



TUNISIA NEWSLETTER

October 2011

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TUNISIA & JAPAN

Tunisian participation in JATA Tourism Fair

Tuesday, October 11, 2011 20:00

Tunisia participated in the JATA Tourism fair, on September 30-October 2, 2011. National Tunisian Tourism Board General Manager Habib Ammar who visited Japan on that occasion emphasised, on Tuesday in Tunis during the regular meeting with the press, the opportunities provided by that market, notably for the Saharan and cultural tourism.

Mr. Ammar said that a delegation of Japanese International Co-operation Agency (JICA) will soon visit Tunisia to examine means to energise two countries' tourist co-operation. He also announced that a "group of Japanese tour operators will pay, shortly, a visit to Tunisia to enquire about the Tunisian tourist products".

Participation of the Embassy of Tunisia in STS Forum

The Embassy of Tunisia participated in the 8th edition of the "Science and Technology in Society –STS- Forum", held in Kyoto from the 2nd to the 4th of October 2011.

This event has permitted to enlarge the network of the Embassy in the field of Higher Education, Technology and Scientific Research.

'Yazaki' will not leave Tunisia

Tuesday, October 11, 2011 14:54

TUNIS (TAP) - Japanese cable plant "Yazaki" set up in the Aquila industrial zone, Governorate of Gafsa said it will not leave Tunisia.

In a statement released on Tuesday, the group specifies that "contrary to information carried by some media, it is by no means planning to leave Tunisia, despite all the difficulties and financial losses suffered during the post-Revolution period which was marked by the lack of political and social stability."

The Group, which has been in Tunisia since 2009, "is working without respite to finish off building its new unit in Gafsa with total investments of 35 million dinars", the statement adds.

Yazaki said that the temporary transfer of some of its activities outside Tunisia, "is out of keenness not to cause problems to our customers."

"We are confident that the Tunisian Government will restore a calm and favourable climate that will help us meet our commitments towards our customers," the same source underlined.

POLITICS

Preparation for the Constituent Assembly election

Thursday, October 13, 2011 10:24

TUNIS (TAP) - Head of the Independent Higher Authority for Elections (IHAE) Kamel Jendoubi stressed, at a meeting on Wednesday afternoon with the team of observers of the Constituent Assembly elections, that the role of the observers is both "important" and "sensitive" and that the election body is striving to monitor the campaign as regards notably foreign funding and election expenses ceilings for equality between all candidates.

Mr. Jendoubi said also that "material preparations for elections are nearing completion and what remains now is printing of all ballot papers which will be ready in two days, supply of the election ink and the training of human resources who will oversee the elections."

He noted that polling stations will be open from 07:00 a.m. to 07:00 p.m.

Answering a question on the preparations for the elections in Canada and the obstacles recorded as a result of the delay in the Canadian authorities' acceptance to organise the elections for Tunisians living there on their territory, Mr. Kamel Jendoubi said that the delay has been made up for thanks to the joint efforts of the Regional Authority for the Elections in this country and the support of Tunisians living there.

IHAE reminds of rights and duties of foreign media correspondents in covering elections

Saturday, October 01, 2011 17:28

TUNIS (TAP) - The Independent Higher Authority for the Elections (IHAE) held, on Saturday, a meeting with the foreign media representatives accredited in Tunisia, to remind of the fixed procedures and rules that define the rights and duties of the information bodies and journalists, during their coverage of the different stages of the elections of the National Constituent Assembly set for October 23, 2011.

To ease accreditation of foreign journalists, IHAE informs foreign journalists who have not beforehand an official document justifying their accreditation by the Tunisian competent public authorities that it is still possible for them to file their application in the IHAE which, exceptionally, will co-ordinate with the competent authorities to carry out formalities related to their accreditation by the Tunisian State. The deadline is October 15 2011.

Emphasis was placed on the key role of media at this delicate stage in Tunisia's history and its democratic transition process, as well as on compliance with the procedures in force, during the course of the election.

High Authority for the Achievement of the Revolution Objectives, Political Reform and Democratic Transition works come to end

Thursday, October 13, 2011 17:04

BARDO (TAP) - The High Authority for the Achievement of the Revolution Objectives, Political Reform and

Democratic Transition (HAARO) closed its works on Thursday during a ceremony chaired by Caretaker President Foued Mebazaa and in the presence of interim Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi.

