

President Arroyo Confers Presidential Awards on DFA Assistant Secretary Lucenario and BSP Governor Tetangco as Leading Proponents of the Philippine ePassport

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PR-613-09, 11 August 2009 - President Gloria Macapagal-

Arroyo conferred today the Order of Lakandula, with the Rank of Bayani, on Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando M. Tetangco and the Order of Sikatuna, with the Rank of Datu (Gold Distinction), on Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs Domingo D. Lucenario, Jr.

The conferment ceremony was held at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) during the celebration of the Department's 111th Foundation Anniversary. The celebration also marked the launching of the Philippine ePassport.

Governor Tetangco and Assistant Secretary Lucenario were lauded for their roles in the development and implementation of the Philippine ePassport.



Through their efforts, Filipinos will soon travel with the state-of-the-art ePassport equipped with a tamper-proof microchip bearing the traveler's identification and personal information. This move makes the Philippines globally compliant with the standards set by the International

Civil Aviation Organization.

The Order of Lakandula is one of the highest honors given by the Republic of the Philippines. It is an order of political and civic merit, awarded in memory of Lakandula's dedication to the responsibilities of leadership, prudence, fortitude, courage and resolve in the service of one's people.

The Order of Sikatuna is the national order of diplomatic merit of the Republic of the Philippines. It is conferred upon Filipino and foreign diplomats, officials and other individuals who have rendered exceptional and meritorious services to the Republic of the Philippines. END

Modernizing the Philippine Passport for the Global Filipino, Remarks by Dr. Alberto G. Romulo, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, at the Ceremonies Launching of the Philippine ePassport, DFA Auditorium, Pasay City, 11 August 2009

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Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo;
My colleagues in the Cabinet;
Bangko Sentral Governor Amando Tetangco;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Colleagues in the Department;
Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Skeptics, critics and Thomases have said that we would never have machine readable, or ePassport during your Presidency.

Today, we prove them wrong, very wrong.

MADAM PRESIDENT, WE HAVE DONE IT! WE DID IT!

Indeed, two years ago, in June 2007, we already proved them wrong.

We brought to the Filipino people the first world-class machine readable passport or MRP.

In 2007, we issued 228,430 MRPs.

In 2008, 2,097,383 MRPs were issued.

From January to August 9, 2009, 1,500,402 MRPs have been issued and delivered. To date, the DFA has issued a total of 3,826,215 MRPs.

The MRP has brought much benefit to our people. With a quick swipe of the MRP, immigration clearance is accomplished in less than 30 seconds.

Our Filipino travelers – workers, professionals, businessmen, students - no longer suffer the embarrassment or humiliation of waiting, anxiously, in long separate lines for their clearance.

Our countrymen's travel experiences the world over offer eloquent testimonies to the international acceptability and credibility of the MRP and now the ePassport.

Representing millions of Filipinos with MRPs, this is what our countrymen say:

- Eduardo Panganiban in Ankara, Turkey: "Mabilis and hassle-free and entry naming sa Washington D.C. airport, isang swipe lang ng passport at isang tanong lang sa akin ng immigration officer...okay na."
- Gemalyas Flor, OFW in Ghazar, Lebanon: "Para sa akin, the best ang passport ngayon dahil ang picture ay di na pwedeng dayain. New system, wala na makakapandaya o makapanloko pa ng passport. Hinahangaan ko ang bagong sistema nyo para sa kaligtasan ng ating mga kababayan..."
- Rizalyn Manlapaz, Filipino nurse in Saudi: "Ok na ok po ngayon ang pagrenew ng passport. Mabilis kaysa dati."
- Geraldo Ugale, OFW in Malaysia: "Secure ang machine readable passport. Maipagmamalaki ng Pilipino."
- Cathy Rose Garcia, Filipino Journalist in South Korea: "Machine readable passport makes it easy for OFWs. There are no hassles at airports."
- Haidee Caliyo in Ontario, Canada: "I am happy to receive my machine-readable passport...With just one swipe at the airport counters, all my personal data come out...I feel proud to use the machine readable passport because its features are now similar to the passports of first world countries like Canada and the U.S."
- Dr. Ricardo Braganza of San Juan, Metro Manila: "There is a big difference between the old passport and the machine readable passport. When I was travelling around Southeast Asia, every immigration inspection I had gone through went smoothly and I was not even asked for my ID anymore as compared to the green passport."

There are countless other Filipinos travelling overseas who have nothing but praise for their MRP.

Madam President, after the successful launch of the MRPs in 2007, we could have rested on our laurels and taken it easy.

We did not. We wanted to give our people the latest - the best - the ultimate in travel documents.

Today, we prove again the naysayers wrong.

We have raised our standard one level above the MRP – the state of the art Philippine ePassport!

The ePassport takes the MRP to the next higher level and standard in travel documents: an embedded microchip

containing the following:

- Data essential in verifying the passport holder's identity, including the holder's personal data, biometrics and digital signature.

This chip is interoperable, that is to say, it can be read by any standard passport machine reader in border controls worldwide.

