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Embassy of the Philippines

SINGAPORE

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Philippine Embassy to Issue New Machine Readable Passports in
Singapore on June 1, 2008

The Philippine Embassy in Singapore will start accepting applications for the new Machine Readable Passports (MRP) starting **1 June 2008**. The issuance of the MRP is in compliance with the requirement of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for all countries to issue Machine Readable Passports not later than 01 April 2010.

In response to the ICAO directive, the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) will be phasing-out the green passport and has instructed all its regional passport offices and foreign service posts, including the Philippine Embassy in Singapore, to begin issuing the MRP.

The DFA has launched the maroon-colored MRP since last year at its main office in Manila, in regional consular offices throughout the country, and in Hong Kong, where it was first pilot-tested. The DFA is also now issuing machine-readable diplomatic and official passports for Philippine diplomats and government officials.

Because the processing time for the passport is **six (6) weeks**, the Philippine Embassy is urging Filipinos in Singapore to immediately check the validity of their passports and to apply for the new MRP at the embassy **at least two months** before the expiration of their passports.

Better Security Features and Advantages

The MRP complies with international standards and helps safeguard the integrity of the Philippine passport. It contains new security features, such as holographic and micro-printing technology, that will help prevent the tampering of the personal details of the passport holder through data or photo manipulation or substitution.

Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Belen Fule-Anota expects the MRP to boost the integrity of the Philippine passport.

'We expect the new passport to substantially lower the incidence of passport data and photo tampering and restore the integrity of the Philippine passport as a travel document,' the lady envoy said.

The lady ambassador added that the MRP will facilitate the travel of Filipinos overseas as it is easier and faster for immigration officials to scrutinize digitally.

‘The MRP, because of its added security features and reliability, will make overseas travel for Filipinos more convenient and stress-free,’ she said.

Passport Fee, Requirements, Validity

Despite having more security features and more pages--44 compared to 36 pages for the old green one—there will be no increase in the passport fee.

All passport requirements will remain the same except that the applicant will be required to personally appear and submit three (3) passport-size photos (4.5x3.5 cm), which should have a royal blue (instead of the usual white) matte background.

Like the green passport, the MRP will be valid for five (5) years. All regular green passports earlier issued will remain valid and will be honored by immigration authorities worldwide until their stated expiry date.

Processing Time

The Embassy can no longer accommodate requests for the early release of passports. Since the new passport will be printed and produced at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, processing time will take *six (6) weeks* from the time the application is submitted to the time it will be ready for pick-up. All MRP applications will have to be sent to Manila by courier, after which the DFA will send the finished passports back to the Embassy in Singapore.

Applicants who wish to renew their passports after 31 May 2008 are advised to submit their applications **at least two months** before their passport’s expiration, scheduled travel or before the expiration of their employment permit/pass or visa, to avoid inconvenience.

‘To avoid inconvenience, I strongly advise Singapore-based Filipinos to apply for the MRP earlier and not to wait until the last day of their passport validity,’ stressed Ambassador Anota.

For further inquires regarding the Philippine Machine-Readable Passport, please call the Philippine Embassy at +65 6737-3977 or e-mail at php@pacific.net.sg.