Chairman of HAARO Yadh Ben Achour stressed, at the opening of the ceremony, that the main objective today is the construction of democracy and citizenship and breaking off with the remnants of the political and cultural model adopted for a long period in the history of modern Tunisia.

He said that the Authority's creation was "a link in the chain of Tunisia's democratic transition process, the first forum for the practice of freedom of speech in the country and a sphere that houses the different political and ideological theses, as part of respect for the right to the different and free opinion."

Mr. Ben Achour also listed HAARO's gains, particularly the decree-laws promulgated to organise public and political life and its contribution to preparations of the appropriate platform for the October 23, 2011 race.

DIPLOMACY

Interim President attends UNHCR Executive Committee in Geneva

Tuesday, October 04, 2011 09:35

GENEVA (TAP) – "I will not stay beyond the constituent assembly elections" said Caretaker President Foued Mebazaa at a news conference on Monday in Geneva where he attended the 62nd session of the UNHCR Executive Committee.

Speaking of the refugees which crossed into Tunisia, the Interim President said that Tunisia had endeavoured to provide the best hosting conditions to refugees fleeing Libya in spite of the difficult conditions the country was living through after the revolution.

Asked about Tunisian-Swiss relations, Mr. Mebazaa described them as "satisfying" in a hint at the obstacles and controversy that characterised these relations after the World Summit on the Information Society WSIS held in 2005 in Tunis.

The Swiss confederation is taking a new look at Tunisia especially after the changes that occurred there, he stated, adding that it has been committed to speed up the process of returning the Tunisian assets frozen in Switzerland.

Promising prospects for Tunisia-Libya relations

Thursday, October 13, 2011 09:01

BENGHAZI (TAP) - Interim Prime Minister Béji Caïd Essebsi's visit to Benghazi provided the occasion to congratulate the new Libyan leaders on the success of their revolution and reaffirm Tunisia's support to the Libyan people.

The visit also provided an appropriate occasion to think about the future of the two peoples who share a common destiny and convergent interests at domestic and foreign levels.

The joint communiqué published at the end of this visit highlighted the will of the two countries' leaders to focus all efforts on strengthening the fraternal ties of solidarity between the two peoples for the benefit of their mutual interests and for the establishment of fruitful relations based on co-operation, complementarity and partnership.

Prime Minister visit to Washington

Saturday, October 08, 2011 10:20

WASHINGTON (TAP special correspondent Ihsen Turki) - "I would like to pay a tribute to Tunisia, the first North African and Arab country to have achieved this extraordinary transformation which we call the Arab Spring," U.S. President Barack Obama stated on Friday, when receiving Caretaker Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi, in the White House.

"Tunisia has been an inspiration to all of us," Mr. Obama estimated, asserting everyone's right to respect, democracy and to free and democratic elections.

Commending "the progresses recorded in Tunisia in such a short period," the U.S. President reckoned that this transformation had been achieved thanks to the efforts of the Tunisian Government's leadership that succeeded to make of it a totally orderly process.

This process, he said, would lead to free and democratic elections of a National Constituent Assembly (NCA), that would work out a new Constitution.

As Tunisia is the first country to have lived through the Arab Spring and the first country to organise free, just and democratic elections, "it is only right and appropriate to invite Tunisian officials to the White House," he specified.

The discussions described as "excellent" by the American President, turned on the opportunities offered to Tunisia and the challenges it is faced with and on the bilateral co-operation possibilities.

"We have notably emphasised the importance of an economic transformation that goes with the political one," Mr. Obama asserted.

The meeting between Messers. Obama and Caid Essebsi was also an occasion to discuss the various transformations recorded in the region.

"I expressed to Mr. Caid Essebsi my deep admiration for the Tunisian people's extraordinary hospitality offered to the Libyan refugees," the American President said.

Speaking about the long-standing relations binding the two countries, Mr. Obama assured that "the American people will express their solidarity with the Tunisian people by all means possible in this transition period."

For his part, Beji Caid Essebsi who was on an official visit in Washington on October 3-7, pointed out that he had conveyed to the American President "a message of the Tunisian Revolution and Tunisian people, a message of recognition for the support he has constantly provided to the process of change in Tunisia."

The Prime Minister added that "President Obama has been the first leader to welcome the January 14th change and has kept supporting this change in Tunisia."

"A support that I wish will be irreversible, Mr. Obama was the first leader to have understood the importance of the

change that had taken place in Tunisia and its importance for the entire region," Mr. Caïd Essebsi pointed out.

