



TUNISIA NEWSLETTER

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TUNISIA & JAPAN



Tunisia took part in the 6th Renewable Energy Exhibition (Japan, 5-7 December 2011)

Tunisia took part in the 6th Renewable Energy Exhibition held in "Makuhari Messe" in Chiba prefecture from 5th to 7th December 2011. The Tunisian delegation was led by H.E. Mr. Elyes Kasri, the Ambassador of Tunisia to Japan, and composed of representatives of public and private institutions and companies.

The Embassy of Tunisia held a workshop seminar in "Makuhari Messe" in which Japanese companies and researchers participated and got acquainted with the Solar Tunisia Plan and perspectives of investment in this field.

During a partnership meeting on solar energy held at the Embassy, a discussion was held on the perspectives for cooperation in the field of scientific research and technology. This event was attended by Japanese opinion leaders from administrative, scientific and economic sectors.

At the reception held after the seminar, Mr. Hideichi Okada, METI Parliamentary Vice-Minister, considered this event as a kick-off of the Japanese-Tunisian cooperation in the field of renewable energy. He also highlighted the geographic position of Tunisia as a hub of renewable energy namely in solar energy, which can represent one of the important options for energy in the future for the Europe and the MENA region.

"Tunisia, a huge pool of innovative ideas", says Japanese professor Tetsuo Ida of Tsukuba University

Tuesday, December 06, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - Tunisian-Japanese co-operation in matters of scientific research in the fields of communication networks technology, security of banking systems and other protocols dates back to ten years.

Since the holding in 2001 of the first Tunisia-Japan Symposium on Society, Science and Technology, the two countries' researchers have found many convergent views and common ground for co-operation propitious for the exchange of experience and ideas.

Japanese professor Tetsuo Ida of Tsukuba University has given a three-day-intensive course last December 2-5 at the national communications college of Tunis, entitled: "Logics for Checking of Hardware and Software as well as Communication Protocols."

In a statement to TAP news agency, Tetsuo Ida highlighted the interest of the Japanese researchers in the quality of works carried out in Tunisia in matters of research and technological innovation, saying that Tunisia is now a strategic partner for Japan in matters of research for "it represents a real huge pool of innovative ideas."

Fisheries co-operation agreement signed between Tunisia and Japan

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - A co-operation agreement in the fisheries field was signed, on Wednesday in Tunis, between Tunisia and Japan.

This agreement is the second phase of a joint management project of coastal halieutic preserves, in the Gulf of Gabes.

The agreement aims to devise a management plan of the coastal fisheries in the Gabes Gulf region, according to a participatory approach that gathers the administration, the profession and scientific research. This four-year project will start on April 1, 2012.

The main components of the project include conducting of studies on the present situation of the coastal preserves and the socio-economic situation of fishermen of the regions targeted by the project.

These components also centre on boosting the capacities of the Tunisian technicians by means of organising training sessions in Japan and providing additional incomes for the benefit of fishermen.

The signing ceremony of this agreement, chaired by Agriculture and Environment Minister Mokhtar Jallali, is part of the visit in Tunisia of a Japanese delegation of fisheries specialists.

Japanese participation to the 1st follow-up meeting of the G8-Tunisia partnership (Tunis, 18 November 2011)

Japan took part in the 1st follow-up meeting of the G8-Tunisia partnership held in Tunis on 18 November 2011, with the participation of the representatives of the G8 state's members, international and regional organizations and financial institutions.

The Tunis meeting is part of the implementation of the Deauville Partnership and the point 25 of the September 20 Foreign Minister's New York meeting's declaration.

The Tunisian Government submitted at Tunis meeting the road map for the 2011-2013 projects financing within the Jasmine Plan.

Cooperation to boost Japanese tourist inflow

Monday, November 14, 2011

HAMMAMET (TAP) - "Tourism development policies" is the topic of the international training session to be held from November 14 to 25 in Hammamet, with attendance of 15 tourism officials from 8 African countries.

This training session is organised by the Tunisian National Tourism Board (ONTT), the Tunisian Technical Co-operation Agency (ATCT) and the Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

It is part of the implementation of the triangular co-operation programme between Japan, Tunisia and the African and Arab countries, notably in matters of improving skills in the tourism field.

At the opening session, Tunisian National Tourism Board (ONTT) director-general Habib Ammar said that Tunisia is planning to identify efforts to boost Japanese tourist flow.

