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## Rody to discuss cheaper medicine trade deal in India

By **CHRISTINA MENDEZ**

President Duterte will be heading to India next week to attend the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit and Republic Day, which is expected to further bolster ASEAN-India relations, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said yesterday.

Duterte's trip will likely include bilateral talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and a possible discussion on a trade deal on the importation of cheaper medicine.

Duterte will arrive in India on Jan. 24 to attend the summit in New Delhi on Jan. 25 and the Republic Day on Jan. 26.

The Philippines is looking forward to the outcome document dubbed as the "Delhi Declaration," which will be

released in conjunction with the summit, said Assistant Secretary Ma. Hellen dela Vega, head of the DFA Office of ASEAN Affairs.

Like the Philippines, the Indian government is comprised of the executive, legislative and judiciary. India's President Ram Nath Kovind is incumbent head of state, while Prime Minister Modi is the sitting head of government.

President Kovind will welcome ASEAN leaders during a lunch on Jan. 25.

India is an important dialogue partner of ASEAN because of the many important agenda under the ASEAN-India plan of action.

The priority areas of cooperation include trade and investment, connectivity, agriculture, tourism, culture,

science and technology, and climate change.

ASEAN and India established dialogue relations in 1992 and India became a full dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1995.

The ASEAN-India Special Commemorative Summit is the culminating activity of the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India dialogue relations which started in January 2017 while the Philippines was ASEAN chair.

"You will recall that Prime Minister Modi visited the Philippines for the first time last November. And therefore, President Duterte is also visiting India for the first time next week," Dela Vega said.

The DFA also said that India is one of the first non-ASEAN signatories of the Treaty of

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† MEDICINE

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Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia and an important partner of ASEAN in promoting regional peace and stability.

India also participates in various ASEAN-led mechanisms, including the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum.

As of 2016, the population of India stood at 1.33 billion and India's GDP totaled \$2.25 trillion. The Philippines' GDP in 2016 was \$304.9 billion.

India remained one of ASEAN's top trading partners in 2016, with total trade volume amounting to \$58.45 billion.

India also ranked as the 7th largest source of foreign direct investments with inflows

from India to ASEAN recorded at nearly \$1.5 billion in 2016.

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

The summit proper will consist of two sessions. The retreat session will focus on maritime cooperation. The plenary session, on the other hand, is where regional and

international issues as well as the future course of ASEAN-India relations will be discussed.

Capping the summit is a cultural program and banquet hosted by Modi in honor of the ASEAN leaders in the evening of Jan. 25.

The Republic Day of India is a tradition celebrated with grand ceremony and spectacular parade.