The long-standing and privileged relations binding the two countries would be further strengthened and Tunisia would always be a credible partner of the United States, Mr. Caïd Essebsi asserted.

U.S. President Barack Obama decided on four new programmes aimed to support the reform and development process in Tunisia, in the political, economic and social fields, announces the White House in a communiqué following the meeting, on Friday in Washington, between the American President and interim Prime Minister Béji Caïd Essebsi.

The first programme relates to the return, in 2012, of the American "Peace Corps" to Tunisia with volunteer assignment focusing on English language teaching and youth skills development.

The second programme is related the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). This partnership, indicates the same source, is a recognition of Tunisia's commitment and progress toward democracy and economic freedom.

According to the third programme, the U.S. government proposes to provide Loan Guarantees, if authorised by Congress, at a budgetary cost of € 30 million to support a significant portion of the budgetary gap, thereby enabling Tunisia to borrow from international capital markets and bring down the cost of financing Tunisia's reform agenda.

According to the fourth programme, pending its approval by the US Congress, the United States will launch a Tunisia Enterprise Fund that provides seed money to support the private sector growth. At an initial budgetary cost of € 20 million, this Fund will leverage other investors and help Tunisians launch the small and medium enterprises that will be the engines of long term opportunity.

During his visit to Washington, Interim Prime Minister Béji Caïd Essebsi met also the World Bank President Robert Zoellick who announced that the World Bank is ready to provide the necessary financial assistance to Tunisia in this stage of transition to democracy.

Mr. Zoellick reminded that the WB had already granted a 500-million-dinar loan to Tunisia for the year 2011. He also enquired about the next political events in Tunisia and paid tribute to Tunisian women who, he said, are an example to follow in the Arab and Islamic world.

American government reiterates commitment to support development and transition in Tunisia

Thursday, October 13, 2011 20:12

TUNIS (TAP) - A meeting was held, on Thursday in Tunis, between Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Khemaies Jehinaoui and Special Co-ordinator for Middle East Transition William Taylor, who had been appointed to this position by American President Barack Obama last September.

The meeting is part of following up the official visit paid last week by interim Prime Minister Beji Caïd Essebsi to Washington.

On this occasion, the American official reasserted his country's will to support the Tunisian people in this

transition and its readiness to back up Tunisia's efforts to achieve development and carry out successfully the democratic transition process, in line with the concrete programmes announced by the U.S. President in favour of Tunisia.

US ambassador G. Gray: US will support any government that comes out from democratic elections

Tuesday, October 11, 2011 18:55

TUNIS (TAP) - "The United States of America will support any Tunisian government that comes out from the democratic elections," U.S. Ambassador in Tunis Gordon Gray said on Tuesday.

"We will support Tunisia in its democratic transition. We are not backing up a party or a candidate (...) We support a free and transparent process," he pointed out during a news conference on Caretaker Prime Minister Beji Caïd Essebsi's recent visit to Washington.

Great Britain: Boosting relations of partnership with Tunisia

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2011 08:16

TUNIS (TAP) – Great Britain aims to strengthen its relations with Tunisia, first country of the Arab spring, said Irfan Siddiq, head of the Arab Partnership Department at the UK Foreign Office, at a news conference held on Thursday.

Explaining the outlines of the "The Arab Partnership Initiative" announced by British Prime Minister David Cameron, Siddiq reminded that the aim of this initiative is to support the Arab Revolution countries in the economic, social, cultural and political fields.

Great Britain has released 110 million pounds over four years to finance projects as part of this initiative, Siddiq declared, adding that this partnership aims to help Tunisia and the countries of the Arab region which endeavour to establish greater political openness, develop their judicial systems, freedom of expression and democratisation of institutions .

Tunisia-EU : "New Tunisia needs foreign investments to secure success of democratic transition"

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2011 10:29

TUNIS (TAP) - "Tunisia has made a strategic choice in reaffirming its preferential ties and partnership with the European Union," affirmed on Wednesday Interim Prime Minister Beji Caïd Essebsi at the opening of the Tunisia-EU task force meeting.

"The reservations of the European community about liberties and human rights are quite unjustified after the Revolution of January 14" he said.

Speaking of the process of started in Tunisia and the election of the Constituent Assembly next October 23, Caïd Essebsi declared : "We want these elections to be free, credible, democratic and transparent," stressing in this regard the increasing participation of women in these elections with the adoption of the principle of parity.

