



Philippines-China CHRONICLE



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Former President Ramos meets President Jiang Zemin



Former President Fidel V. Ramos led members of the Board of Directors of the Bo'ao Forum for Asia (BFA), in their meeting with H.E. President Jiang Zemin on 24 January 2003 in Beijing.

During the meeting, President Jiang expressed his confidence that the Forum under the wise guidance of its Chairman, former President Ramos, and an effective and experienced new Secretary General in the person of Mr. Long Yongtu, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, will turn BFA into a dynamic international forum to serve the needs of the people of the region.

President Jiang said the BFA provided a new forum for dialogue and cooperation for Asian countries, and complemented cooperation between governments. He assured that China will continue to provide assistance and support to the BFA and hopes that it will become a very active forum in Asia.

The former President and other members of the Board of the BFA said that the Forum had played an important role in increasing regional development and exchanges. Former President Ramos added that all the members of the Forum should work together for economic development and the improvement of understanding and cooperation in Asia.

The former President, who was accompanied by Mrs. Ming Ramos, Atty. Frumencio Lagustan, Executive Director of the Ramos Peace and Development Foundation (RPDEV), and Ms. Arlene Juele of RPDEV, also met Filipino community representatives and Embassy officials before returning to Manila.

Speaker de Venecia attends AAPP

Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. headed the Philippine delegation to the Meeting of the Executive Council of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP) held in Beijing on 23-26 January 2003. The Speaker was accompanied by Mrs. Ma. Georgina de Venecia, Congressman and Mrs. Roque R. Ablan, Jr., and other officials of the Philippine House of Representatives.

Speaker de Venecia, who is vice chairman of the conference, presided over two of the four sessions of the AAPP Meeting. During the occasion, the Speaker briefed the meeting on preparations for the Fourth General Assembly of the AAPP to be held in Manila on 7-11 May 2003. H.E. Li Peng, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, pledged the support and cooperation of the Chinese legislature when the Philippine Congress hosts the AAPP's Fourth General Assembly.

The Executive Council endorsed three proposals of the Speaker, namely, the establishment of an AAPP Council of Senior Advisers; compilation of top 20 political and economic reform laws from each AAPP member country; and the setting up of an AAPP Internet Portal (website).

Speaker de Venecia also had a bilateral meeting with Chairman Li at the Great Hall of the People. He conferred on Chairman Li a medal together with a citation from the House of Representatives for his significant contributions in furthering legislative exchanges and cooperation between the two countries.

Philippine Best in March Trade Expo in Shanghai

Brisk preparations are underway for the Philippines' first major trade show in Shanghai entitled "Ties that Bind: A Philippine Solo Exhibition." The trade fair, which will be held on 27-30 March 2003 at the Shanghai Exhibition Center, aims to build trade and economic links with China through the best of the Philippines' products and services.

Organized by the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), the trade fair will showcase Philippine companies representing garments, jewelry, fashion accessories, furniture, food and beverage, marine products, resource-based building and decoration materials, cosmetics, automotive parts, information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services, education services and design services.

Aside from offering the Chinese market a sampling of the best of what the Philippines can offer, the exhibit also gives Philippine companies the opportunity to explore and understand the Chinese market better.

China's huge population, emerging middle class, high growth rate, increasing dependence on imports and recent entry into the World Trade Organization make a good market for Filipinos to explore. According to China's General

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Photo taken after Speaker de Venecia conferred on Chairman Li a medal and a citation from the Philippine House of Representatives. (From left) Mrs. Victoria Bautista Ablan, Congressman Roque R. Ablan, Jr., Ambassador Josue L. Villa, Mrs. Georgina de Venecia, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Chairman Li Peng, Madame Zhu Lin, NPC Vice Chairman Xu Jialu, NPC Secretary General He Chunlin, NPC Vice Secretary General Wang Yunlong, and Vice Foreign Minister Yang Wenchang.