- A complex laminate that protects the datapage against tampering;
- Customized invisible images on every page; and
- A hidden and coded technology that allows the encoding of the holder's name and passport number on the passport photo.

This is world class ePassport at its best!

With the ePassport travel document, we join the exclusive club of countries issuing ePassports – among them Japan, South Korea, India, Hong Kong in China, France, Spain, Germany, Italy, the UK, Russia, the U.S.A., and other developed countries.

Madam President, while the DFA is proud of the MRP and now the ePassport we do not claim sole credit for this singular achievement.

Indeed we were never alone in this journey.

From the very start, beginning from the green passport to the MRP, and from the MRP to the ePassport, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas has been for the last 25 years DFA's constant and steady partner.

Governor Tetangco with the Monetary Board was always there – to counsel and to guide.

This is why, Madam President, we take this opportunity once more to thank Governor Tetangco, the BSP and its officials without whose help and support passport modernization would not have happened.

Also with us in this journey for a world class passport are the following partners:

- DOJ and Secretary Raul Gonzales;
- DOF and then Secretary Juanita Amatong and now Secretary Gary Teves;
- OSG and then Justice Benipayo and now Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera;
- DBM and Secretary Rolando Andaya;
- DTI and Undersecretary Elmer Hernandez;
- NEDA and Deputy Director General Rolando Tungpalan; and finally
- the Office of the President and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita.

But above all, this feat would have not been possible without the President – your encouragement, your guidance and your full support.

Madam President, your vision for our country and your desire to enhance our people's life opportunities has been the DFA's guidepost in these successive projects to modernize our travel documents through the MRPs and

now this ePassport project.

Madam President, we in the DFA realize how much you've been able to do over the last 8 years:

- Sustaining a positive growth in the economy for 33 consecutive quarters, thus doubling the size of the economy from 2001 to 2009, with the lowest average inflation since 1966;
- Stabilizing the economy to the praise of international rating agencies like Moody's;
- Drastically reducing public debt and foreign debt to GDP ratio;
- Vigorously engaging international partners such that net foreign direct investments multiplied 15 times during your presidency;
- Creating 8 million jobs from 2001 to 2008 or an average of one million every year;
- Tripled investment in technical and skills training;
- Building more and better infrastructure for development such as airports and seaports of international standard, the ROROs and the expanding ribbon of road and bridge networks from north to south, east to west; and
- Pursuing peace with NPA and MILF.

Definitely accomplishments way way ahead and above your immediate predecessor.

But, Madam President, I believe that providing world-class MRPs and ePassport to Filipinos, particularly to our contract workers overseas must rank as one of your finest achievements.

The ePassport is your legacy – your tribute – to the global Filipino who is keeping our economy afloat in the midst of the global downturn.

As your constant and loyal arm, we in the DFA will go to the limit with you to serve our people. You can count on us to continue fulfilling our mandate to help and protect Filipinos here and abroad.

Labor's Walter Reuther said: "There is no greater calling than to serve your fellowmen...There is no greater satisfaction than to have it done well."

You have served your fellowmen and done it very well, Madam President.

Thank you.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo Opens the Philippine ePassport Exhibit at the DFA

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PH-111-09, 11 August 2009—H.E. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo cuts the ceremonial ribbon to open the exhibit, “Philippine Passport: Changing Lives, Moving the Nation,” during the formal launch of the new Philippine ePassport at the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), on the occasion of the DFA’s 111th Anniversary. Assisting the President is Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto G. Romulo and Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco, and DFA Undersecretaries Franklin Ebdalin and Rafael Seguis. (photo by Benjamin Remo, DFA-PISU)

DFA Launches Philippine ePassport, Issues First ePassport to President Arroyo

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PR-611-09, 11 August 2009 – The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) launched today the Philippine ePassport that will make the country at par with developed countries.

No other than President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was the recipient of the first ePassport presented to her by DFA Secretary Alberto G. Romulo in ceremonies held at the DFA Auditorium coinciding with the Department’s 111th Founding Day anniversary.

President Arroyo's ePassport bears the serial number EA0000001. To illustrate its features, the President scanned her ePassport on the passport reader which revealed her biometric information, digital signature and photograph.

A joint project of the DFA and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), the issuance of the ePassport makes the Philippines compliant with international standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of which it is a member.

Filipino travellers and migrant workers stand to benefit the most from the globally-compliant ePassport currently being used in over 60 countries.

The ePassport's security features have been enhanced with a hidden encoded image, an ultra-thin, holographic laminate; and a tamper-proof electronic microchip.

Its Integrated Circuit (IC) chip stores the passport holder's photograph and other personal data for easy verification of identity and is fully inter-operable which means that the chip can be read by border control officials in other countries using a passport chip reader.

The ePassport will facilitate and hasten the entry formalities in other countries of OCWs, Filipinos residing in other countries and Filipino travelers, as well as further cut down on opportunities for passport fraud and tampering.

Despite its advanced security features, the Philippine ePassport will be available for a fee of P950, making it one of the lowest-priced ePassports in the world.

