



28 DEC 2015

*Wilfredo C. Santos*  
*Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines*



## YEAR-END MESSAGE

To my dear *kababayans*:

Since assuming my duty on 29 April 2015 and presenting my credentials on 30 August 2015, these past eight (8) months have been a challenging yet very fulfilling experience for me.

As Ambassador, it is my duty and responsibility to protect and promote the interests of the Philippines and of Filipinos in Qatar. Guided by this mandate, I wish to acknowledge the strides we have made so far.

On the economic front, the Embassy successfully launched *Kulinarya Qatar*, a brand/movement that aims to promote the Philippines as a tourist and business destination through Filipino cuisine. *Kulinarya Qatar's* success was shown through the huge turn-out during the *Eidul Fitr 2015 Filipino Food Festival* and the *Filipino Community Family Day* held on 17-18 July and 23-26 September 2015, respectively.

Exchanges between Filipino and Qatari businessmen were given a huge boost when an Outbound Business Mission (OBM) was organized in coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on 05-06 November 2015 at the Mövenpick Hotel West Bay. Nine (9) PH companies conducted Business-to-Business Meetings with their Qatari counterparts, followed by merchandise visits to Lulu, Al Meera and Carrefour.

This was immediately followed by a visit from the Philippines-Qatar Trade Initiative (PhiQat) comprised of top Filipino business leaders from various sectors, such as telecommunications, agriculture, real estate, aviation, IT, petroleum, logistics, tourism and hospitality, and business process outsourcing (BPO), among others. Their visit in November saw them meeting with the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

True to my earlier pledge to intensify the Embassy's economic diplomacy thrust, I look forward to more exchanges between Filipino and Qatari businessmen in 2016 for the benefit of our trade and economic relations with Qatar.

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
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To promote Philippine culture as a way of educating Qataris and expatriates alike on our traditions and heritage, as well as strengthening the Filipino sense of identity in each and every *kababayan* in Qatar, several cultural events were organized, such as the ASEAN Festival on 30 April – 02 May, performance of the Ballet Philippines on 12 August, and the gala screening of award-winning film '*Heneral Luna*' on 23 October, which were all held at the Katara Culutral Village.

The Embassy had the privilege of hosting several Philippine government officials, namely from the Department of Agriculture, National Commission on Muslim Filipinos, Department of Transportation and Communications, Civil Aviation Board, Department of Tourism, Department of Labor and Employment, Department of Justice, National Bureau of Investigation, Department of Health, DTI and the House of Representatives, as they met with various Qatari officials.

Such visits signify the strength of our country's relations with Qatar, and we aim to further increase such interactions among our government officials in line with our efforts for more active bilateral relations in 2016.

To better serve our *kababayans* in Qatar, the Embassy signed a *Delivery Services Agreement with Qatar Postal Services Company* on 10 August 2015. The passport delivery service rolled out in mid October. This agreement offers the convenience of passport delivery by Qatar's national courier service at an affordable cost of QR25 (P325). This will hopefully make the passport application process more convenient for Filipinos in Qatar.

As the 2016 Presidential elections is fast approaching, I am also happy to report that we have exceeded our target of 16,000 registrants for the overseas voting (OV) registration by registering 17,501 overseas Filipinos and 1,152 applications for transfer, reactivation and correction of other entries as of 31 October 2015. I fervently hope that these figures will translate into more active participation by our *kababayans* in this important democratic exercise in our country.

This is just the beginning of many changes and initiatives that will benefit not just Filipinos in Qatar, but the Philippines in general. As we prepare ourselves for the coming challenges and opportunities to be presented by 2016, we need your support, patience and understanding in this journey.



*Wilfredo C. Santos*

*Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines*

Let's work together for a more fruitful and productive 2016. Happy New Year and Mabuhay po tayong lahat!

  
**WILFREDO C. SANTOS**  
Ambassador