An Open Invitation to Foreign Travelers to the Philippines

"Visit Philippines 2003 is our way of celebrating our rich cultural heritage and festive spirit. We invite people from all over the world to come and experience the Filipino way of celebrating life. We gladly welcome everyone to share in the experience: from small town fiestas to international events. When the celebration is over and it is time to leave, our visitors will say goodbye to friends, not strangers. But we will not say goodbye... instead, we will say 'See you again, come back soon!'"

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo
and
Philippine Tourism Secretary Richard J. Gordon

Interested travelers may obtain brochures on the March 2003 calendar of events for Visit Philippines 2003 from the Philippine Embassy. Travelers may also visit the following web site for more details on Visit Philippines 2003: www.wowphilippines.com.ph.

DIPLOMATIC NOTES

Philippines-China Exchange of Notes on visa for resident diplomats

Through an exchange of diplomatic notes, the Philippines entered into a reciprocal agreement with China allowing Filipino diplomatic and consular personnel to receive multiple-entry visas from the Chinese Government for a maximum validity period of five years. The agreement took effect on 19 December 2002 and will benefit Filipino diplomats assigned to the Philippine Embassy in Beijing and to the Philippine Consulates General in Xiamen, Guangzhou and Shanghai. Chinese diplomatic and consular personnel posted to the Chinese Embassy in Manila and the Chinese Consulate-General in Cebu City are also entitled to the same multiple-entry five-year visa.

Previously, visas issued to Filipino diplomatic and consular personnel posted in China were valid for a maximum of one year only. This new regulation is expected to facilitate the performance of functions by resident diplomatic and consular personnel who may be expected to shuttle between their place of assignment and their home country in the course of the tour of duty, both for official and private travels.

This new visa agreement is a product of the first bilateral consular consultations held between the Philippines and China in Beijing on 3 July 2002.

Filipino students in Beijing increases

A total of 213 Filipino students are currently enrolled in short-term Chinese language courses at the Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU), up 28% from last year's 167 Filipino enrollees.

The increase in the number of students is due to a growing interest in learning Chinese, with Filipinos becoming aware of the opportunities in enhancing Philippines-China relations.

A handful of Filipino students are also enrolled in Beijing University and the Beijing Foreign Studies University.

Sister-lake pact between the Philippines and China signed

A partnership agreement by the respective heads of the lake development agencies of the Philippines and China was signed in February, marking the first sister-lake agreement between the Philippines' Laguna Lake and Lake Taihu, China's third largest lake.

Wu Jieping, Vice Chairman of the 9th National People's Congress, said during the signing ceremony in Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province, "It is the proud beginning of the lasting relation between our two countries that will become the momentous part of both our nations' history and environment while fostering brotherhood among member-states in the family of nations." He added that such an agreement is aimed at helping protect and preserve natural resources for present and future generations while safeguarding sources of water to avert perceived deterioration in water quality and quantity.

Hosting a formal dinner for the Philippine delegation after the signing ceremony, he said that China holds with the highest priority the endeavor of striking a friendly alliance with its neighbors on lake conservation in its efforts to help promote awareness of the rising global threats to watersheds and natural resources within the region.

Senator Angara meets CPC leader Wu Guanzheng



Left to right: International Department of the CPC Central Committee Vice Minister Cai Wu, Senator Edgardo Angara, newly-elected CPC Politburo member H.E. Mr. Wu Guanzheng, Ambassador Josue Villa and Atty. Avelino Cruz.

Senator Edgardo Angara paid a private visit to Beijing on 23 - 25 January 2003. Notwithstanding the private nature of his visit, the Chinese Government took the opportunity of the visit for Senator Angara to meet newly-elected Communist Party of China (CPC) Standing Committee Political Bureau Member Wu Guanzheng at the Great Hall of the People on 24 January 2003. Before his election to the Politburo Committee, Mr. Wu served as CPC Secretary for Shandong Province.