As regards economic issues, Caïd Essebsi outpointed the importance of the Tunisia-EU Task force meeting, the first

to be held in a Southern Mediterranean country, and the strong economic ties between Tunisia and the EU.

Tunisia is in the lead of South Mediterranean countries exporting manufactured products to the European Union.

The PM affirmed that new Tunisia needs to attract new foreign investments and new credits to secure the success of the democratic transition process, reminding in this respect of the outlines of the plan submitted to the G8 meeting last May in Deauville (France) and the promises made and estimated at 125 billion dollars.

The opening session of the Tunisia-EU task force meeting was attended by the head of the EU Foreign Policy Chief, the Swiss Confederation President, the ADB President, the Vice President of the World Bank and several European and Tunisian businessmen.

Tunisia calls on international community to support its democratic transition

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2011 10:03

NEW YORK (TAP) - Foreign Minister Mouldi Kefi called on Monday in New York on the international community to support democratic transition in Tunisia and the efforts made to overcome the economic difficulties surrounding in general peoples' revolutions and the effects on Tunisia of the humanitarian and economic crisis in Libya.

In his address on behalf of Tunisia to the 66th session of the UN General Assembly, the FM affirmed the will of the Interim Government and all the parties to establish the foundations of actual democracy reinforcing people's sovereignty and enabling them to exercise their right to self-determination.

Speaking of Tunisian diplomacy after the Revolution of last January 14, the FM said the country is endeavoring to promote relations with brotherly and friendly states as well as regional and international organisations.

Tunisia reasserts support for Palestine's bid for full membership in UN

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2011 14:51

TUNIS (TAP) - Tunisia reasserted its unwavering support for Palestine's bid for a full membership in the United Nations Organisation (UNO).

According to a statement released by the Foreign Ministry on Monday, this legitimate request is a very significant step for the just cause of the Palestinian people who have been struggling for long decades to recover their natural and legitimate rights, on top of them their right to build their independent State with Al-Quds as capital, exercise full sovereignty on their land and live in an environment of peace, stability and development together with their neighbours.

In this regard, Tunisia exhorts all UN members, particularly those of the Security Council, to respond positively to this legitimate Palestinian request, saying that endorsement of this request will certainly consecrate the principles of law and justice, rehabilitate international legality and foster good will to put an end to the conflict in the Middle-East, on the basis of a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement that preserves the rights and security of all stakeholders.

In the same statement, Tunisia reiterates constant commitment to support the Palestinian people's struggle and its adherence to all initiatives aimed to reach a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Middle-East.

Global warming: Tunisia calls for more decisive role of industrialised countries

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2011 16:04

TUNIS (TAP) - Tunisia called upon industrialised countries to play a key role in the achievement of the goals of the Climate Change Conference, to be held in Durban, South Africa, on November 28-December 9, 2011.

The Tunisian delegation attending the international seminar on "Addressing Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication," organised in New York September 20-24, 2011 on the fringes of the 66th session of the United Nations General Assembly, also underlined the need to endow developing countries with technologies and appropriate technical and financial assistance to face up this phenomenon.

BUSINESS & ECONOMY

Growth of manufacturing industries to reach 3.2% in 2011

Wednesday, October 05, 2011 07:56

TUNIS (TAP) - The rate of growth of manufacturing industries is expected to reach 3.2% in 2011, compared with 1.1% last year, according to estimates announced Tuesday by the Industry and Technology Ministry.

These industries account for 18% to 20% of the GDP.

Mr. Zakariya Hmed, Staff Chief of the Industry Minister said, in the regular press briefing held at the Government's Palace in Kasbah, that the Ministry has set these estimates on the basis of indicators recorded during the first nine months of 2011.

Job creation expected in this sector should grow to about 37,000 positions in 2011 (13,200 in the private sector and 23,700 in the public sector), in addition to ensuring the sustainability of 13,000 job positions (sub-contracting, contracts, etc.).

The ministerial official also said that 80% of the 11,000 jobs lost as a result of destruction should be saved, thanks to the payment of indemnification to damaged businesses, which thus could resume their activities.

Libya, first market for Tunisian agricultural exports

Thursday, October 13, 2011 15:34

TUNIS (TAP)-Libya was the first destination of Tunisia's farming products and food industries during the first nine months of this year. Libya had been second in 2010 just after Italy.

