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BILATERAL RELATIONS

# INDIA - PHILIPPINES

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# INTRODUCTION

India Philippines relations, also known as Indian-Filipino relations or Indo-Filipino relations, refers to the bilateral relations between the India and the Philippines. Diplomatic relations between India and the Philippines was established in 1949. India maintains an embassy in Manila, whilst the Philippines maintains one in New Delhi. A Treaty of Friendship was signed between the Philippines and India on 11 July 1952.



# HISTORY

## Early History

Indian elements in Philippine culture point to early relations between the two societies. However, some works posit that the influx of Indian cultural elements into the Philippines is understood only in terms of the developments in the intervening regions between these two areas, the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian Archipelago, where there was an intensified process of Indian influences from the 2nd through the late 14th centuries CE.

Through the Srivijaya and Majapahit empires, Indian influences would have reached the Philippines from the 10th through the early 14th centuries, based on the events in these two regions, and through direct migration from the Indian subcontinent to the Philippines. Artifacts of Indian orientation have been found in a lot of islands in the Philippines.

The golden image of the female Bodhisattva which was found in Agusan, was related to the development of Buddhism in Southeast Asia dating back to the late 13th and 14th centuries. The introduction of Sanskrit words and literature may be dated to the 10th and 12th centuries. Until now, Sanskrit words are still found in abundance in various Philippine languages.

Then there is the folk narrative among the Maranao, known as Maharadia Lawana which shows an Indian character and whose story is very similar to the Indian epic Ramayana. The existence of rajanates in Philippine classic history, especially in Cebu and Butuan, also points to heavy influences from Indian cultures. Hinduism was also prevalent in various societies in the Philippines, notably in central and southern islands, along with the banks of Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay.

## Colonial Era

During the period 1762–1764, during the various Anglo-Spanish wars, 600 Sepoy (or native Indian) troops arrived in the Philippines as part of the military expedition of the East India Company. When the British troops withdrew, many of the Sepoys mutinied and refused to leave. They settled in what is now Cainta, Rizal. The region in and around Cainta still has many Sepoy descendant.

During the 18th century, there was robust trade between Manila and the Coromandel Coast of Bengal, involving Philippine exports of tobacco, silk, cotton, indigo, sugar cane and coffee.

## Post World War II era

The Philippines established diplomatic relations with India on 26 November 1949.[5] The first Philippine envoy to India was the late Foreign Secretary Narciso Ramos.

Five years after India's independence in 1947, the Philippines and India signed a Treaty of Friendship on 11 July 1952 in Manila to strengthen the friendly relations existing between the two countries. Soon after, the Philippine Legation in New Delhi was established and then elevated to an embassy.

However, due to foreign policy differences as a result of the bipolar alliance structure of the Cold War, the development of bilateral relations was stunted. It was only in 1976 that relations started to normalize when Aditya Vikram Birla, one of India's successful industrialists, met with then President Ferdinand E. Marcos to explore possibilities of setting up joint ventures in the Philippines. This resulted in the establishment of Indo- Philippine Textile Mills, Inc. (Indo-Phil), then the largest Indian investment in the country. Indo-Phil currently employs 2,000 Filipino workers and supplies 40% of Philippine domestic demand for yarn.

The Trade Agreement between the Philippines and India was signed on 29 May 1979. In 1995, following the first Philippine Trade Mission to India, a Joint Working Group and a Joint Business Council were set up to assess and identify potentials for trade as well as identify new areas for collaboration. Since then, bilateral meetings have been held regularly.

## 21st Century Relations

Policy Consultation Talks between the two countries were established in 2000. The talks, which are held annually and conducted by senior officials of the foreign ministries of the two countries, aimed at discussing bilateral issues and regional and international issues of common concern.