During their meeting, Senator Angara and Mr. Wu exchanged notes on the progress of bilateral cooperation in the fields of agriculture, trade, and education. Mr. Wu invited Senator Angara to lead a delegation from the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino (LDP) to visit China at the invitation of the CPC. Senator Angara accepted the invitation and agreed to schedule a visit to China by members of the LDP.

CPC Deputy Director General for International Liaison, Mr. Wu Shumin, earlier called on Senator Angara at his hotel. Mr. Wu fondly recalled the visit by a delegation from the CPC to Manila where they had the opportunity to meet with Senator Angara. Mr. Wu reiterated the invitation by the CPC leaders for the establishment of party-to-party relations with LDP.

Departure and arrival of Philippine Embassy personnel

Philippine Defense and Armed Forces Attaché Colonel Ramon Santos and Assistant M/Sgt. Jeannette Marbella left Beijing at the end of January upon completion of their tours of duty in China. The new Defense and Armed Forces Attaché Col. Samuel Narbuada, and his Assistant TSg. Aladin Dacayanan, arrived in Beijing in the same month.

The Embassy also welcomes the arrival of Ms. Marie Charlotte Tang, Third Secretary and Vice Consul and Mr. Abraham Castillo, Attaché. Ms. Tang is handling economic, trade, investment and tourism matters, while Mr. Castillo is assigned to the consular section of the Embassy.

MFA hosts activity for ASEAN Diplomats

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a friendly skiing activity for ASEAN diplomats on 16 February 2003 at the Huaibei International Ski Resort near Beijing.



From Left: Amb. Abdul Hamid Abdul Jalil (Brunei); Amb. Khek Lerang (Cambodia); Standing behind: Counsellor Luo Zhao Hui, Asian Department, MFA; Amb. Don Pramudwinai (Thailand); Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi; Amb. Datuk' Abdul Majid Bin Ahmad Khan (Malaysia); Amb. Tran Van Luat (Vietnam); Director General Fu Ying, Asian Department, MFA and former Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines; Amb. Josue L. Villa (Philippines); Amb. Chin Siat Yoon (Singapore) and his wife, Madame Wang Lee Moi.



The Philippine Embassy Skiing Team

Memorial Mass for Ambassador Suarez

A memorial Mass on the tenth anniversary of the death of former Philippine envoy to Beijing Pablo R. Suarez was held on 25 January at the South Cathedral (Nantang), celebrated by Father Xavier Zhang.

Philippine Embassy personnel, members of the Filipino community, and other parishioners were present. The regular Sunday Church choir sang hymns throughout the duration of the Mass.

Ambassador Suarez started his diplomatic career as Vice Consul in the Philippine Consulate in New York in 1960, and later as First Secretary of the Philippine Mission to the United Nations. In 1966, he was assigned to the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. and in 1969 became a Career Minister. In 1973, he was assigned as Consul General in the Philippine Consulate in Chicago. After holding the position of Assistant Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Suarez was assigned as Chief of Mission to Malaysia in 1985 and later to the People's Republic of China in 1989. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs. He retired from the service in 1992, but was later appointed by President Fidel V. Ramos as Philippine Ambassador to the United States. Ambassador Suarez passed away on 25 January 1993 in Washington, D.C.

Ambassador Suarez was posthumously awarded the Ancient Order of Sikatuna with the rank of Datu, the Dakilang Kamanong of the Gawad Mabini, and the Distinguished Service Award of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Overseas absentee voting law enters into force

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law R.A. No. 9189, otherwise known as the Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003. The law is based on Senate Bill No. 2104 and House Bill No. 3570 which was reconciled by a Conference Committee composed of representatives from the Senate and the House of Representatives.

The new legislation seeks to comply with the constitutional mandate to allow overseas Filipino voters to cast their votes in national elections without having to return to the Philippines on election day.