Tunisia exported 30% of its food and agricultural products to the Libyan market, compared with 14% during the same period last year, Mr. Lotfi Khdir, Head of the

Foreign Trade Observatory (FTO) coming under the Trade and Tourism Ministry, told TAP news agency.

He added that the value of Tunisian exports to Libya reached by the end of last September 554.5 million Tunisian dinars (MTD) against 186.3 MTD in the same period of 2010, i.e. a rise of 368.2 MTD.

This increase, he said, is particularly due to a rise by 148 MTD of exports of vegetable oil, cereals (49.3 MTD), tinned tomatoes (32.5 MTD), milk and derivatives (32.1 MTD), flour (28.8 MTD), pasta (15.9 MTD), baked products (10.1 MTD), sugar (6.8 MTD) and frozen meat (6.4 MTD).

Agricultural and food industries account for 73% of the overall Tunisian exports to Libya.

The total value of Tunisia's exports to Libya is estimated at 758 MTD during the first nine months of 2011, i.e. a rise of 1.7% (12.5 MTD) compared with the same period last year.

Libya is the first Arab and African customer of Tunisia and its fifth client internationally, FTO Chairman said.

One thousand Tunisian exporters out of 6,000 operate on the Libyan market.

New project to boost Tunisia's innovative research system

Wednesday, October 12, 2011 18:42

TUNIS (TAP) - Boosting mechanisms of governance of the National Research and Innovation System (RIS), research vitalisation and development of networking activities on the national and international levels are the key axes of the Support Project to Research and Innovative System (SPRIS) launched on Wednesday in Tunis.

The aim of this project, financed by a donation from the European Union worth 12 million euros (more than 23 million dinars) and whose achievement is to be extended till 2014, is meant to improve contribution of research and innovation to the socio-economic development and generate new jobs in Tunisia, while strengthening ties between the research and production systems and helping the country integrate the European research programmes.

The project, whose start is scheduled for 2012, will provide diagnosis of the National Innovation System (NIS).

In addition to research and specialised support structures, the project will be of benefit to the industrial enterprises and services. In this connection, the German Technical Co-operation Agency (GIZ), one of the partners of the SPRIS project, will ensure the technical assistance of 200 enterprises.

At the opening of the seminar on launching SPRIS, Industry and Technology Minister Abdelaziz Rassaa said that this important project is an "excellent opportunity to boost the National Research and Innovation System in Tunisia, which is called to be efficient to carry out successfully any economic development strategy."

"The project will undoubtedly guarantee Tunisia's economic revival and contribute to the achievement of the targets assigned to the Tunisian industries," he further said.

In Tunisia, the share of exports of technological products out of the total volume of industrial exports has been lower than 30% in 2011 --the aim being to raise this share up to 50% in 2016 by means of developing the buoyant sectors, (i.e., electrical, electronic, technical textile, etc.), reminded the Industry and Technology Minister.

Higher Education and Scientific Research Minister Refaat Chaabouni pointed out that "only a rigorous and viable national innovation system is able to boost the nation's collective intelligence and transform it into riches and employment."

The first meeting of this project's steering committee is organised by the National Scientific Research Promotion Agency in association with the Higher Education and Scientific Research Ministry and the Industry and Technology Ministry.

Tunisia takes part in Paris Equip Auto show

TUNIS (TAP)- Seven Tunisian companies are taking part in the 19th International Equip Auto show held October 11-15 in Paris.

These companies, whose participation in this biennial event is supervised by the Tunisian Exports Promotion Centre (CEPEX), are active in the branches of automotive filters and cables, drive shafts, leaf springs, water pumps, wheel rims and vehicle seats.

Equip Auto 2011, which covers an area of 108 square meters, represents, according to a statement of CEPEX, a space for exchange and a vector of technological innovation for all automotive after-sale players.

Nearly 1,800 companies are taking part in this exhibition, 70% of which are foreign companies from 50 countries.

One hundred thousand professional visitors are expected in Equip Auto, 30% of whom are foreign visitors.

Tunisia exported auto components worth 1,082.7 million dinars in the first eight months of 2011, compared with 878.7 MTD in the same period of 2010, i.e. a rise of 23.3%.

The French market has the lion's share in Tunisian exports in this sector with 25.4% ahead of Italy (8.4%) and Germany (6%).

