

Duterte in India for summit

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NEW DELHI—President Duterte arrived here on Wednesday to take part in a regional summit with leaders of India and the Association of South-east Asian Nations (Asean), and to begin exploratory talks on the purchase of cheap medicines from the subcontinent.

He arrived at 8:15 p.m. (Manila time) along with a high-level delegation that included Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez, and National Security Adviser Hermogenes Esperon Jr.

Delhi Declaration

Mr. Duterte was to have a bilateral meeting with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi shortly after arriving here, with the former broaching the possibility of a trade deal with the Indian pharmaceutical industry.

The Asean-India Commemorative Summit, scheduled on Thursday, will focus on maritime cooperation and on regional and international issues.

At the end of the two-session summit, the Asean and Indian leaders were expected to sign the Delhi Declaration that features a roadmap for cooperation between Asean and India, which are celebrating 25 years of relations in 2018.

Republic Day

Mr. Duterte and the nine other Asean heads of state have been invited to India's Republic Day celebration on Jan. 26, according to Assistant Secretary Hellen de la Vega, head of Asean affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Modi personally invited Mr. Duterte to visit India when the

two met in Manila during the Asean Summit in November.

It was at that meeting where the President told Modi that he would welcome Indian investments that could give Filipinos

better access to cheap medicines.

Mr. Duterte is expected to attend a lunch to be hosted by Indian President Ram Nath Kovind.

Top Asean partner

This is Mr. Duterte's first trip abroad in 2018 after castigating and firing two officials for having too many foreign travels.

India, with 1.3 billion people, is one of Asean's top trading partners. In 2016, total trade volume between the regional bloc and India amounted to \$58.45 billion.

In 2017, India became one of Asean's top five partners in development assistance, with funded projects and programs amounting to \$55.5 million.

Asean and India established dialogue relations in 1992, with India becoming a full dialogue partner of Asean in 1995. INQ

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