The official pointed out that some 15 million Japanese tourists visit annually the different world countries, and Tunisia hosts only 13,000 among them.

He specified that action will focus on mobilisation of means to attract Japanese tourists who appreciate the Saharan and cultural tourism.

To this end, offers are to be developed and diversified, and to be based on a specific marketing policy, in addition to improving know-how in Japanese culinary arts in tourism schools and training of tourist guides fluent in Japanese.

JICA representative Tomi Zaoua Wben announced that a delegation from the Agency will visit Tunisia in December 2011 to look into means allowing to increase the Japanese tourist flow.

Tunisian-Japanese Symposium on Society, Sciences and Technology attracts over 500 researchers

Saturday, November 12, 2011

HAMMAMET (TAP) - Over 500 researchers including 100 Japanese, are taking part in the 11th Tunisian-Japanese Symposium on Society, Sciences and Technology held on November 11-13 in Hammamet.

The agenda of the meeting includes scientific lectures in the areas of agriculture, nutrition, bio-technology, environment, energy, mathematics, ICTs and innovation, etc.

In his opening address, on Friday, Higher Education and Scientific Research Minister Refaat Chaabouni said that development challenges in Tunisia require boosting bilateral and multilateral scientific co-operation, underlining the opportunities offered to further strengthen the cooperation with Japan in the fields of higher education and scientific research. He also pointed to the importance of innovation in ensuring sustainable development.

Japanese Tsukuba University Vice-President Kazuko Shiojiri spoke about the need of a sustained academic co-operation between the two countries, to serve social development in Tunisia, in particular and North Africa in general.

Tunisian-Japanese scientific co-operation has recorded a noteworthy development over the recent years, reflected in the launch of vanguard projects as the Borj Cedria technological park.

A project on developing organic resources in arid and semi-arid areas is in progress.

Five Tunisian research centres and three Japanese institutions are taking part in this project launched in 2010, with a budget of nearly six million dinars.

It should be noted also that 29 students have followed doctoral studies in Japan, as part of Tunisian-Japanese co-operation. Twenty one of them have already defended their theses.

Tunisia cultural and tourism promotion event organised by the Embassy of Tunisia

The Embassy of Tunisia organised on 7 December 2011 in cooperation with Asahi Culture Centre a Tunisia cultural and tourism promotion event, including presentation on Tunisia, Tunisian cuisine degustation and concert of Tunisian music.

35 auditors from Asahi Culture Centre in the area of Tokyo participated in this event.

Soccer/FIFA Club World Cup: Tunisia's Espérance is representing the African Continent

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) – Representing the African Continent, Tunisia's Espérance Sportive de Tunis team will go for their first participation in the "FIFA Club World Cup Japan 2011" to be held in Japan next December 8-18.

To warm up, the first group of the Tunisian team's delegation left for Japan on November 27 and the second group followed on November 28. A training camp is held in the city of Osaka, from November 30 to December 5.

The Tunisian team will then move to Nagoya City to continue the preparation for the world cup of clubs.

According to the draw, Esperance will play at quarter finals Asian champion Al Sadd of Qatar, next December 11.

In case of win, the African champions will play at semi-finals Spain's FC Barcelona, European champion and winner of the 2009 event held in the United Arab Emirates.

POLITICS

"New President and PM to exercise duties starting from early next week"

Tuesday, December 06, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - Mr. Samir Ben Amor, politburo member of the Congress for Republic (CPR) party, declared "that the new President and Prime Minister will exercise their duties as of early next week, to restore legitimacy to the different State authorities and re-assure the Tunisian and foreign investors."

In a statement to TAP news agency, Mr. Ben Amor pointed out that the election of the new caretaker President and the accreditation of the Prime Minister, who is expected to form the government team, "will not last more than what is needed and will take place during the next two plenary sessions."

Interim President chairs meeting on progress of security situation in the country

Friday, December 02, 2011

CARTHAGE (TAP) - Developments of the security situation in the country were the focus of the meeting held on Friday, at Carthage Palace, under the chairmanship of Interim President Foued Mebazaa and in the presence of Caretaker Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi, National Defence Minister Abdelkrim Zbidi, Interior Minister Habib Essid, Foreign Affairs Minister Mohamed Mouldi Kefi and Chief of Staff of the Armies Rachid Ammar.

The meeting stressed commitment of the security institution and the Army to carry on discharging their mission in ensuring security of the citizens and public institutions, preserving the country's integrity and invulnerability and protecting its borders against all kinds of violations or menaces.