9.3% growth in exports and 6.9% decrease in trade deficit

Wednesday, October 12, 2011 15:45

TUNIS (TAP)- Exports posted a growth of 9.3% between 2010 and 2011 (9 months), reaching 18.777 billion dinars while imports rose by 4.9% to 24.684 billion dinars.

According to statistics published on Wednesday by the Foreign Trade Observatory (Ministry of Trade and Tourism), the rate of coverage of imports by exports is estimated at 76.1% compared with 73% in the same period last year.

Regarding trade deficit, it fell by 6.9% in 2011 (compared to 2010) to reach 5.907 billion dinars.

The observatory explained the increase in the value of exports by the rise of those of energy products by 25.9% (745.1 MTD) and food products by 36% (539.6 MTD).

Two hundred and forty-eight projects achieved, despite 27% drop in FDIs

Saturday, October 15, 2011 19:29

TUNIS (TAP) - The Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) dropped by 27% by the end of the last nine months to 1,238 million Tunisian dinars (MTD), compared with last year, according to the Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (FIPA). These investments helped create 8,484 new jobs, against 9,165 in 2010.

It appears from the analysis of the flow of FDIs that there is a focus on the sectors of energy (760 MTD) and manufacturing industries (271 MTD).

The mechanical and electrical industries (MEIs) and textile are, in this regard, the first industrial sectors that attracted FDIs, created jobs and stimulated exports.

FDIs distribution within the manufacturing sector shows a strong concentration in the mechanical and electrical industries, which are in the lead. Ninety projects were achieved by investments worth 129.7 MTD, helping create 3,208 jobs.

The textile-clothing industries rank second with 66 new projects and 2,900 jobs created.

The FDIs' flow went up by 42.2% in plastics industries and 271% in the leather and footwear sector.

Drops regard mainly the tourism sector (minus 86.8%), manufacturing industries (minus 27%) and energy (minus 18.3%). As to the services sector, they recorded a rise by 17.2% in the investments flow.

"Positive signs in economic activity" (BCT)

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 01, 2011 15:48

TUNIS (TAP) - Positive signs in economic activity were noticed late September, 2011, according to the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Tunisia (BCT), which pointed to the lessening of the drop registered in the tourism sector and the revival of activity in some other sectors that have been mostly hit since the beginning of the year in addition to the gradual improvement in trade with Libya and the positive trend of stock market indicators.

The Board decided, according to statement released on Friday, to keep unchanged the key interest rate of the Central Bank of Tunisia and recommended to start the working out of an upgrading programme of the financial system in order to consolidate its soundness and develop its interventions to ensure economic activity revival.

It said that the reduction in the Central Bank key interest rate to 3.5% beginning September induced a decrease in money market average rate at 3.2% vs 3.76% the previous month.

Measures undertaken on the monetary level helped banks pursue their efforts of financing the economy at a sustained pace with a 10.5% increase in financing the economy since the beginning of the year. Also, discount portfolio rose by 8.5% during the same period which is a positive indicator reflecting economic activity progress, the Board said.

On the other hand, assets in foreign currencies registered a virtual stability compared to August reaching on 29

September 10,850 MTD corresponding to 120 days of imports, it added.

The Board also noted the mitigation of pressure on bank liquidity in August and the continuation of this trend in September which resulted in a decrease in the Central Bank's intervention on the money market.

Moreover, the Board considered the trends in international environment, in particular sovereign debt crisis in the Euro zone and the risks of impact on national economy, and recommended to manage to face these repercussions notably through the follow up of these trends and the undertaking of appropriate measures if needed.

The Board recommended also to consolidate the registered positive signs on the national level through notably a more sustained activation of public finance policy.

New regional development strategy centred around 3 axes

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2011 15:54

TUNIS (TAP) - Regional Development Minister Abderrazek Zouari announced, on Thursday, that a new regional development strategy has been devised and will, shortly, be presented under the shape of a white book.

"It consists in a set of proposals to be presented to the future government," Mr. Zouari underlined, during a conference held, on Thursday in Tunis, on "Assets of Regional Development."

This three-axis strategy aims to tackle the phenomena of unemployment and poverty, reduce the regional divide and develop social policies.

It proposes a new development vision that requires new democratically elected institutions, adapted infrastructure, an appropriate taxation policy and a good co-ordination with the central authorities.

Emphasis was placed on the need to revise the Tunisian social model, one where 80% of the development resources are directed, under the former regime, to the coastal and tourist zones, at the detriment of the inland regions, which only get from 20% of the State budget.