The highlights of the new law include the following:

1. Qualified overseas voters may vote for president, vice-president, senators and party-list representatives.

2. A permanent residency does not automatically disqualify a Filipino voter from casting his vote in the 2004 national election if he declares his/her intention to reside permanently in the Philippines not later than 3 years from the approval of his/her registration as an overseas voter.

3. Voters must either be registered with the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) in the Philippines before departing for abroad or with the Philippine embassy or consulate having jurisdiction over their place of residence, not later than 280 calendar days before the scheduled day of election.

4. Filipinos wishing to register as overseas voters with the Philippine embassy or consulate must submit their valid Philippine passport and complete the registration form to be prescribed by the COMELEC.

Additional details of the Overseas Absentee Voting Act of 2003 may be secured by downloading the complete law from the website of the Philippine Congress at <http://www.congress.gov.ph>.

Chinese regulation on entry/exit of foreign currencies

The 1969 Regulation for the entry and exit of foreign currencies into China, adopted by the National Foreign Exchange Administration and the General Customs Administration, provides for the following conditions governing foreign currencies:

1. Passengers carrying more than US\$5,000 into China are required to declare the money to Customs authorities upon arrival at Chinese airports. Passengers are requested to keep the customs invoice which will serve as the permit for taking out an equivalent value of foreign currency upon departure from China.

PROFILE

Neil Frank R. Ferrer Third Secretary and Vice Consul Philippine Embassy, Beijing



(This is the 11th of a series of features on Philippine diplomats in China.)

Mr. Neil Frank R. Ferrer, or Neil to his friends and colleagues, joined the Embassy in April 2001 on his first foreign assignment. He is the Embassy's political officer who handles matters pertaining to bilateral relations vis-à-vis the Philippines and China, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, including other diplomatic missions in China accredited to the Philippines. He has a special interest on the law of the sea and other maritime issues.

Neil obtained an A.B. Political Science degree from the University of the Philippines and has completed all academic units of the M.S. Economics program of De La Salle University. He is a Chevening Scholar of the U.K. and holds an M.A. in International Boundaries, with Distinction, from the University of Durham.

After passing the Foreign Service Officers' Examination, Neil joined the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in 1996. While in Manila, he served as Principal Assistant under the Office of the Undersecretary for Policy and the Office of Policy Planning and Coordination. In 1999 he was designated Executive Officer of the Maritime and Ocean Affairs Center until his foreign assignment. Before joining the DFA, Neil worked as a researcher at the Foreign Service Institute and later at the Institute for Development Research and Studies. He was also a part-time Instructor at De La Salle University.

Neil was born in 1970 in Quezon City to Cebuano and Ilocano parents. He is married to Miriam L. Manaog and they are blessed with a lovely daughter, Phebe Minelle.

2. Passengers intending to take out from China more than US\$5,000, but not exceeding US\$10,000, are required to secure a permit from a local bank if they did not declare a similar amount when they entered China.

3. Passengers intending to take out from China more than US\$10,000 are required to secure a permit from a local bank and the approval from the State Foreign Exchange Administration.

Passengers caught carrying into or out of China undeclared foreign currencies exceeding US\$5,000 may be subjected to corresponding penalties under Chinese law. All Filipinos are advised to comply with this regulation in order to avoid prosecution.

LEGAL CORNER

Philip was recruited to work as an accountant in a Beijing-based multinational company. He left his wife and two children in Kalibo where he maintains a residence.

During the course of his employment in Beijing, Philip fell in love with Isabel, a Filipino employee of a Beijing hotel. Isabel is single. Their affair led to the birth of a baby girl whom they named Philisa. Upon the advice of their friends, they registered the birth of Philisa with the Philippine Embassy and applied for a passport. The Consular Officer informed them that Philisa will have to carry the surname of Isabel and not of Philip since she is an illegitimate child.

Q: Philip wants Isabel to carry his surname and asked the advice of the Consular Officer.