This is a collective responsibility whose weight is borne by all citizens and all components of civil society, stressed the attendees of this meeting.

They also emphasised the importance of security and stability in ensuring success of Tunisia's democratic

transition and boosting comprehensive development, to achieve the objectives of the Tunisian Revolution, especially now that the country held successfully its first elections on the path of entrenching the pluralistic democratic process through the combined efforts of all sides.

It was agreed, during this meeting, to ensure co-ordination between the different stakeholders to guarantee hand-over of power under best conditions, and with civism, to allow the State apparatuses to run normally in the next period.

Unanimous agreement on need for current Government to keep on running day-to-day affairs

Monday, December 05, 2011

CARTHAGE (TAP) - Caretaker President Foued Mebazaa conferred, on Monday, with Caretaker Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi, Speaker of the National Constituent Assembly and Ettakatol Party Chairman Mustapha Ben Jaafar, Congress for the Republic Party Chairman Moncef Marzouki and Ennahdha Movement Secretary-General Hamadi Jebali.

The meeting discussed the situation in the country and current issues, in light of ongoing preparations to organise authorities during this reconstruction stage.

Participants in the meeting emphasised the need for the current government to keep on running day-to-day affairs to ensure continuity in the functioning of the public service until the new government is formed.

They also stressed the need to prepare the optimal framework for the transfer of power, in accordance with the people's will and the supreme interest of the country.

NCA members call for respect of liberties and for restraint

Saturday, December 03, 2011

BARDO (TAP) - Members of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) reasserted, during a meeting held under the chairmanship of Speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar, their attachment to respect of freedoms, and in the first place freedom of speech and for peaceful protest.

They called, in a communiqué released on December 03, for the respect of the supremacy of law and total rejection of violence. Besides, they stressed the imperative to respect and preserve the educational institutions' integrity from any political strife.

The NCA members attending in the meeting also called on all to show restraint and responsibility by opting for dialogue to resolve dissensions of any nature.

Tunisia is going through a delicate and decisive stage where priority should be granted to the building of a new democratic regime, a fair economic system and the attributes of decent life to all, they reminded, "which requires avoiding the causes of tension and insecurity that threaten stability of the country."

Interim PM steps down

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - During a ceremony held on Wednesday at the Carthage Palace, Caretaker President Foued Mebazaa accepted the resignation of the Interim Government submitted by Prime Minister in the outgoing government, Mr. Beji Caid Essebsi, whom he had tasked with managing the country's current affairs until the formation of a new government.

During the ceremony, Mr. Mebazaa paid tribute to the Interim Government members and chairmen of national committees and authorities, decorating them with the insignia of the Order of the Republic.

Mr. Mebazaa voiced consideration to all members and executives of the Tunisian administration who had contributed to the success of the management of the State affairs, ensuring continuity and stability of institutions.

Mr. Beji Caid Essebsi, for his part, said that the government had assumed its responsibilities by fulfilling its duty and working in full co-ordination among its members and the institution of the Presidency of the Republic.

He pointed out that the situation of the country is presently better than what it was when they took over their duties.

He reminded that one of the major missions assigned to the government had consisted in organising the National Constituent Assembly elections, emphasising that those elections were the first free, pluralistic and transparent elections in the country's history.

Constituent Assembly elects two commissions

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - The Constituent Assembly elected by a show of hands the two commissions entrusted with drafting the policies and procedures of the Assembly and the final wording of the organisation of powers.

Each commission includes 22 members.

According to the government decree providing for the organisation of the Constituent Assembly inaugural

session works, the election of the two commissions' members depends on the proportional representation of the assembly members with one seat for every 10 seats at the assembly and the remaining seats are shared out on the basis of the biggest remainders.

Constituent Assembly Speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar sworn in

Wednesday, November 23, 2011

LE BARDO (TAP) - Constituent Assembly Speaker Mustapha Ben Jaafar took the oath of office on Tuesday evening.

He highlighted, in an address on the occasion, the mission devolving upon the Assembly and spoke in favour of building-up a second republic that reinforces social justice and preserves public and individual liberties.

"The Constituent Assembly mandate should not exceed one year," he said, stressing the need to avoid frictions and overstatements and put the nation's interest above any other consideration.

Mr. Ben Jaafar also emphasised the need to strengthen relations with brotherly and friendly states and to forge ahead on the way of building up the Great Arab Maghreb.