The new strategy rests on an analysis of the present socio-economic situation where the poverty rate ranges between 0.49% in Monastir and 15.1% in Kairouan, according to the Ministry's figures.

The unemployment rate among the higher-education graduates is of 47.3% in Gafsa and 10.9% in Ariana.

Investment in such inland regions like Sidi Bouzid, El Kef, Jendouba, Tataouine, Siliana and Kairouan is very weak, compared with that of the coastal and tourist regions.

Broad outlines of post-constituent economic programme

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2011 16:22

TUNIS (TAP) - An economic and social development strategy for the 2012-2016 period designed to bring necessary reforms on the short and middle terms will be handed over by Caretaker Prime Minister Beji Caid Essebsi to the next Government.

The development strategy aims also to achieve an average growth of 6.3%, reach a per capita income of 9,746 dinars and create 500,000 additional jobs, including 300,000 for university graduates, thus allowing to reduce the unemployment rate to 10.5% in 2016.

The scheme includes three phases, emergency, transition and emergence.

1- Emergency: meeting short term needs in the remaining two months of 2011 and the year 2012 in terms of support to regions and employment, support to enterprises and social assistance and restore economic and financial balance to prepare the next phase.

2- Transition: recover a growth rate higher to 5% while approaching 6% in the years 2013 and 2014 through resort to a remedial effort and exceptional commitment to comprehensive reforms involving different political, economic and social fields.

3- Emergence: Initiate a process of convergence with developed countries from 2015, by targeting new levels of growth higher than 7%.

Ways to enhance democratic transition process in Tunisia by International Finance Institutions

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2011 07:46

TUNIS (TAP) - On the sidelines of the annual assemblies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), held from September 23 to 25 in Washington, Minister of Planning and International Co-operation Abdelhamid Triki conferred with World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

The meeting reviewed the progress and prospects for strengthening the democratic transition process in Tunisia.

Both sides discussed a co-operation programme that will cover the transition period of the Tunisian economy (2012-2013).

During his talk with the President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Mr. Triki reiterated the need to speed up measures designed to help Tunisia join this institution, in order to make the most of its expertise and broaden the areas of bilateral co-operation.

The EBRD official reviewed sectors in which the institution could act in Tunisia, particularly in matters of technical assistance.

On the fringes of the annual assemblies' works, Mr. Triki conferred with Mr. Abdellatif Youssef el-Hamad, Director General and Board Chairman of the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD).

During the meeting, the AFESD official reviewed prospects of co-operation with Tunisia, reasserting will of his institution to support projects to be carried out in Tunisia during the next stage, particularly motorways and industrial areas.

TOURISM & CULTURE

Kebili: over 6000 tourists last week

Monday, October 03, 2011 16:20

KEBILI (TAP) - More than 6 000 tourists visited Kebili, last week. Thanks to these massive arrivals, several tourist activities resumed, including mainly desert trips and the organisation of sports contests, such as the Italian "Tunisian Desert Cup" rally due on October 4-8, 2011 with the participation of 75 sportspeople.

Kebili's regional tourism commissioner Anouar Chetoui added that a delegation of Spanish journalists had visited last September 25-30 the region to discover the Saharan tourist product.

Another group of Greek journalists are presently visiting the Kebili region (September 27-October 4) to report on the peculiarities of the Tunisian tourism, while German and Turkish journalists will visit the region on October 6-11, 2011.

PACConf decides in favour of FTAV

Thursday, October 13, 2011 12:34

TUNIS (TAP) - The Passenger Agency Conference (PACConf), International authority regulating relationship between airlines and travel agencies in the world, decided on Wednesday in favour of the right of the Tunisian Federation for Travel Agencies and Tourism (FTAV) to defer to next December 31 the payment it was imposed by the International Air Transport association IATA.

IATA had actually imposed, last August, on all Tunisian travel agencies new exorbitant bank guarantees amounting to 1,6 million dinars for a single agency.

The 34th meeting of PACConf in Singapore has thus decided in favour of the claim of the Tunisian Federation for Travel Agencies and Tourism and IATA saw its case dismissed.

Culture celebrates freedom and democracy

Friday, October 07, 2011 19:25

TUNIS (TAP) – The Culture Ministry worked out a rich and varied month-long programme to celebrate the October 23 electoral event.

The programme, placed under the slogan "Culture Celebrates Freedom and Democracy," encompasses all regions. High on the agenda are conferences, seminars, poetry evenings and exhibitions, in addition to shows for children and youth.

