

INDIA, SRI LANKA SIGN SEVERAL AGREEMENTS

Seven bilateral agreements were signed during the four-day visit of Sri Lanka's president H. E. Mahinda Rajapakse to India in June 2010, where he met with Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. The two leaders unveiled a program to build 50,000 houses for internally displaced persons in Sri Lanka's northern and eastern provinces. India is helping rebuild Sri Lankan railways and has extended an \$800-million line of credit for railway projects in Sri Lanka. The two G-15 leaders also agreed to revive a Joint Commission chaired by their foreign ministers, and are looking for ways to expand economic and agricultural ties beyond their free trade agreement signed in 2003.

A joint statement issued at the end of the visit mentioned the need to "speedily restore the traditional links between the two countries" by resuming ferry services between Colombo and Tuticorin and between Talaimannar and Rameswaram. There will be a new Indian consulate-general in Jaffna and Hambantota and Sri Lanka wants to set up another consulate in India. The two leaders also touched on other bilateral and global issues such as stepping up trade and investment, ensuring energy security and better cooperation in counter-terrorism.

Source: bilaterals.org, 9 June 2010.

BRAZIL, ARGENTINA IMPROVE TRADE TIES

Argentina and Brazil made significant advances in resolving outstanding bilateral trade issues following a joint meeting between the Brazilian Finance Minister, Guido Mantega and Argentine Economy Minister, Amado Boudou in São Paulo, Brazil in June 2010. The two ministers announced the creation of a US\$ 100 million fund to offer financing to Argentine companies engaged in trade with Brazil.

Argentina is Brazil's third-largest trading partner behind China and the US. In the first five months of 2010, Brazil posted a trade surplus of US\$ 442 million with Argentina. Brazil is Argentina's main trade partner. Both G-15 countries were especially interested in boosting trade in the areas of oil and gas, auto parts, aviation equipment and farm equipment.

Source: Mercopress, 28 June 2010.

SRI LANKA, EGYPT BOOST RELATIONS

Economic and political relations between Sri Lanka and Egypt were enhanced during the visit to Sri Lanka by Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Ahmed Amin Fathallah, who held wide-ranging discussions with the dignitaries of the Government of Sri Lanka as well as other officials during his stay in Colombo from 14 to 18 June 2010. Sri Lanka and Egypt have agreed to intensify their cooperation on all political matters of bilateral interest in the future. It was

agreed further that a structured process of annual Ministerial dialogue would be launched between two countries beginning this year.

Discussing the ways and means of enhancing the economic relations between the two countries, both sides agreed on the need for taking further practical measures to promote bilateral trade, tourism, and joint investment. The Sri Lankan side requested increased market access for tea, apparels, gems and jewelry, while the Egyptian side indicated that it was keen to export to Sri Lanka citrus products and pharmaceuticals. In the area of education and training, the Egyptian side agreed to consider providing opportunities for Sri Lankan students to study medical and engineering courses in the Egyptian Universities and also increase training opportunities for Sri Lankans in the agriculture sector.

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, Govt. of Sri Lanka, 18 June 2010.

ZIMBABWE TO SET UP TOURISM OFFICE IN IRAN

Zimbabwe is set to strengthen its ties with Iran by setting up a tourism office in the Islamic republic. This follows a meeting between Zimbabwe's Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Walter Mzembe and the Iranian Vice President Hamid Baghaee, who is also the head of the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 88th Session of the United Nations World Tourism Organization Executive Council in Argentina, in June 2010.

Source: Xinhua, 20 June 2010.

VENEZUELA OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS TO NIGERIAN STUDENTS

The Venezuelan government has offered scholarships to students of Nigeria's Taraba State. In a ceremony held at the Nnamdi Azikwe Airport in Nigeria, the Venezuelan ambassador to Nigeria, Enrique Fernando Arrundell said that the scholarship initiative was launched as a solidarity and partnership initiative between the two nations. The ambassador stated that the students, who came from low-income backgrounds, had been selected after multiple tests conducted by Venezuelan officials.

The Venezuelan government has also agreed to build a school in the province. In this regard, the Taraba state government donated land measuring 4.435 hectares, for the building of the Venezuelan school in Jalingo.

Source: AllAfrica.com, 15 June 2010.