Inaugural session of the national Constituent Assembly

Tuesday, November 22, 2011

BARDO (TAP) - The inaugural session of the Constituent Assembly was opened on Tuesday morning at the premises of the former chamber of deputies by Caretaker President Foued Mebazaa.

The ceremony was attended by Interim Prime Minister Béji Caïd Essebsi, the members of the transitional government and delegates of political parties, national authorities and organisations as well as national and international media.

The constituent members started first singing the national anthem and then recited the opening verses of the koran.

Then Caretaker President Mebazaa took the floor for an address in which he paid tribute to the martyrs of the Revolution and stressed that the elections had been successful and provided a "popular legitimacy" to the Constituent Assembly that entrusts it with the "responsibility of achieving the expectations of Tunisians".

Consensus on three presidencies (CPR)

Sunday, November 20, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - Mr. Samir Ben Amor, politburo member of the Congress for the Republic (CPR), said to Tunis Afrique Presse (TAP) news agency that Ennahdha, CPR and Ettakatol parties agreed to share out the three presidencies as follows: Mr. Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic and Mr. Mustapha Ben Jaafar, Speaker of the National Constituent Assembly.

Ennahdha, with the largest number of seats in the National Constituent Assembly, has chosen to appoint Mr. Hammad Jebali as a Prime Minister.

The interim power will be made up of three authorities. The President of the Republic will be tasked with representing the state on the national and international level while the Prime Minister will chair the government. In turn, the Speaker of the National Constituent Assembly will ensure co-ordination between the different parties represented within the Assembly to bring viewpoints closer for drafting the new constitution.

DIPLOMACY

Special Envoy of Australian government : "The experience started in Tunisia has attracted attention of Australian people and government"

Tuesday, December 06, 2011

LE BARDO (TAP) - Leader of the Congress for the Republic party (CPR) Moncef Marzouki, poised to be elected president of the republic, conferred Tuesday in Tunis with Mr. William Fisher, Special Envoy of the Australian government.

At the end of the meeting, the latter told TAP news agency that he had come to Tunisia to express the support of his government to Tunisia, its people and the new political system established in the country.

"The experience started in Tunisia has attracted the attention of the Australian people and government which is willing to support Tunisia and develop co-operation with this country to contribute to boost its development process," he affirmed.

Tunisia reasserts support to Palestinian Authority's bid for status of full UN member

Tuesday, November 29, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - Tunisia reiterated, on Monday, its total support to the Palestinian Authority's application for a full membership status in the United Nations Organisation (UNO), calling on all sides within the international organisation, particularly among the Security Council members, to "support this membership bid which is part of the law and justice, and the international legality as strengthened by the relevant UN decisions."

This call was issued on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People celebrated each year on November 29.

In a statement made public on Monday, the Foreign Affairs Ministry advocates legitimacy of the Palestinian efforts which materialised in Palestine's joining UNESCO as a full member.

"That gain was the crowning stage of Palestine's efforts which enjoyed a large support of the member states within the prestigious agency," points out the Foreign Ministry, voicing wish to see the request of the Palestinian Authority for full membership in the UN "benefit from the same support among all UN members."

In this same statement, Tunisia expresses "deep concern about developments recorded by the Palestinian issue and the obstacles preventing the achievement of a peaceful settlement, after two decades of sterile negotiations, due to the Israeli government's obstinacy and its rejection of all international initiatives and proposals, in addition to its carrying on its colonisation activities and repressive policies."

Italy grants credit line to Tunisian SMEs

28.11.2011

A draft agreement between Tunisia and Italy on granting credit line in favour of the Tunisian Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was signed, on Friday in Tunis, by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Khemais Jhinaoui and Italy's Ambassador in Tunis Pietro Benassi.

This agreement, worth 143 million dinars (73 million Euros) represents the closing stage of negotiations which started in 2005 between the two sides and aims to promote trade exchanges and Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) between Tunisia and Italy.

It is meant to support the Tunisian private sector, boost SMEs' role in the creation of new jobs and support firms' creation in the underprivileged zones and inland regions.

Tunisia will host in 2012 the 9th Session of "Forum for the Future"

Thursday, November 24, 2011

Interim President Foued Mebazaa was briefed, during his meeting with Foreign Minister Mohamed Mouldi Kefi, on Tunisia's participation in the works of the 8th Forum for the Future, held recently in Kuwait.

Mr. Kefi outlined the decision made at the end of the Forum, to hold the 9th session of the "Forum for the future" in 2012 in Tunisia under Tunisian-American chairmanship.