Some 167 plays are also on the agenda with each governorate participating with 11 to 21 plays.

Arab Contemporary Poetry Festival opens in El Jerid

Friday, October 07, 2011 17:31

TOZEUR (TAP) - Poets from Tunisia, Iraq, Sultanate of Oman and Libya recited poems at the opening of the 31st edition of the Arab Contemporary Poetry Festival in El Jerid held on October 7, 8 and 9 in Tozeur and Nefta.

Recited poems celebrate the Revolution and will of peoples to recover their freedom and dignity.

Documentary exhibitions on writers of El Jerid and previous sessions of the festival and a plastic arts exhibition were inaugurated at the opening of the festival.

The agenda of the festival includes several papers to be presented by academics and researchers focusing, in

particular, on the revolutionary dimension of the poetry of Abou el Kacem Chebbi, on the commemoration of the death of this great poet, on

The festival is organised by the regional delegation of culture, the Union of Tunisian Writers and the League of Letters and Arts of El Jerid.

'You are the Voice' song creates huge buzz

Saturday, October 08, 2011 16:14

TUNIS (TAP)- The song entitled "Enti Essout" (You are the Voice) created and recorded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of its mission to support the electoral process in Tunisia has created a huge buzz on the web, a press release from the UNDP said.

Broadcast since September 22 on all radio waves, the song was posted on the web. The video would have been seen "150,000 times on Facebook, in which a fan page has already attracted over 14,000 fans."

"Enti Essout" is a song written, composed and performed by Tunisian young artists: Armada Bizerta, Bendir Man, Badiaa Bouhrizi, Nawel Ben Kraïem, Si-Lemhaf and Yasser Jeradi.

This group of talented and volunteer artists were trained as part of the project to support the electoral process in Tunisia initiated by the UNDP. Free download of the song is available on the site www.entinessout.com.

This song invites youth to mobilise for their future and get more involved for tomorrow's Tunisia by going to the polls next October 23.

This song is distributed non-commercially with a CD offered in several places. A Facebook page and a twitter account also accompany news related to this song.

Prizes of 9th Monastir International Visual Arts Festival awarded

Thursday, September 22, 2011 18:13

MONASTIR (TAP) - The first prize of the 9th Monastir International Visual Arts Festival was awarded equally placed to Russian visual artist Svetlana Zhuravleva and German sculptor Sascha Unger.

The attending artists voiced satisfaction at having participated in this festival and their admiration for the Tunisian Revolution.

The session, which was organised on September 12-22 in Tunis and not in Monastir as usual, recorded the participation of 33 visual artists from Germany, Belgium, South Korea, Bulgaria, Poland, China, France, Turkey, Italy, Ukraine and Tunisia.

Elyes Baccar's 'Rouge Parole' at Doha Tribeca Film Festival

Thursday, September 22, 2011 15:19

TUNIS (TAP) –Tunisian Elyes Baccar's documentary "Rouge parole" is to participate along with 14 other documentary movies and fictional films in the official competition of Arab films at the 3rd edition of the Doha Tribeca Film Festival (October 25-29).

"Rouge Parole" focuses on the popular protests which ousted Ben Ali, presenting testimonies by citizens belonging to various social strata calling for dignity and freedom and denouncing the injustice and repression which characterised the deposed regime.

This third edition of the festival dwells on such themes as revolution, childhood, love and specificities of the Arab world. Seven documentary films representing Tunisia, Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon are in contention for the best Arab documentary and the new public prize.

Tunisia participates in Beirut International Film Festival

Wednesday, October 05, 2011 12:54

BEIRUT (TAP) - Tunisian Director Abdellatif Kechiche's feature film "Venus noire" (Black Venus), Malik Amara's short film "Linge sale" (Dirty Laundry) and a French short film about the Tunisian Revolution will be screened as part of the 11th Edition of the Beirut International Film Festival, held October 5-13 with the participation of 67 films from 29 countries.

"Venus noire" (Black Venus), a Tunisian-French co-production, will compete with six other films from Egypt, Iraq, Iran and Jordan for the "Aleph" Award for Best Middle Eastern Feature Film.

Light will be shed on the Tunisian Revolution in the "short film" category through French Director Karin Albou's film "Yasmine et la Revolution" (Jasmin and the Revolution) which is the only film dealing with Arab Spring in this festival.