFAD also reported that the ASEAN regulations on Pharmaceuticals would be harmonized by 1 January 2009 with details and guidelines available in its website.

**Investment Missions to the Philippines.** The Indian side proposed cooperation in textiles through the expansion of textile trade between India and the Philippines and exploring the possibilities of joint-ventures with Filipino firms. For this purpose, the top Indian industry associations including the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) shall be visiting the Philippines for this purpose. A similar in-bound mission shall be organized for the mining and tourism sectors in the Philippines.

**Towards a Stronger Bilateral Trade Relationship.** As the meeting wended with the success of moving forward a number of issues and arriving at agreements of cooperation, both Secretary Pillai and Senior Undersecretary Aquino expressed the importance of the JWGTI as a vehicle for open and constructive discussions towards strengthening of the bilateral economic relations between the Philippines and India. Both sides expressed optimism that the ASEAN-India FTA will provide further impetus for higher level of economic engagement between the Philippines and India.

Other members of the Philippine delegation included representatives from DTI's Bureau of International Trade Relations; Philippine International Trading Corporation; Bureau of Food and Drugs; Department of Foreign Affairs; and the Philippine Embassy in New Delhi.

The Indian delegation was represented by representatives from its Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Food Processing Industry, Ministry of External Affairs, Dept. of Commerce, Dept. of Agriculture and Cooperation, Dept. of Telecommunications, Dept. of Health and Family Welfare, Dept. of Pharmaceuticals, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), India Railway Construction Company (IRCON) and EXIM Bank of India.



*Ambassador and Mrs. Benedicto with DTI USec. Thomas Aquino and members of the Philippine delegation to the 10<sup>th</sup> Joint Working Group Meeting on Trade and Investments after the dinner hosted by Ambassador Benedicto for the delegates.*

## New Commercial Attaché in Philippine Embassy in New Delhi

The Philippine Embassy in New Delhi welcomed its newest addition last November 11 with the arrival Mr. Michael Angelo D. Roaring, its new Commercial Attaché.

Mr. Roaring joined the Department of Trade and Industry's Foreign Trade Service Corps last June 2007 after eight years in the private sector. Prior to joining government, he specialized in marketing and business development in a number of Filipino and multinational firms including L'Oreal Philippines, the Unisell Group, and Suyen Corporation (Bench).



New Delhi is Mr. Roaring's first foreign assignment and he looks forward to the challenges that lie ahead in bringing trade and investment between the Philippines and India to a much higher level. Mr. Roaring graduated with a Business Administration degree from the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

## Embassy Officials strengthen business ties with Chennai

Second Secretary (Economic) and Consul Iric Arribas and Commercial Attaché Michael Roaring met with officials of various business entities in Chennai as part of the Embassy's effort to strengthen commercial relationship with this major South Indian city. These organizations include:

### The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).

NASSCOM is an organization composed of over 1200 member companies operating in India which are in the business of software development, software services, software products, IT-enabled/BPO services and e-commerce. It was set up in 1988 to facilitate business and trade in software and services and to encourage advancement of research in software technology. It has partnered with the Business Processing Association of the Philippines for the advancement of these same objectives. According to Mr. K. Purushothaman, Regional Director of NASSCOM for Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Chennai is fast emerging to be a key destination for IT and IT-enabled companies, following Bangalore and Delhi.

### Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Founded in 1836, the Madras Chamber of Commerce and Industry is one of the oldest business chambers in India. It is actively involved in the promotion of trade and industry in South India. Embassy officials met with Mr. Subramanian, Secretary General of MCCI who expressed interest in forging stronger economic ties with the Philippines through exchange of trade and investment missions.

**Perot Systems Corporation.** Perot Systems is a global provider of technology-based business solutions drawing upon extensive capabilities in consulting, IT and business process outsourcing, infrastructure and application services, and business and systems integration. Perot Systems is headquartered in Plano, Texas, and has more than 23,000 associates worldwide. As part of its global expansion, Perot Systems opened its first Philippines office in year 2007.