On the fringes of the Forum works, Mr. Kefi notably met with Emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who congratulated Tunisia and its people on their successful National Constituent Assembly election.

Mr. Kefi also spoke of the consideration shown by the participating delegations and their respect to Tunisia.

The Foreign Minister informed the Interim President of the results of the Ministerial meeting on the "Deauville Partnership," held on the sidelines of the Forum works with the attendance of the Foreign Ministers, the G8 countries' representatives, and other partners, as well as several representatives of regional and international organisations.

The FM had a series of meetings with his French, Kuwaiti, Italian and Danish counterparts, the US Assistant Secretary of State to Foreign Affairs, the British Deputy Foreign Minister, several heads of attending delegations and delegates of international and regional organisations.

Mr. Foued Mebazaa underscored the importance to strengthen Tunisia's active presence in the different regional and international events to bolster the country's radiant image and strengthen its co-operation and partnership relations with the sisterly and friendly countries.

The Forum for the future, attended by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Economy and Trade, aims to increase opportunities of partnership and favour co-ordination between the 8 industrialised countries, the MENA countries (Middle East and North Africa) and delegates of the civil society. The first session of the forum for the future had been held in 2004 in Morocco under US-Moroccan chairmanship.

Tunisia congratulates Libyan people on successful formation of government

24.11.2011

Tunisia extended sincere congratulations to the Libyan people for their success in forming a national government, which, it said, constitutes an important stage on the path of establishing a modern state that will achieve the Libyan people's aspirations to freedom, democracy and development, in a stable and peaceful climate.

In a Foreign Ministry's statement released on Wednesday, Tunisia reasserts firm will to strengthen consultation and co-operation with Libya and to work with the Libyan government to develop a strategic partnership in all fields, such a partnership that reflects the close fraternity ties binding the Tunisian and Libyan peoples, in the service of their common interests and ambitions.

Tunisia re-elected member of UNESCO Executive Board

04.11.2011

Tunisia was re-elected member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Executive Board for a new four-year term, during the UN organization's 36th General Conference, held on November 2, 2011 in Paris.

With this re-election, Tunisia is planning to strengthen its participation within the UNESCO to contribute actively to the creation of appropriate conditions for the development of fruitful dialogue between civilizations, cultures and the peoples, based on the respect of the commonly shared values.

The co-operation projects between Tunisia and UNESCO cover a wide variety of aspects, including notably the small coastal historical cities and fitting out of the Carthage Punic ports. Eight Tunisian sites are registered in the Humanity Heritage list.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Tunisian exports in last 11 months up 7.3% despite difficult juncture

Monday, December 05, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - The Tunisian exports, estimated at 22,767.8 million Tunisian dinars (MTD) in the last 11 months, went up by 7.3% at current prices compared with 2010, despite the difficult economic juncture.

This was the result of the rise in the exports of farming produce and processed food (39.8%), electrical industries (22.9%) and the textile-clothing and leather products (6.4%).

Exports in the phosphates and by-products sector, which is the scene of social unrest, dropped by 36%.

These indicators are far away from the rates recorded in 2009 and 2010 when the national exports recorded a double-digit growth (over 20.9%).

According to the National Statistics Institute, imports worth 30,596.1 MD increased by 5.8% compared with 2010 (from January to November).

Progress of import development slowed down markedly compared with 2009/2010 (27%).

For the present year, mainly imports of farming produce and basic foodstuffs as well as energy products recorded respective rises of 28.7% and 24.6%.

Given the difficult situation in the phosphates sector, imports of equipments, metals and phosphate products registered a continued drop by (-8.3%) and (-4.5%), respectively.

Tourism and Trade Minister Houas : Tunisian tourism can recover

Saturday, December 03, 2011

MONASTIR (TAP) - The Tunisian tourism sector is capable of recovering and set as its objective to attract 10 million tourists, Tourism and Trade Minister Mehdi Houas said during a news conference held on Friday in Monastir, after the opening of the French AS Group AFAT Selectour's 2nd Congress.

"Will and means are necessary conditions for the materialisation of this objective," the Minister specified, adding that "to reach 10 million tourists more should be done in 2012, especially as 80% of Tunisia's potential has not been exploited yet."

He emphasised that efforts should be exerted to reinforce training, develop the tourist sector, improve services' quality, open on cultural tourism which is an important niche to discover the country and its people.

