

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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U.S., Chinese Officials to Co-Chair Commission on Trade Ties

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk, Commerce Secretary John Bryson and Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan will address critical trade, commerce and agricultural issues as co-chairs of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade's next meeting.

"Our goals are to help open markets to U.S. exports that will improve the lives of the Chinese people and to work to level the playing field for American companies," Bryson said in a statement November 4. He added that the commission's November 20-21 meeting will offer "an important opportunity to address and resolve key trade concerns with China."

The meeting will take place in Chengdu, a leading Chinese economic center and the capital city of China's southwestern Sichuan province.

Kirk called the commission "a key venue for ensuring that our bilateral trade relationship moves in a positive direction." He said the U.S. delegation will press China for "concrete and measurable results on a number of significant issues," including the country's policies on intellectual property rights, investment and innovation.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is also scheduled to take part in the commission's 22nd annual session. He said in a joint statement with Bryson and Kirk November 4 that partnerships with growing markets, like China's, will be "integral to the strength of the U.S. economy in the decades ahead."

The three said expanding trade ties with China will increase economic growth in the United States and help to meet President Obama's goal of doubling U.S. exports by the end of 2014.

In an effort to meet this goal, Vilsack said, the Agriculture Department has "continued to expand markets for American goods abroad, worked aggressively to break down barriers to trade and assisted U.S. businesses with the resources needed to reach consumers around the world."

Vilsack said that thanks to the productivity of American farmers, ranchers and producers, "our trading partners in China recognize the United States as a reliable supplier of the highest-quality food and agricultural products." Therefore, he said, discussions at the meeting will focus largely on expanding agricultural trade with China.

China was the largest supplier of U.S. goods imports in 2010, and the third-largest market for U.S. exports. Bilateral trade in goods between the United States and China totaled \$457 billion in 2010, with U.S. imports from China totaling \$365 billion and U.S. exports to China totaling \$92 billion. The total U.S.-China trade in services came to \$31 billion in 2010.

Established in 1983, the Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade is the main forum for addressing bilateral trade issues and promoting commercial opportunities between the United States and China. Last year's session was held in Washington in December 2010.

Planning Under Way for U.S.-India-Japan Trilateral Meeting

Washington – U.S. diplomats are meeting with their counterparts from Japan and India to plan an inaugural meeting designed to boost cooperation among the three nations in the Asia-Pacific region, the State Department said November 4.

Deputy Secretary of State William J. Burns reaffirmed plans for the U.S.-India-Japan trilateral meeting in a speech November 4, and the department said the hope is to hold the first meeting before 2012.

A cornerstone of the Obama administration's foreign policy has been enhancing and broadening already-strong ties with the Asia-Pacific region and with India, the world's largest democracy. The United States has launched initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region to boost free trade, cultural and academic exchanges and security. In Tokyo October 27, Burns said, "There is no question that our treaty alliance with Japan is the fulcrum for our strategic turn to the Asia-Pacific."

Burns also cited the global nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance. "This is a global partnership. Together we are working to resolve challenges far beyond the ocean and the region we share," he said.

The United States initiated a strategic dialogue with India in 2010, and President Obama visited India in November 2010. The Obama administration has been using strategic partnerships and dialogues for deeper consultations and commitment with select nations. The dialogues are designed to respond to the specific needs of partner nations and enhance cooperation in critical areas.

In a July speech in Chennai, India, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said of the planned trilateral dialogue, "America's treaty alliance with Japan has long been a cornerstone of security in East Asia, and as a fellow democracy, we believe enhanced cooperation will be beneficial." In that speech, she also said, "We

understand that much of the history of the 21st century will be written in Asia, and that much of the future of Asia will be shaped by decisions not only of the Indian government in New Delhi, but of governments across India and, perhaps most importantly, by the 1.3 billion people who live in this country.”

“One of the most important aspects of our Asian Pacific strategy is also to work more closely with India and to help put meat on the bones of India’s desire to play a prominent role in the Asian-Pacific region going forward,” Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, said in September.

Deputy Secretary Burns said in the November 4 speech that India’s rise will reshape the international system. “India is already a powerful economic and cultural presence in East Asia, and has built a vast network of economic agreements and security arrangements with partners like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Vietnam. India’s outreach is growing toward a comprehensive vision for the East Asia region — a ‘Look East’ policy that is becoming an ‘Act East’ policy.”

Burns added that “an architecture of free trade and investment” that connects India to Southeast Asia and East Asia will have a profound effect on economic growth and global trade.

Mayor Urges Iranian Americans to Go Into Public Service

By Kathryn McConnell | Staff Writer

This is part of an occasional series about young Iranian Americans in various professions.

Washington — Nader Baroukh wants more young Iranian Americans to go into in public service.

Baroukh is mayor of Falls Church, Virginia, a small city outside Washington. In 2008 Falls Church citizens elected him to the city council. Two years later, the council selected him to serve a four-year term as mayor, a part-time position.

“The United States provides us with a lot of opportunities we wouldn’t have in Iran,” said Baroukh, 39. “It’s important for young Iranian Americans to give back.”

In 1977 a young Baroukh moved to the United States with his family. Growing up in Los Angeles, he first thought he would go into the entertainment business. But an experience during secondary school in the late 1980s sparked a change of mind.

The teen worked with a teacher who had a background in film editing to produce an awareness ad about

HIV/AIDS. A local public television station aired the short film to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS among secondary school students. It was a time when people in the United States were just beginning to talk about the deadly disease, and Baroukh believed that the film got people talking and made an important difference.

At Chapman University in Orange, California, he became a dormitory resident adviser and eventually a member of the student senate. Noticing Baroukh’s commitment to help others, his academic adviser suggested that Baroukh apply for a Harry S. Truman scholarship for college seniors who show exceptional leadership potential. Baroukh was awarded a scholarship to graduate school in 1994.

That gave Baroukh three important benefits. He began to build a network of diverse Truman scholar peers, many of whom became loyal friends. The scholarship also brought him into the program’s network of mentors, and it gave Baroukh the financial foundation he needed to apply to the University of Virginia School of Law.

After receiving his law degree in 1999, Baroukh moved back to California and started work with the federal government. He relocated to the Washington area in September 2001 and still works for the federal government as an attorney.

“I can’t stress enough how important it is for citizens to be involved in their communities,” Baroukh said. “One of the fundamental principles of the democratic process in the United States is citizen involvement in nonprofits or with a government entity.” He suggests to people that they volunteer to serve on a city board or commission focused on a specific issue like education or housing. Even keeping up with news from local print and online sources is a form of involvement, he said.

Baroukh said one of his major accomplishments as mayor is that he has made decisions affecting the city more transparent to citizens. He revamped the way the council develops its budget, “providing a framework that has resulted in better decisionmaking” and laying out a long-term budget plan that is financially sustainable.

Baroukh said Falls Church citizens realize that tough decisions like raising real estate taxes will benefit the city in the long run. But to avoid further homeowner tax increases, the mayor is attracting new businesses to the city that will provide tax revenue.

He said one way he measures his success is by measuring how much citizens are involved in local affairs. To find out, he goes to places like the Falls Church Farmer’s Market, community concerts and restaurants. “When I don’t hear what’s going on in peoples’ minds, I begin to

wonder if we're doing something wrong. I want to hear, even if it's a complaint," he said.

Citizens can attend council meetings, which are also streamed online. They can read meeting minutes on the city's Web page.

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