A delegation of doctors from the Russian Orthodox Church visited India



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On the 12 - 18 March, with the blessing of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', a delegation fr om St. Alexii Hospital and other social institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church visited India to establish cooperation with medical institutions of the Malankara Syrian Church.

The trip was organised by the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. With the blessing of Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov), DECR Secretary for Inter-Christian Relations, took part in the trip.

The delegation included: director and chief physician of the Hospital of St. Alexii A. Zarov – head of the delegation; general practitioner of the hospital Priest Igor Blinov; epidemiologist, head of humanitarian projects at the hospital G.A. Gerasimov; Deputy Chief Physician for Surgery I.M. Dizengoff; Head of educational work at the St. Demetrius School of Sisters of Mercy A.V. Konopatchenkov; Head of the Oncological Service of the Hospital of St. Alexii, Oncologist I.V. Myslevtsev; medical translator, nurse E.A. Zarova; teacher of the Orthodox St. Peter's School S.A. Posternak.

On the 13 - 14 of March there was a visit to the St. Gregorios Clinic and International Research Oncology Centre in Parumala. Scientific interviews were held with the management and doctors of the main departments of the Malankara hospital: departments of cardiology, oncology, neurosurgery, gastroenterology, endocrinology, traumatology, orthopaedics, urology, nephrology, and general medical practice. Russian specialists had an opportunity to visit operating theatres and see the practical work of Indian surgeons. A bilateral consilium was held on the interdisciplinary interaction between doctors in the treatment and diagnosis of cancer, during which, among other things, advanced techniques used in colorectal cancer surgeries were discussed.

Indian doctors gave interactive presentations on a number of topics including: "Neuronavigation and awake skull trepanation surgery", "Diagnosis of severe nerve cases"; "Neurointervention in stroke cases"; "Practice and current research in gastroenterology"; "Advanced surgical treatment of colorectal cancer"; "Facial reconstruction and laparoscopic surgeries"; "Thyroid nodule and thyroid cancer examinations"; "Intensive care and infection control practices", etc. There were active scientific discussions on each of the presentations.

The Russian side gave a presentation on the history and modern activities of St Alexii Hospital. Representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate spoke about the personality of St Luke of Crimea, the Heavenly Patron Saint of Russian medicine. The Indian side showed particular interest in the experience of St Alexii Hospital in the field of palliative care, which is being revived in Russia largely through the efforts of medical specialists of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Following the results of the joint work, negotiations on co-operation between St. Alexii Hospital and St. Gregorios Parumala Hospital took place.

Fr om the Indian side, the talks were attended by: the General Director of St Gregorios Parumala Hospital, Priest Paul Emcee, the Executive Director of the Malankara Church ECC, Priest Ashwin Fernandis, the Chief Financial Officer of the hospital, Chorbishop Thomas Johnson, the Chaplain of the hospital church, Chorbishop Joseph Varghese, and heads of departments.

Next, the delegation of Russian doctors visited the St Gregorios Parumala College of Nursing, wh ere a

meeting with its management and students took place. During the meeting, the director of St Alexii Hospital, A.Yu. Zarov addressed the audience with a welcoming speech, after which S.A. Posternak made a presentation on the activities of the Orthodox St. Demetrius College of Nurses of Charity.

On the 14th of March, Russian specialists participated in a conference on the occasion of the World Kidney Day, hosted by the Parumala Centre for Renal Sciences and Kidney Transplantation. The event was chaired by the Secretary of the Holy Synod of the Malankara Church, Metropolitan John Mar Chrysostom of Niranam. A.Y. Zarov, Director of St Alexii Hospital, made a presentation at the event. Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov) welcomed the audience on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church.

P. Narayan of the Kerala Municipality presented a programme initiated by the Primate of the Malankara Church, His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III, to support the poor and needy patients who cannot afford expensive transplant surgery.

On the 16th of March, at the residence of the Malankara Catholicos in Kottayam, a Russian delegation met with the Primate of the Malankara Orthodox Syriac Church, His Holiness Catholicos Baselios Marthoma Mathews III. During the audience, His Holiness Catholicos noted the relevance of co-operation between the medical institutions of the two Churches, started as a personal initiative of His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', and wished success in further joint work. A.YU. Zarov told the Primate of the Malankara Church about the scientific meetings and negotiations held with Indian colleagues.

On the 17th of March, Russian specialists visited the clinic and the Medical Research Centre of the Malankara Church in Kolencherry, got acquainted with the medical practice, academic and research programmes of this institution. The Russian specialists visited the clinic and the Medical Research Centre of the Malankara Church in Kolenchery on 17 March.

During the trip, the delegation of the Moscow Patriarchate also visited the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Niranam, one of the seven churches founded on Indian soil by St Thomas the Apostle, wh ere a part of his holy relics resides. The guests visited the St Basil the Great Monastery in Kottayam and Our Lady of Bethlehem **Nunnery** in Ernakulam, where they were cordially received by its abbess, **Nun Dina** , who had recently **visited** Russia as part of a delegation of monastics from the Malankara Church. Mother Dina told the guests about the nursing ministry carried out by the sisters of her monastery.

During the talks held between specialists from medical institutions of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Malankara Church, a number of proposals were formulated for the development of specific areas of bilateral co-operation, which will be submitted for approval by the Supreme Authority of both Churches for further implementation within the framework of the activities of the Working Group for the Co-

ordination of Bilateral Relations. A reciprocal visit by Indian doctors to the medical centres of the Moscow Patriarchate is expected this year.

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