The tourists' entries recorded in the first ten months of 2011 have fallen by 33,3 % to 4 million visitors whereas Tunisia had hosted over 6 million tourists in the same period last year.

According to the statistics published by the national tourism board ONTT, The European tourists numbered 1,9 million , thus meaning a fall of 45,1%.

As regards the first tourist providing market for Tunisia, namely France, visitors numbered 731 034, thus meaning a decline of 42,7 %.

As to Maghreb tourists, statistics show a decline of 12, 9% for Libyans (1336 526 visitors in 2011) and a clear fall of 41% for Algerians (516 623).

As a result , bed-nights fell by 41,9% from last January, 1 to last October 31, to 18,8 millions and revenues declined by 36,2 % to 1 907,8 million dinars.

Tunisian olive oil export earnings worth 430 MTD

Thursday, December 01, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - "Tunisia exported during the 2010-11 season 107,000 tonnes of olive oil, 12% of which was packaged oil, for earnings worth 430 million Tunisian dinars (MTD)," Deputy-Director in the Agriculture and Environment Ministry's Agricultural Production General Management Chokri Bayouadh said.

In a statement to TAP news agency, the official specified that the European Union is the most important importer of Tunisian olive oil.

The American market, which ranks second with 25% of Tunisian exports, recorded a 6% rise during the 2010-11 season.

During the same period, Tunisia exported 10,000 tonnes of organic oil, mainly to the United States and Europe.

At present, the Tunisian olive oil, which is exported to 50 countries across the world, is conquering new markets such as Brazil and Russia, Mr. Bayouadh pointed out.

The average production level in the last ten years reached 850,000 tonnes of olives and 165,000 tonnes of oil.

As regards the average exports level in the ten past years, Tunisia exported 120,000 tonnes of olive oil, and 45,000 tonnes were sold in the domestic market for earnings worth 500,000 MTD.

Olive oil exports' earnings represent 50% of the Tunisian farm produce exports.

"Forecasts point to a production of 900,000 tonnes of olives and 180,000 tonnes of olive oil during the 2011-12 season," the official specified.

Tunisia, which counts 74 million olive plantations over 1.7 million hectares, the equivalent of 1/3 of the country's farm lands, ranks second after Spain

Leather and footwear exports up 8.9% (first 10 months)

Friday, November 25, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - Exports of the leather and footwear industries posted a rise of 8.9% in the first ten months of 2011, going up from 796.9 million Tunisian dinars (MTD), in 2010, to 868.1 MTD.

Imports rose by 9.1% reaching 556.9 MTD, compared to 510.5 MTD in the same period of 2010.

The trade balance posted a coverage rate of 155.9%.

According to the monthly October 2011 information bulletin of the National Leather and Footwear Centre, growth in the sector's exports is explained by the increase recorded in leather goods whose exports were up 50.7% (117.4 MTD) and leather clothing 73.6% (12.5 MTD).

Regarding Tunisia's customers, Italy comes first with 46.6% of the overall exports, i.e., 404.4 MTD.

France ranks second with a 21.3% growth from 212.4 MTD to 257.7 MTD in 2011, i.e., 29.7% of the overall exports.

Germany, Spain and Hong-Kong rank third, fourth and fifth, respectively, with 96.3 MTD, 14 MTD and 7.8 MTD, despite their declines.

As to imports, they involve leather, hides or skins (314.1 MTD), i.e., 56.4% of the overall imports, accessories and components (797.9 MTD) and shoe uppers (76.8 MTD).

Tunisia's largest supplier is Italy with 252.6 MTD, i.e., with 45.4% of total imports.

France with 129.7 MTD, i.e., 23.3%, and Germany with 59 MTD, i.e., 10.6%, rank second and third. China and Spain came fourth and fifth with 23 MTD and 21.2 MTD, respectively.

Tunisian distinction in the field of balneology

Friday, November 25, 2011

HAMMAMET (TAP) - Four Tunisian spas, namely Golden Tulip, Lella baya, Club Alhambra and Hammam Chanchou (Gabès) have been awarded prizes by the World Federation for Balneology and Climatology at its 64th general assembly held last October 16-19 in Slovenia.

There are in Tunisia 100 geothermal springs, including 50 operated by 4 spas and 30 traditional steam baths , in addition to 50 water cure centres and 50 thalassotherapy centres which host 150 000 tourists each year.

Symposium in Tunis focuses on ways to boost tourism in 2012

Friday, November 18, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - Ways to boost Tunisian tourism in international provider-markets in 2012 was the focal point of a symposium held on Friday in Tunis.