A: A father can pass his surname to his child only if the child is legitimate. Philisa is a product of the illegal cohabitation of Philip, a married man, and Isabel. Philip has the option of adopting Philisa in order for his daughter to be allowed to carry his surname. Through adoption, Philisa will become a legitimate daughter of Philip. The adoption, however, must have the consent of Philip's wife, his children who are over 10 years of age, and Isabel.

If adoption of Philisa by Philip takes place, Isabel will lose her parental authority over Philisa. If Isabel does not wish to lose her parental authority over Philisa but wish for her to be her legitimate daughter, she can adopt Philisa with the consent of Philip. If Isabel's adoption of Philisa is approved, Philip will lose his parental authority over Philisa.

Regardless of whether it would be Philip or Isabel who will adopt Philisa, she will continue to be an heir to both Philip and Isabel, and her blood relatives.

Experimental playgroup unit successfully completed

The Angels' Lab, an experimental Saturday playgroup unit for 2-4 year old children of Filipinos in Beijing, was successfully implemented from 20 July to 7 December 2002. The closing ceremony was attended by Madame Caroline M. Villa.

The playgroup was organized under the Philippine Embassy's gender and development program to fulfill the Philippine government's mandate for all government agencies to set up day care units and to provide free educational support to Filipino children. It imparted the following: pre-learning behavior, basic motor and verbal skills, basic social interaction skills, songs, dances, crafts, ABC's, and 123's.

Among the participants who completed the course are Coby Fernandez, Johan Gamboa, Elise Gaurana, Lia Pacaud, Nicole and Coleen Real.



Participants at work: recitation.

Secretary Ople visits Hong Kong



DFA Secretary Blas F. Ople held talks with HKSAR Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa.

Philippine Foreign Affairs Secretary Blas F. Ople visited Hong Kong on 13-16 February 2003 and met with the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), Tung Chee Hwa. He reiterated President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's earlier appeal not to consider proposals to impose a levy on the minimum wages of Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Chief Executive acknowledged the significant contribution of Filipino workers in Hong Kong society, but sought the understanding of the Philippine government that difficult decisions will have to be made in the light of the difficult economic conditions prevailing in Hong Kong.

Consul General Victoria S. Bataclan hosted a dinner on 13 February in honor of the Secretary that was attended by Hong Kong-based Consuls General of the nine ASEAN countries. Secretary Ople thanked Secretary for Home Affairs, Dr. Patrick Ho, for the various programs undertaken by his Department that benefit Filipino workers in Hong Kong.

On February 14, Secretary Ople and Secretary Ho signed the Philippines-Hong Kong Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Cultural Cooperation. As an offshoot of the MOU, the Philippine Consulate General in Hong Kong and the HKSAR Leisure and Cultural Services Department are now working on the staging of the "Concert in the Park Goes to Piazza" at the Hong Kong Cultural Center in April this year which will feature Filipino performing artists residing in Hong Kong.

Before leaving Hong Kong, Secretary Ople also met with the Filipino community leaders. He assured these leaders of the support of the Philippine government to promote and protect the interests of the Filipino workers in Hong Kong.

Foreign Undersecretary Arturo D. Brion gave a presentation on the salient features of the Absentee Voting Law and discussed the role of the Philippine Consulate General and members of the Filipino community in ensuring the successful implementation of elections.

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Travel Satellite TV delegation visits the Philippines

A delegation of eight members from Travel Satellite Television (TSTV) visited the Philippines from 22 February to 1 March at the invitation of the Philippine Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon.

The delegation visited Manila, Tagaytay, Clark, Pinatubo, Subic, Davao and Cebu through arrangements made by the Philippine Embassy in Beijing, the Philippine Tourism Representative in Hong Kong, Philippine Airlines and the Association of Hotels and Restaurants in the Philippines.

The delegation was impressed with the beauty of the Philippines and the warmth and hospitality of the Filipinos. They plan to feature the Philippines in TSTV's programs in the next few months.