**R.R. Donnelly and Sons.** RR Donnelley is the world's premier full-service provider of print and related services, including business process outsourcing. Founded more than 140 years ago, the company provides solutions in commercial printing, direct mail, financial printing, print fulfillment, forms and labels, logistics, call centers, transactional print-and-mail, print management, online services, digital photography, color services, and content and database management to customers in the publishing, healthcare, advertising, retail, technology, financial services and many other industries. The largest companies in the world and others rely on RR Donnelley's scale, scope and insight through a comprehensive range of online tools, variable printing services and market-specific solutions. Their BPO operations are headquartered in New York and provided integrated onsite-offshore BPO services to Fortune 500 companies and to professional services firms through its operations in North America, Europe, India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines.



## Ambassador Benedicto visits Mumbai and Kolkata

Ambassador Francisco L. Benedicto visited the Philippine Consulates General (PCGs) in Mumbai and Kolkata on 12-14 November and 17-18 November, respectively. He was accompanied in the consular visits, his first official travel since presenting his credentials to President Pratibha Patil on 10 November, by Mrs. Leontina Benedicto, Deputy Chief of Mission Maria Aileen Bugarin, and Second Secretary and Consul Iric Arribas.

In Mumbai, the Ambassador was received by Ms. Rajashree Birla, Philippine Consul General, ad honorem, and a director on the boards of the Aditya Birla Group of Companies. A dinner was also hosted in his honor by industrialist Taizoon Khorakiwala and spouse Edith. They were joined at the dinner by guests from India's hotel, entertainment and real estate development industry.

Meanwhile, in Kolkata, the Ambassador and his party were met by Honorary Consul General K.K. Khemka, who toured them around the PCG and hosted a reception in their honor with the local diplomatic corps and business community. Apart from these, the Embassy officials also made a presentation on doing business in the Philippines before the Indian Chamber of Commerce and had a luncheon with the Filipino community in Kolkata.

The Ambassador's visits to Mumbai and Kolkata are part of the Embassy's ongoing efforts to enhance the delivery of consular services by the Philippine Foreign Service Posts in India, as well as to project the Philippines as an attractive destination for investments, with a view to strengthening economic ties between the Philippines and India.



Ambassador and Mrs. Benedicto with Honorary Consul General Rajashree Birla (3rd from right) and the Khorakiwala family in Mumbai.



Ambassador Benedicto and party with the Filipino community in Kolkata.

## Dominican Republic Ambassador hosts lunch for Ambassador Benedicto

Ambassador Benedicto is introduced to other Ambassadors by Ambassador Hans Frank Danenberg Castellanos, the Dominican Republic's Ambassador to India and non-resident Ambassador to the Philippines, who hosted a luncheon in Ambassador Benedicto's honor.



(Left to right) With the Ambassador of Oman, the Ambassadors of Lesotho & Lebanon, and with the Ambassador of Ecuador

**Photos of Ambassador  
Benedicto at various  
functions in India**



With the Ambassador of  
Algeria during their National  
Day reception.



With the Ambassador of  
Hungary during their National  
Day reception.



With the Ambassador of  
Turkey and spouse during  
their National Day reception



Ambassador and Mrs. Benedicto with High Commissioner Savenaca  
Kaunisela and the Defense Attaché of Fiji



With the Malaysian High Commissioner Dato Tan Seng Sun  
and spouse Datin Julia Tan at the National Day of Malaysia

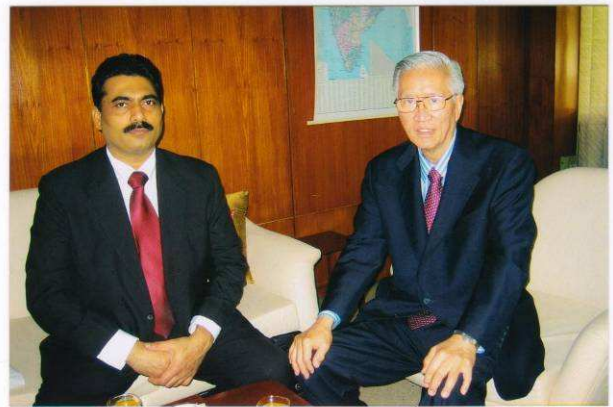


With Ambassador Zhang Yan of the People's Republic of China  
and spouse at their National Day reception