Participants said the debate comes at the right time, especially since Tunisian tourism is still recording declines in the first ten months of 2011 in all parameters, namely arrivals (-33%), earnings (-37%) and overnight stays (-43%).

Director General of the Tunisian National Tourism Board (ONTT) Habib Ammar said these figures reflect, despite these negative margins, the strength of Tunisian tourism in the face of events that marked the country since last January.

He called on the sector's stakeholders to further work to ensure that 2012 be the year of revival of this vital sector.

For this purpose, it is necessary, according to Mr. Ammar, to launch a communication campaign that provides information on the new reality in Tunisia to restore confidence of foreign tourists.

Chairman of the Hotel Trade Federation Mohamed Belajouza emphasised the need to break with the past and correct the image of Tunisia to reassure foreign partners and beyond customers.

Trade and Tourism Minister Mehdi Houas announced the implementation of a restructuring plan of Tunisian stands in major international events so that their configuration will contribute to changing the perception of Tunisia, its offer and its heritage.

As to the promotional budget, the minister said special action will target potential tourist-provider markets such as the Russian market whose budget will increase by 250% in 2012.

Participants in this debate looked at different communication plans proposed by communication agencies and study their content and their timing.

The symposium was attended by representatives of the Tunisian tourism abroad, representatives of foreign communication agencies under contract with ONTT and several Tunisian officials.

Tozeur: improved prospects for dates exports

Friday, November 11, 2011

TOZEUR (TAP) - The sector of dates exports in the Tozeur region will witness a noteworthy improvement with the operationalisation of three new dates conditioning and exportation units, bringing the total number of such units to 17.

Additionally, the region's professionals decided to lift the exportation price restrictions in agreement with the inter-professional fruits grouping.

The exportation campaign started on October 1, 2011, with promising prospects as exporters gained a large share of production on the spot.

According to the first estimates, this year's crop will reach some 45,000 tonnes, including 35,000 tonnes in the "Deglet Nour" quality brand. Last year's exports recorded a rise in revenues: 18,000 tonnes were exported, for a total value of 62 million dinars.

First international 'e-commerce Tunis' exhibit to be held in December

Thursday, November 10, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - The first international e-trade exhibition entitled "e-commerce Tunis" will be held next December 1-2 in the northern suburb of Gammarth by the Strategic Development Agency "Xpert-Net".

The aim of this meeting is an exchange of expertise and information between Tunisian and foreign experts in matters of communication, on-line commerce and web-marketing.

On the agenda of this event are round table meetings, workshops and B to B business contacts as well as an e-banking forum.

This first exhibit will be attended by big international firms (France, Italy, Japan, China, Qatar, Switzerland..), operating in the various technological fields.

Sousse hosts international symposium on "Heritage, Tourism and Development"

Thursday, November 03, 2011

SOUSSE (TAP) - An international symposium on "Heritage, Tourism and Development" was held on November 1-2, 2011 in Sousse.

The event was part of the Euro-Mediterranean Programme "Montada" on the valorisation of traditional architectural heritage in the cities of Sousse and Kairouan.

The conference brought together international researchers and academics as well as representatives of the municipality, university and association of the protection of city of Sousse.

Participants focused, in particularly, on issues related to the development of archaeological sites to make them influential tourist and economic centres, emphasising the need to publicise the wealth of this heritage as a tourist product that might be used in local development.

Workshops conducted by UNESCO and World Bank experts were held on the occasion and focused on the following topics: heritage and tourism, cultural tourism and local communities, economy of heritage, tourism and development.

The "Montada" project is carried out as part of the Euromed Heritage 4 programme.

It mainly aims to hold forums on the traditional Mediterranean architecture in three Maghreb countries, namely Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria.

CULTURE

Training session in intangible heritage

Monday, November 21, 2011

EL KEF (TAP) - A first training session started, on Monday in El Kef, on "Valorisation of Intangible Heritage for Development of Cultural Tourism and Job Creation."

Held in association with the Spanish Foundation of Innovation in Handicrafts Industries, this eight-day session will provide trainers' training in the field of intangible heritage valorisation, in its various components, given its positive impact on handicrafts development and job creation.

The session will be an occasion to enquire about the techniques of research and marketing of handicrafts products, notably in the fields of handicrafts industries, archaeological and historical sites which constitute economic fields of activity able to promote the economic dimension of the cultural sector.