This is the third group of journalists invited by Department of Tourism (DOT) to undertake a familiarization tour of the Philippines in line with the intensified promotion activities for Visit Philippines 2003.

With the geographical proximity of the Philippines to China, the cultural affinity of the two peoples, and the growing purchasing power of the Chinese, the prospect of seeing more Chinese tourists visiting the Philippines in the coming years is great.

Trade Expo, from page 1

Administration of Customs, in 2002, Philippines-China bilateral trade reached US\$5.2 billion, the highest trade volume ever, with China buying more from the Philippines. This bespeaks the promise that bilateral trade and investments hold.

Parallel to the exhibit, there will also be several cultural events that include a Philippine food festival at the Atrium Café in Shanghai's Hilton Hotel, performances by Philippine musicians and a fashion show at the Shanghai Exhibition Center featuring Manila Wear. Everyone is invited to participate in these activities. More information is available at the following web site: <http://www.citem.com.ph/shanghai>.

CITEM hosts 27 Chinese journalists

At a dinner in Manila on 18 December 2002, 27 Chinese journalists from Beijing and Shanghai witnessed a preview of the Philippine Solo Exhibition, which will be held in Shanghai on 27-30 March 2003.

Center for International Trade, Expositions and Missions (CITEM) Executive Director Ms. Felicidad Tan-Co welcomed 11 Beijing-based print journalists, 8 television reporters from China Central Television (CCTV)-2 and Nanjing Television, and 8 Shanghai-based print journalists to B@Home, Filipino designer Budji Layug's showroom which houses world-class home décor and furniture from all over the Philippines.

The evening was highlighted by a fashion show dubbed "Manila Wear," with models donning clothes using indigenous Philippine materials made by Filipino designers.

The journalists were in the Philippines at the invitation of Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon in line with the Department of Tourism's familiarization tour program of the Philippines.

Biggest Rizal Park is in China

On 23 January 2003, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr. led a 60-member Philippine delegation in the wreath-laying ceremony of the new Rizal Shrine in Siongue Village, Jinjiang City, Fujian Province, southern China.

The Philippine delegation included Consul General Corazon Bahjin, Representative Roque Ablan, National Historical Institute Chair Ambeth Ocampo, officers of the Knights of Rizal, Tarlac-based descendants of Rizal's sister Soledad, and Chinese-Filipino businessmen. Chinese officials who graced the occasion include Jinjiang City Mayor and Party Secretary Gong Qingkai, and Chair of the Jinjiang City People's Congress Xue Zuliang.

The Shrine was built to commemorate Dr. Jose Rizal's Chinese ancestral roots and symbolizes the strong bond of friendship existing between the Philippines and China. During its inauguration, Speaker de Venecia remarked that the Shrine "is a great symbol of the 1,000 year-old friendship between our two nations."

The monument, made of the world-famous Jinjiang granite stones, stands at 18.61 meters high, which is taller than the 12-meter high Rizal Monument in Manila. It was built in a 5-hectare park named in Rizal's honor, making it the biggest Rizal Shrine outside the Philippines. The Park will also be the site of a Rizal museum and library.

The project's success may be attributed to the combined efforts of the Cua-Chua Family Association where Rizal draws his Chinese lineage, the KAISA Para sa Kaunlaran headed by Professor Teresita Ang-See which provided assistance in research and substance, Philippine Airlines Chair Lucio Tan who headed the project committee working group, the Tulay Foundation, the Knights of Rizal, the Philippine Consulate General in Xiamen, the Jinjiang village and the city association based in Manila that arranged funding for the project, the Fujian Provincial Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, and the Quanzhou Municipal Government.



Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., together with Philippine Consul General to Xiamen Corazon Bahjin and other members of the Philippine delegation, during the wreath-laying ceremony of the new Rizal Shrine in Jinjiang City, Fujian Province.