

Headline: Talks with Hollande to run from terror to climate change

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French President Francois Hollande FILE PHOTO

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MANILA, Philippines—The arrival of French President François Hollande in Manila on Thursday is expected to not only further boost bilateral economic ties between France and the Philippines but also highlight the latter country's role in the fight against climate change.

"This visit has two important aspects. First, it is to highlight the very positive phase in the bilateral relations between France and the Philippines. The French President would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm the friendly ties between our two countries," French Ambassador Gilles Garachon said in a statement.

The state visit of Hollande to the Philippines is also said to come at a "dynamic phase in the bilateral ties between the two countries and at a time when international negotiations on the environment approach a crucial stage."

Earlier, Malacañang said President Aquino and President Hollande would discuss the extreme terrorism that has hit France and the Philippines.

According to the French Embassy, Hollande's visit will see the signing of cooperation agreements in the areas of development, tourism, health and academic exchanges.

Business-to-business trade agreements will be concluded during a forum hosted by the Makati Business Club on Feb. 26.

Hollande will be accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development Laurent Fabius, Minister of State for Development and Francophony Annick Girardin, and Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy Ségolène Royal.

The delegation will be joined by personalities renowned for their environmental advocacies, such as Marion Cotillard, Mélanie Laurent, Patriarch Bartholomew I of the Orthodox Church and other officials of various international organizations.

The French Embassy said Hollande is expected to formally open a climate change forum to be attended by Philippine government officials, members of the academe and civil society representatives.

President Aquino and Hollande are expected to launch a call for the global community to support the signing of a climate agreement during the 21st Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to be hosted by France in December 2015.

Hollande will also grace the National Museum opening of an exhibit on Unesco World Heritage Sites in the Philippines and around the world by French photographer Ferrante Ferranti.

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On the second day of his visit on Feb. 27, Hollande is scheduled to go to Guiuan, Samar, one of areas hit hardest by Supertyphoon Yolanda (international name: Haiyan) in November 2013. Amy R. Remo