The session, which targets Tunisian and Algerian trainers in the intangible heritage fields, will be attended by Spanish experts who will present the experiences of several European, African and American countries which managed to promote the handicrafts industries and made of them an important economic catalyst.

The choice of El Kef city to host this session has to do with the fact that the region has archaeological and civilisational riches of great value.

Strategic Tunisian-European partnership to develop movie and audiovisual sector

Monday, November 14, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - In his address to the Meeting on the Third Euromed Audiovisual Programme, organised November 14-15 in Tunis on the theme "Strategic Partnership to Develop Cinematographic and Audiovisual Sector," Ambassador and Chief of the European Delegation Adrianus Koetsenruijter said that the gathering was part of the strategy of the European Union and its south Mediterranean partners to develop Euro-Mediterranean audiovisual co-operation.

He recalled that the Euromed's first two programmes had helped reinforce inter-cultural dialogue and develop exchanges within the Euro-Mediterranean region, by helping professionals develop, distribute and promote their works on the international market.

"The Third Euromed Programme," he specified, "aims to reinforce institutional capacities in the Mediterranean region."

Despite its modest means, he pointed out, the Tunisian audiovisual sector has become, along the decades, a successful model in the Mediterranean basin, either by its film industry or by its opening of its televisual landscape, specifying that Tunisia has been endowed with efficient structures with a performing industrial sector that attracted shootings of several international films.

Mr. Adrianus Koetsenruijter pointed out that Tunisia has shown a great capacity of keeping abreast of progresses in the new information and audiovisual technologies, estimating that "the Tunisian audiovisual landscape is in need of a healthy and fruitful competitiveness for the whole profession."

It is worth specifying that Tunisia actively took part in the two previous programmes of Euromed Audiovisual and signed numerous co-production and audiovisual co-operation agreements with European countries.

Tunisian films have also been present in several north Mediterranean festivals.

Tunisian Revolution at animation crossroads of Paris Image Forum

Monday, November 07, 2011

TUNIS (TAP) - A special programme devoted to the Tunisian Revolution through animation movie-making has been prepared by the 9th Animation Crossroads of the Paris Images Forum.

This event, scheduled for December 4, 2011, includes debates, screenings, an exhibition of press cartoons and caricatures, with a free hand accorded to Zouheir Mahjoub, a great name of animation in the Maghreb and Africa, presently managing director of AZA production and chairman of the Marsa-based Association of Animation Cinema Development and Closely-Related Arts.

A selection of short feature films are to be screened, including "Le guerbaji" (1985), "Les deux souris blanches" (1992), "La Goutte miraculeuse" (2009) and "Ruse pour ruse" (2006) of Sancho Mongi, pioneering figure of Tunisian animation films.

A carte blanche was also reserved to the Tunisian Association of Animation Cinema, created to develop animation movies in Tunisia, to supervise training workshops for children and young amateurs of cinema and create a network linking animation cinema professionals.

On the event's agenda is also the screening of short films produced recently in Tunisia, including Mustapha Taieb's "Le château de sable," Rafik Omrani's "La poule de Sabaa," "Coma" of Alaeddine Boutaleb, "L'enfant roi" of Hassine Grayaa and "L'ambouba" of Nadia Raies.

Centering on the January 14, 2011 Revolution, a round-table discussion on "the revolution re-emerges" will look at animation as an additional means of communication, alongside press cartoons, with the screening of animated and free artistic creations on Youtube.

The 9th Animation Crossroads is the annual culminating point of the Image Forum, created 20 years ago by poet Pierre Emmanuel.

During the four-day event, the large public, professionals and the French schools will meet around an agenda that celebrates animation cinemas from Poland and Tunisia.

Ridha El Behi's "Always Brando" wins Best Production Award at Abu Dhabi International Festival

Saturday, October 22, 2011

TUNIS (TAP)- Tunisian Ridha El Behi's feature film "Always Brando" won the Best Production Award in the feature films competition at the 5th edition of the Abu Dhabi International Film Festival held on October 13-21.

"Always Brando," referring to movie icon Marlon Brando, chronicles the story of young Anis whose destiny veers into tragedy once his resemblance to Brando presents the promise of success and fame in Hollywood.

Ridha El Behi's previous films include Forbidden Thresholds (1972), Sun of the Hyenas (1977), the Angels (1985), Bitter Champagne (1986), the Swallows do not Die in El Quds (1994) and the Magic Box (2002).