



## A delegation from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church has completed its visit to Russia



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A delegation from the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church visited Russia from April 24-27 and took part in a meeting of the Working Group for Coordinating Bilateral Relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. The delegation included Metropolitan Abraham Mar Stephanos, Metropolitan of the Diocese of UK, Europe & Africa and Rev. Aswin Fernandis, Executive Director of the Department of Ecumenical Relations of the Malankara Church.

At the end of the meeting the Memorandum on further development of the main directions of bilateral cooperation was adopted.

Guests from India were warmly welcomed at the Stavropegial Convent of the Protection of the Mother of God in Moscow, where they were greeted by the Mother Superior, Hegumeness Feofaniya (Miskina). The Holy Protection Monastery became their home for the duration of their stay in Russia. The delegation had the opportunity to venerate the relics of Blessed Matrona of Moscow, whose veneration

by Christians in India has spread in recent years.

Making a pilgrimage trip to the holy places near Moscow, the delegation visited the Savvino-Storozhevsky stauropegial Monastery, where they were received by the abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Pavel (Krivonogov); the chapel of the Zaikonospassky Monastery in the village of Volynshchino, and the Church of the Annunciation of the Mother of God in the village of Pavlovskaya Sloboda, where its rector, Archpriest Vladislav Provotorov had shown them the unique iconography of the church.

During their stay in Moscow, representatives of the Malankara Church visited the Zachatyevsky stauropegial Monastery and met with the abbess, deputy chairman of the Synodal Department for Monasteries and Monasticism, Hegumeness Juliana (Kaleda), who extended a warm welcome to the delegation.

On April 25, representatives of the Malankara Church attended the Patriarchal liturgy at the Moscow Kremlin Cathedral of the Archangel, after which they met with His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia.

On April 25-26 the delegation made a pilgrimage to the shrines of Yaroslavl Diocese where they were accompanied by the Secretary of the Yaroslavl Diocese, Priest Alexander Pchelkin and the head of the Social Department of the Diocese, Hieromonk Agafangel (Shkurankov).

The representatives of the Malankara Church visited the Vvedensky Tolga convent, where they venerated the Tolga icon of the Mother of God; walked in the cedar forest, where, according to legend, the image of Tolga appeared; learned about the tragic pages of the history of the monastery at the Time of Troubles (Smuta) and during the Soviet regime.

Representatives of the Malankara Church also visited the Dormition Cathedral of Yaroslavl and the Church of the Holy Prophet of God Elijah, where they familiarized themselves with great interest with the unique frescoes of the XVII century.

At the Yaroslavl Seminary members of the delegation met with the Bishop Veniamin of Rybinsk and Romanovo-Borisoglebsk, who welcomed the distinguished guests on behalf of the Metropolitan Vadim of Yaroslavl and Rostov. A concert in honor of the guests was given by the choir of pupils of the Yaroslavl Theological Seminary Regents School. Metropolitan Abraham Mar Stephanos and Priest Aswin Fernandis met with teachers and students of the Seminary and Regents School. The delegates spoke about the life of Christians in India and answered numerous questions.

The delegation visited the Rostov land and saw the Dormition Cathedral of the Rostov Kremlin, where they prayed next to the relics of St. Leontiy of Rostov; climbed the Kremlin's famous bell tower, and listened to the sound of bells, the largest of which, "Sysoy", weighs 32 tons. At the Spaso-Yakovlevsky monastery guests prayed at the relics of St. Demetrius of Rostov and had conversations with the brethren of the monastery.

Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov), DECR Secretary for Inter-Christian Relations, and hierodeacon Pyotr (Akhmatkhanov), DECR staff member, participated in the trip.

On April 27, the delegation left Moscow for India.

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