Filipino passport applicants may still choose between the ePassport OR the machine readable passport (MRP) currently priced at P500.

The ePassport project is part of the DFA's passport modernization program which started in 2007 with the launch of the machine readable passport. To date, about four million MRPs have been issued.

Initially, application for the ePassport will be on appointment basis. Full implementation of the project will take place in the next three months. END

Frequently Asked Questions on The Philippine ePassport

Posted: 10 Aug 2009 10:55 PM PDT

PR-610-09, What is an ePassport?

An ePassport is a passport which features microchip technology. An integrated circuit (chip) within its pages

contains the data that are essential in verifying the identity of the passport holder. These data include the personal data found on the data page of the passport, the biometrics of the passport holder, the unique chip identification number, and a digital signature to verify the authenticity of the data stored on the chip.

The chip technology allows the information stored in an ePassport to be read by special chip readers at a close distance.

What are Biometrics?

Biometrics are the unique and measurable physical characteristics of an individual that include face recognition, fingerprints, and iris scans.

The Philippine Electronic Passport (or Philippine ePassport) uses the digital image of the passport photograph that can be used with face recognition technology to verify the identity of the passport holder.

It captures the fingerprints of the passport holder, for identification using the Automated Fingerprint Verification System (AFIS).

What are the special features of the Philippine ePassport?

The Philippine ePassport allows information stored on the chip to be verified with the information visually displayed on the passport.

It uses contactless microchip technology that allows the information stored on the chip to be read by special chip readers at a close distance.

It contains an integrated photograph of the holder, a digitized secondary photo, and an electronic print of the holder's signature.

It contains overt and hidden security features such as Invisible Personal Information (IPI), letterscreen, microprinting, and UV reactive ink, among others.

What is the difference between the existing maroon machine readable passport (MRP) and the ePassport?

An MRP is a passport that contains a machine-readable zone (MRZ) printed in accordance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standard. It is capable of being read manually and with the use of a machine.

An ePassport has an embedded IC chip where the photograph and personal information of the bearer are stored in accordance with ICAO specifications. These information can be read by chip readers at close distance. An ePassport also contains a machine-readable zone.

What advantages does the Philippine ePassport offer?

The ePassport is highly secure, hence avoids passport reproduction and tampering. The ePassport database is enhanced with AFIS that guards against multiple passport issuances to the same person and enhances imposter

detection.

It facilitates fast clearance of travellers at immigration checks.

ePassports provide travellers benefits such as use of automated border clearance or “E-gates”, automated issuance of boarding passes, and faster travel arrangements with airlines.

For countries, the use of electronic passport also provides better border protection and security.

Why do we have to use ePassports now?

The MRP has the minimum ICAO standards in travel documents. The ePassport is the world standard in travel documents. As member of ICAO, the Philippines has an international obligation to enhance the security of its travel documents.

The issuance of ePassports will allow the Philippines to offer world-class consular services to its nationals.

Countries have greater confidence and acceptance of the ePassport since it is enhanced with biometric technology.

ePassports are already being used in more than 60 countries worldwide. In ASEAN, five countries have already issued e-passports (Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia).

Who can avail of the Philippine E-Passport?

The ePassport will initially be made available in limited number. Regular issuance will start sometime in October 2009 from whence all applicants who can comply with the documentary requirements may avail of the ePassport.

How much does an ePassport cost?

The ePassport is available for P950. A passport applicant, however, may choose between the ePassport and the less expensive Machine Readable Passport, both compliant with ICAO standard.

Why is the ePassport more expensive than the current passport?

The added security features of the ePassport are factored into the production cost. Comparative prices of ePassports from different countries, however, show that the cost of the Philippine ePassport is among the lowest in the world.

What other countries use ePassports?

ePassports are already being used in more than 60 countries worldwide. In ASEAN, five countries have already issued ePassports (Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia). In the future, all countries are seen to switch to the ePassport due to the increasing need for efficient and better border security.

What is the ePassport logo and what does it mean?

The ePassport logo which appears on the cover of the ePassport is the international symbol for an electronic passport. It means that the passport has an integrated circuit or chip on which data about the passport and passport holder is stored. The logo will alert border inspection lanes at all airports and transit ports equipped with special data readers for ePassports that the passport is an ePassport.

I have a previously issued passport. Can I use it for travel as long as it is still valid?

Yes. Previously issued passports (MRP and non-MRP) are valid until their expiry. It is a good practice to make sure your passport is valid at least six months before intended date of travel to avoid any inconvenience.

Will there be additional requirements needed for the processing of ePassports?

None. Essentially, the requirements for ePassport processing will remain the same as that for the MRP, although personal appearance is required for the taking of biometrics (i.e., fingerprints, photo, and signature).

Can existing holders of the maroon MRP simply surrender their passports and have them converted to an ePassport?

As soon as the production of the ePassport comes into full swing, holders of MRPs can have their passport cancelled and apply for ePassport if they so wish.

Where can I apply for an ePassport?

The ePassport will be initially available at DFA Manila, to be followed by Philippine Embassies and consulates abroad and throughout the Philippines through DFA's regional offices.