

INDIA, ARGENTINA DEEPEN RELATIONS

Bilateral ties between India and Argentina were strengthened with the signing of several economic and technical cooperation agreements during the official visit of the President of Argentina, H.E. Cristina Fernandez Kirchner to India in October 2009. The Argentine President, who was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising several ministers and businessmen, held extensive talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh of India.

Among the agreements signed between the two G-15 countries was a civil nuclear pact to encourage and support scientific, technical and commercial co-operation for mutual benefit in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Other agreements included MOUs on Cooperation in Science & Technology, Cooperation in the field of trade promotion and technology transfer in international trade, as well as agreements on oil exploration and sports.

Addressing a Seminar on "Argentina-India: Trade, Investment and Business Opportunities" in New Delhi, Mrs. Kirchner said the two countries had set a trade target of \$3 billion by 2012 from \$1.3 billion in 2008. Indian exports to Argentina in 2008 amounted to \$289.7 million, while Argentina's exports to India were valued at \$ 906 million. Chemical products account for about 40 % of India's total exports to Argentina, while edible oils constitute 75 % of total imports from Argentina.

Source: MACHINIST.IN, 15 October 2009.

BRAZIL, VENEZUELA REVIEW BILATERAL ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS

Brazilian President H.E. Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva met with Venezuelan President H.E. Hugo Chavez in Caracas, Venezuela on 30 October 2009, to evaluate the progress of bilateral development projects between the two G-15 countries. Among the projects reviewed was the joint construction of a biotechnological research complex in Venezuela, which will benefit from a knowledge sharing agreement with Brazil's biotechnological research center in Manaus. The two Presidents visited a soy plantation in Venezuela's Anzoategui state that is the result of a joint project meant to boost Venezuela's soy production with an investment of more than \$233 million.

The Brazilian Industrial Development Agency and Venezuelan Ministry for Science, Technology, and Medium Industry signed a series of cooperation accords to develop the "Puerto Ordaz – Manaos Productive Axis," which will integrate the infrastructure, communications systems, and industries of Venezuela's natural resource-rich, southeastern Guyana region with Brazil's northern Amazonian region.

Source: venezuelanalysis.com, 30 October 2009

CHILE, ARGENTINA SIGN MAJOR RAIL AND ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

Chile and Argentina have agreed to build road and railway tunnels across their common border in a project aimed at opening two new routes through the towering Andes mountains. Chilean President H.E. Michelle Bachelet and Argentina's President H.E. Cristina Kirchner signed the agreement on 30 October 2009 in Santiago, Chile, as part of a broader treaty to promote integration and cooperation along their mountainous 5,000-kilometer border.

The railway project involves a 23-kilometer tunnel through the Andes mountain chain to link the cities of Mendoza in Argentina and Los Andes in Chile. It would take between 8 and 10 years to build and cost an estimated three billion dollars. The agreement also calls for constructing a second cross-border tunnel through the Andes at Paso de Agua Negra for a highway linking northern Chile and Argentina. The tunnel would supplement the Los Libertadores tunnel in the central part of the country, which is often closed by snow.

The Chilean President said the agreement was the first of its kind in Latin America, while her Argentinean counterpart stated that its aim was to "unite the potential that helps generate better living conditions for our people."

Source: www.france24.com, 31 October 2009

INDONESIA, INDIA TO BEGIN TALKS ON FREE TRADE AREA

Indonesia and India are set to begin discussions on the creation of a free trade area (FTA) between themselves. A Joint Study Group, which had been set to explore the feasibility of a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), has recommended the launching of full fledged talks to negotiate a pact that can take the bilateral merchandise trade to USD 20 billion by 2020. Bilateral trade between the two G-15 countries amounted to around \$7 billion last year, with a trade surplus of \$ 3.22 billion in favour of Indonesia.

The feasibility study has suggested that there is a strong case for concluding CECA as a first step towards an FTA in trade in goods, services, investments and other areas of economic cooperation between Indonesia and India. The proposed pact, if it were to fructify, would be similar to that which Singapore signed with India in 2005, which covers the entire gamut of economic ties.

Source: PTI, 19 October 2009

MALAYSIA, EGYPT ESTABLISH JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL

Economic relations between Malaysia and Egypt are set to reach a higher level with the establishment of the Malaysia-Egypt Joint Trade and Investment Committee (JTIC) and Joint Business Council. Dato' Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia, co-chaired the first JTIC Meeting with Mr. Rachid Mohamed Rachid, Minister of

Trade and Industry of Egypt on 7 October 2009 in Cairo. The two Ministers inaugurated the Joint Business Council following the meeting.

The Ministers also witnessed the signing of 4 MoUs including those between the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation and the Egyptian Commercial Service on Cooperation in Trade Promotion; the Export-Import Bank of Malaysia and the National Bank of Egypt on general cooperation; and between I-Nai Venture Holdings Sdn. Bhd. and Al Andalus on collaboration in Islamic art and architecture.

A review of investment links between the two G-15 countries showed that as at December 2008, investments from Egypt in Malaysia amounted to US\$5.83 billion in wood and wood products, machinery and equipment for oil and gas industry and, souvenirs and giftware. Malaysian investments in Egypt were mainly in the oil and gas related industry, palm oil, distribution of automotive and autoparts, as well as smart card technology.

Source: Press release of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, Malaysia, 8 October 2009.