



Economic and Science Diplomacy Stressed in Chief Envoy's Visit to SoCal



Dialogue between Ambassador Romualdez dialogues with select business sector representatives. Also present are Consul General Cruz and Political and Economic Officer, Consul Oreta.

Los Angeles City, CA – Ambassador Jose Manuel G. Romualdez embarked on his first official visit to Southern California on 13-16 September 2019, as part of his effort to reach out to Filipino-Americans spread throughout the continental United States.

Southern California, aside from being home to more 800,000 Filipino-Americans, is an important economic partner of the Philippines, being home to two strategic ports and several Fortune 500 companies, some of which have eyed the Philippines as a potential investment destination.

The Philippines also enjoys a thriving relationship with the City of Los Angeles, the seat of the country's representation in Southern California, with which two cities in Metro Manila have sister-city and sister-river arrangements, Makati and Pasig, respectively.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that discussions on trade, investment, and science & technology dominated Ambassador Romualdez's visit to the southern part of the Golden State. These sectors also comprise the most strategic areas of interests laid out in the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Philippine Development Plan.

The visit comes at a time of heightened interest in and anticipation of the proposed Free Trade Agreement between the Philippines and United States, especially with the

conclusion of negotiations of the United States-Mexico-Canada Free Trade Agreement last year.

The issue was one of those raised during his discussions with representatives of select economic agencies in Los Angeles, namely the Los Angeles Metro, Global Research Institute for International Trade (GRIT) and Ever Win International Corp, which was held at the Philippine Consulate General in the late afternoon of 15 September 2019. GRIT also inquired on the Philippine Government's strategy on the impact of the U.S.-China trade war.

Part of the Philippine Government's strategy is to sustain the current economic strides to keep the country an attractive investment destination. The Ambassador highlighted the positive developments taking place in the Philippines and opportunities for investments, such as the *"Build, Build, Build"* program, New Clark City, and many other mass transportation projects, which opens avenues for cooperation arrangements with LA Metro.

L.A. Metro was represented by its Filipino-American Executive Planning Officer, Mr. Emmanuel Liban, who is also a Commissioner on the City of L.A.'s Board of Transportation (left photo below).

Ever Win International, a California-based global supplier of electronics device accessories, sent its Filipino-American Project Manager, Mr. Bernard Chan, and Vice President of Strategic Business, Mr. Shyen Wang. Mr. Chan was instrumental in the opening of Ever Win's facility in Laguna Technopark, which started operations early 2019 (middle photo below).

GRIT was represented by its founder and CEO, Ms. Sarita Jackson. The Philippines is one of the country focuses of GRIT's trade development research (right photo below).





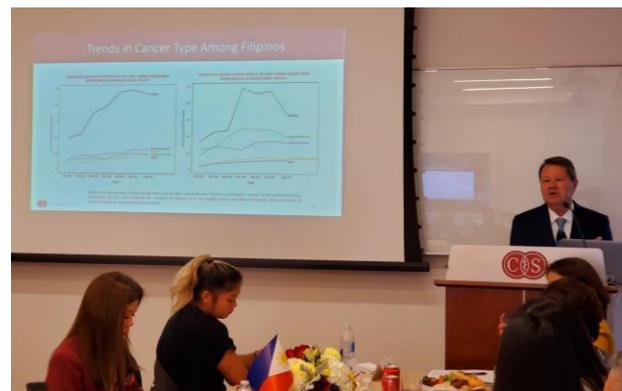
Earlier on the same day, the Ambassador spent time with the SoCal-based Coalition of Filipino American Chambers of Commerce (COFACC) headed by Mr. Gerry Palon and Ms. Ellen Samson. COFACC was founded by 15 Filipino American business entrepreneurs and professionals representing five Filipino American Chambers of Commerce in Southern California.

The growth of Filipino-American chambers of commerce speaks of the transformative aspect of the Philippine Government's economic development narrative, that is, transforming the Filipino mindset to becoming an investor and entrepreneur. Ambassador Romualdez encouraged COFACC members to invest in the Philippines now given the remarkable growth of the country's economy (photo left).



Ambassador Romualdez with his delegation and COFACC officials.

The Ambassador's three-day visit was concluded with discussions on a possible cancer research collaboration between the Philippines and Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, a general medical and surgical facility as well as a teaching hospital. (Photos below)



The Philippines' interest in Cedars-Sinai is reflective of the PHL Government's thrust to promote science and technology under the Zero to 10-Point Socio Economic Agenda of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte. The Department of Foreign Affairs, in particular, looks to science diplomacy as part of the Philippine Government's attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the work it has started to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Cedars-Sinai has been ranked as among the top 10 best hospitals in the United States aside from having a topnotch cancer research facility. It has an ongoing cancer research program, focusing on the Filipino-American community, which was based on initial observations that breast cancer is one of the leading causes of death among Asians.

During the meeting held at noon on 16 September 2019, the Ambassador expressed his support for said research program. "I would like to see more cooperation between organizations like Cedars-Sinai and the Philippines to share information and give our people the chance to live longer," he added.

Modern medicine and exchange of training and best practices in the field of nursing are also among the potential areas for cooperation between the Philippines and Cedars-Sinai.

It is worth noting that the link-up with Cedars-Sinai was made possible by the Filipino-Americans positioned in the hospital's top management, Ms. Peachy Hain, Executive Director of the Department of Nursing and Ms. Josie de Jesus, Administrator.

To this end, the Ambassador thanked Cedars-Sinai for its confidence in Filipino nurses and the opportunities it opens for Filipino medical professionals to advance themselves in the field of nursing and hospital management as seen in the number of Filipino-Americans in the institution's management and policy-making levels.

Around 35 guests, including more than 20 officials of the hospital were present during the meeting. Cedars-Sinai's delegation was led by its Senior Vice President and Chief Officer for Human Resources, Andrew Ortiz and Dr. Dan Theodorescu, Director for Research, Cancer Center.

Joining the Ambassador in all of the aforementioned meetings were Minister and Consul Gunther Emil M. Sales of the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C., Consul General Adelio Angelito S. Cruz, Deputy Consul General Ambrosio Brian F. Enciso III, Consul Rea G. Oreta, Information Officer Mary Grace "Joss" D. Leaño and Protocol Officer Fernan M. Balicoco of the Philippine Consulate General in Los Angeles. END.