

India-Fiji relations enter new phase; healthcare and tourism major gainers



Dr. Salanieta Saketa, Permanent Secretary for Health, Government of Fiji (2nd from left) addressing the meeting. Others from left, Prof. Ian Rouse, Dean of Fiji School of Medicine; Mr Subhash Goyal, Convenor, FIEO Committee on Services; Mr Ratsish Singh, First Secretary, Embassy of Fiji; and Mr Ashok Kumar, Deputy Director General, FIEO.

The Federation of Indian Export Organizations hosted a high powered delegation consisting of members of the Ministry of Health, Government of Fiji on 17 February, 2010 in New Delhi. This was followed by an interactive meet with members of India's corporate sector from healthcare, medical tourism, travel and tourism and consultancy.

The meet was chaired by Mr Subhash Goyal, convener, FIEO Committee on Services. The delegation was headed by Dr Salanieta Saketa, Permanent Secretary for Health, Government of Fiji; Prof Ian Rouse, Dean of Fiji School of Medicine; and Dr Iferemi Waqainabette, General Surgeon, in Fiji. The delegation was escorted by Mr Ratish Singh, First Secretary, Fiji High Commission in India. Mr Subhash Goyal, convener, FIEO Committee on Services while welcoming the delegates from Fiji extended all support from Indian organisations for the development of core sectors in Trade in Services in Fiji. The delegation was on a five-day tour to India to explore various business opportunities in healthcare, travel and tourism, medical tourism, consultancy in infrastructure

and various projects, and medical equipment.

The first meeting of the visiting delegation was organized at FIEO. Dr Saketa thanked the Federation for providing such an interactive platform for discussion and interaction, and invited Indian companies to be part of the reforms that are going in their country. As Fiji lacks basic healthcare facilities in oncology, cardiology, joint replacement, diabetics, etc, she felt that through assistance from Indian hospitals and players in India's medical sector, Fiji would be able to overcome the effects of these diseases. Another highlight was the one on one meeting with Indian players in the healthcare sector to explore opportunities in healthcare and medical tourism.

It was also briefed to the Indian delegates that Fiji Trade and Investment Bureau (FTIB) which is an Government agency & is engaged in promoting investment and the development of Industries & is also responsible for increase in Trade in Services and goods of Fiji with various countries.

Mr Ratish Singh said that Fiji has a

population of over 900,000 and pointed out that the country has vast opportunities in the field of travel and tourism. He suggested exploring Fiji as a tourist destination since the new air route between India and Fiji has further increased the scope of inbound and outbound traffic of tourists and patients between India and Fiji. He informed that the new air route has brought the airfare and airtime by almost half. He also pointed out that there is an excellent possibility of opening a tourism BPO in Fiji as a lot of opportunities are coming from India, US, China, Japan, etc in this field.

Mr Singh was also informed that India has got the most advanced medical facilities in the world at much lower rates as compared with other developed countries. Prof Ian Rousesaid said there existed various cultural similarities between India and Fiji, and was of the view that there is good scope for Ayurvedic and traditional medicines in Fiji as they are already using the same, procured from other countries.

Since India is blessed with quality and cost competitiveness in healthcare sector, the visitors



Mr Subhash Goyal (right) welcoming Dr. Salanieta Saketa, Permanent Secretary for Health, Govt. of Fiji.

were keen to source medical equipments from India and hoped to increase inbound patients to India. Currently, Fijian patients are being treated in Indian hospitals, such as Batra and Moolchand, to name a few.



Delegates having one to one meeting.

Mr Goyal in his interaction further expressed that the trade relations between India with Fiji could gain traction as Fiji has preferential access to Australian and New Zealand markets under SPARTECA, and to European markets under Lome. Also, Fiji has

good air and sea links with overseas markets.

The one to one Business Meet was also organized soon after, and the representatives of leading organizations in travel and tourism, Ayurveda, hospitals and healthcare and hotels had fruitful discussions with the visiting delegates. The visit of the delegation from Fiji and the pro-active approach of the Embassy of Fiji in India will create a strong foundation for improving relations between the two countries. Plus the Pacific island nation would be in a favorable position to reap the benefits of India's present and projected phenomenal growth. ■