Both countries signed a Joint Declaration for Co-operation to Combat International Terrorism to complement the ASEAN-India Joint Declaration to Combat International Terrorism which was adopted by the Heads of Government and States of ASEAN and India on 8 October 2003 in Bali, Indonesia. The declaration seeks to enhance intelligence and information sharing on counter-terrorism measures, strengthen capacity-building efforts through training and education, capability and readiness, including training and technical assistance; and to continue working together in the fight against the cyber crime and terrorist misuse of cyber space.

The first RP–India Security Dialogue was held in Manila on 12 March 2004. The Philippines and India agreed to establish a security dialogue that would serve as a policy forum for sharing security assessments and for reviewing and giving direction to co-operation in bilateral/regional security and defence matters.

In commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Philippines–India diplomatic relations, and pursuant to Presidential Proclamation 1924, the month of November 2009 was proclaimed as Philippines–India Friendship Month by then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

The ASEAN–India Free Trade Area agreement signed by India in 2009 also includes the Philippines as signatory.



# JOINT COMMISSION ON BILATERAL CO-OPERATION

The agreement to establish a Joint Commission on Bilateral Co-operation was signed during the State Visit to India of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on 5 October 2007. The establishment of the Joint Commission on Bilateral Co-operation aims to further strengthen and develop the co-operation in the field of trade, economic, scientific, technological and other fields of co-operation. The meeting of the Joint Commission will be co-chaired by the two countries' Ministers for Foreign Affairs who will meet once every two years.

The inaugural session of the Joint Commission was held on 15 March 2011, co-chaired by Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert F. Del Rosario, and was held in New Delhi. During the meeting both sides agreed to move forward on co-operative initiatives in various fronts (trade, agriculture, defence).

During the 2018 ASEAN–India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi, where the Delhi Declaration was signed, Philippines-India relations was one of the two most focal bilateral discussions made. India is targeting billions of investments in Philippine markets, notably in the pharmaceutical, information technology, energy, and transportation which would lead to the creation of 10,000 jobs.






# CULTURAL RELATIONS

Filipino culture had Indian influences. About 30 percent of the Tagalog language were loanwords from Sanskrit. The use of brass, bronze, copper and tin in Philippine decorative arts and metal works also had Indian origin. Early Filipino literature and folklore also had Indian influences such as the Maranao epic of Darangan and the Ifugao tale of Balituk. The Philippine folk belief regarding eclipses, where some narrates that the dragon called laho bites the moon or sun to cause the phenomenon is related to the Indian belief regarding the being Rahu from Hindu tradition.









# MILITARY RELATIONS

Defence and maritime security have emerged as core pillars of the India–Philippines Strategic Partnership, which was elevated during Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s state visit to India in August 2025. Guided by the 2025–2029 Plan of Action, institutional engagement has expanded through the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC), service-to-service staff talks across the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and enhanced Coast Guard collaboration.

A historic milestone in bilateral defence trade was achieved with the January 2022 agreement valued at $375 million for the supply of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile system. With deliveries beginning in April 2024, the Philippines became the first international operator of the BrahMos system, bolstering its coastal defence capabilities.

Maritime cooperation and naval interoperability have deepened steadily through regular port calls and joint drills. Following years of regular goodwill visits by Indian Navy and Coast Guard vessels to Manila and Subic Bay, both navies conducted their first-ever bilateral maritime exercise in August 2025. In September 2026, Indian Naval Ships Sahyadri and Kulish participated in the ADMM-Plus Maritime Security Joint Cooperation Activity at Subic Bay. Both countries also maintain active officer exchanges across premier military institutions, including the National Defence College (NDC), College of Defence Management, and Army High Command Course.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) remains a vital facet of bilateral military cooperation. India has consistently extended prompt airlifted and financial relief during crises—ranging from Typhoon Bopha (2012), Typhoon Haiyan and the Bohol earthquake (2013), and the Marawi rehabilitation efforts (2017), to dispatching 30 tonnes of emergency medical aid and a BHISHM Cube portable hospital via an Indian Air Force C-17 in January 2026 following Super Typhoon Uwan and the Cebu earthquake. In August 2026, both nations further strengthened disaster-response interoperability through the Joint Philippines–India Disaster Management Exercise in Quezon City.