Ambassador and Mrs. Benedicto at a lunch with Mr. and Mrs. Michael Ellis of the American Embassy



Call on the Ambassador by Mr. Chandrakant Salunkhe, head of the Small and Medium Business Development Chamber of India



Call on the Ambassador by Mr. Pocholo Azucena, Philippine Airlines Manager for GSA Relations and Charter Services together with Ms. Shilpa Sethi of the Philippine Tourism Marketing Office, New Delhi



Australia-based Filipino Chef Raymond "Sunny" De Ocampo (3rd from right) called on the Ambassador during his recent visit to New Delhi as part of a tour to promote Australian cuisine. They were joined in the photo by the Embassy's officers, and the Filipino chefs at The Oberoi Hotel, Augusto Cabrera and Dennis Garcia.





## Filipinos in India organize, interim set of officers elected

With the steady growth in the number of Filipinos in India and the encouragement by Ambassador Francisco L. Benedicto, the local Filipino community recently moved to organize themselves into a group named "Filipinos In India". An interim set of officers who will take the lead in finalizing the group's formation was elected through e-mail voting, which yielded the following results:

President: Dante Payawal  
Vice President: Doroteo Jose  
Secretary : Cecille Manguan  
PRO : Noel Arellano  
Treasurer: Fatima Sharma  
Auditor: Vicky Singh  
Sergeant at Arms : Ben Baquilod and Augusto Cabrera  
Muse : Sharmaine Buhay

The interim officers took their oath of office, administered by Ambassador Benedicto, at the induction ceremony held in conjunction with a Filipino community Diwali party on 18 October 2008 at the Gurgaon penthouse of three Filipino professionals.

"It is high time that the Filipino community here in India assume a more organized form, and thereby receive its due recognition, which would enable it to play a greater role whether in representing our country or participating in socio-civic projects both in the Philippines and here in India," remarked the Ambassador.



## Filipino, Chinese basketball teams face off in friendly match

The Chinese community basketball team made good on their goal to even things out with their Filipino opponents, winning the second friendly match on 29 November 2008 organized by the Philippine and Chinese Embassies. The game, which was held in the Chinese Embassy grounds in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, was won by the Chinese 47-36, two years after the Philippine team prevailed in the first friendly match between the two communities. Filipino and Chinese expatriates, as well as officers and staff of the two Embassies, cheered on their respective players.



### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION AND ELECTION TO ALL FILIPINO CITIZENS

All citizens of the Philippines abroad, not otherwise disqualified by law, at least eighteen (18) years of age on the day of the election, and who wish to vote for purposes of the 2010 Philippine National Elections, must file applications for registration/certification as overseas absentee voters from 01 February 2009 until 31 August 2009 at the Philippine Embassy, New Delhi.

## Filipinos bring Christmas to Delhi

In a testimony to the spirit of sharing that surrounds the season, the Filipino Community in Delhi gathered together for a Christmas potluck on 7 December 2008 in the home of a community member in Chattarpur Enclave.

Apart from the sumptuous spread of Filipino delicacies, with a pair of lechon as a centerpiece, the kids were treated to a magic show, face painting and an inflatable castle, while the adults entertained themselves with karaoke, parlor games and a raffle.

“Christmas is always a joyful family affair for us Filipinos, and being in another country, we tend to miss the company of our loved ones on this special occasion,” remarked Ms. Maria Aileen H. Bugarin, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Philippine Embassy,” who attended the party with other Embassy officers and staff. “It’s wonderful to have an opportunity like this to celebrate Christmas with our extended family here in India.”



## Filipinos in Bangalore get together with Embassy officials

Mr. Iric Arribas, Second Secretary and Consul, touched base with the Filipinos in Bangalore on 12 December 2008 and informed them of the consular services relevant to them as Filipinos married to Indian nationals residing in India.



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