# TRADE RELATIONS

Economic and commercial ties between India and the Philippines have expanded steadily, crossing the US$3 billion milestone in 2022–23. According to official trade data, bilateral trade reached US$3.53 billion in 2023–24 (with Indian exports at US$2.10 billion and imports at US$1.43 billion) and rose further to US$3.9 billion in 2025–26.

Beyond the ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement, both countries have agreed to negotiate a bilateral Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to unlock greater market access and diversify traded goods and services. Strong institutional engagement through the Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment continues to drive two-way commerce. Indian investments in the Philippines span key sectors including IT-BPM, pharmaceuticals, textiles, steel, airports, chemicals, and automobiles, with growing collaboration in infrastructure, renewable energy, semiconductors, and digital technologies.



# INDIAN COMMUNITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Indian community in the Philippines, estimated at over 70,000 to 150,000 including Persons of Indian Origin and Non-Resident Indians, resides primarily in Metro Manila, Davao, and Cebu. Originating from 19th-century migration from Sindh and Punjab, the community has evolved into an affluent and well-integrated segment of Filipino society, supported by numerous religious and cultural institutions, including over 30 Gurudwaras and several Hindu temples. In recent decades, a growing number of Indian professionals have also joined international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank, the International Rice Research Institute, UN agencies, multinational corporations, IT-BPM firms, and Indian joint ventures.

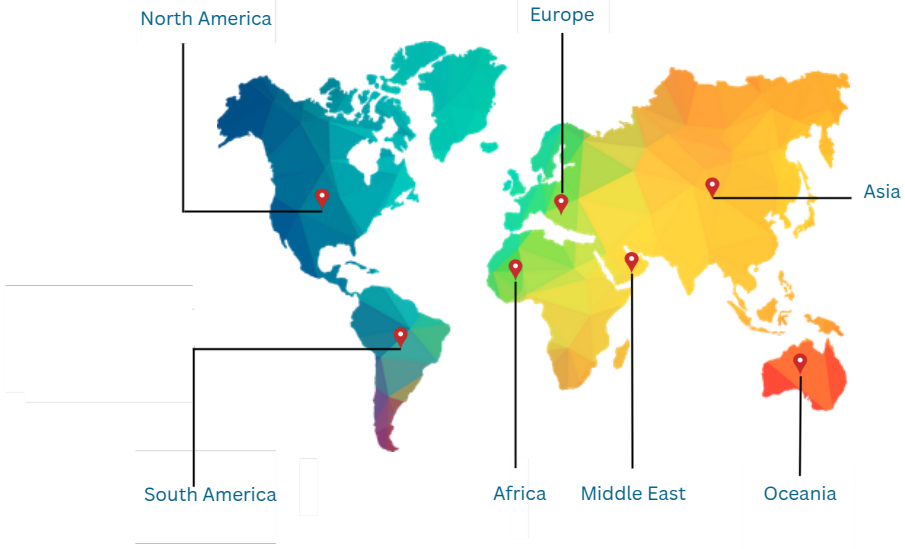
The Philippines has become a major destination for Indian higher education, hosting nearly 10,000 Indian students. Most pursue medical degrees across Commission on Higher Education (CHED)-recognized universities, while others enroll in aviation academies or business programs, including at the prestigious Asian Institute of Management in Manila, drawn by English-language instruction.

Academic and cultural outreach remains vibrant. Leading institutions—including the University of Santo Tomas, the University of the Philippines, the University of Northern Philippines, the University of the Visayas, Adamson University, and the University of Mindanao—feature dedicated ‘India Chapters’ in their libraries housing books gifted by India’s Ministry of External Affairs. Additionally, a bust of Mother Teresa, gifted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, stands at the University of Santo Toma

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