

# EDITORIAL

## Welcome to the Spring 2009 edition of UK/Syria



The meeting between British Foreign Secretary David Miliband met President Assad in Damascus on Miliband's recent Middle East regional tour in November was an important boost to the continuing work of both the Embassy and the British Council in a wide range of areas of key interest to the UK. This was the first visit of a senior British politician since Tony Blair's visit in 2001.

Discussions centred on developing mutual understanding and are reflected in the practical work of the Projects and Commercial sections of the Embassy reported on p.30.

The Commercial Section have been working on the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Health Departments of both countries which embrace UK and Syria ideas on the development of

health service structures , hospital services including medical cities and skills development. We describe some of the initial work in the report on p.26.

In the last few months we have also focused on Islamic banking and environmental issues including water supply. Have a look at p.8 and p.12.

The Projects Section has been working with UNIFEM and the Syrian Government on projects promoting good governance and in parallel developing democratic skills in younger successful businessmen. Read more on p.30.

The Embassy is delighted to welcome Mawared Syria and VFS Global who are now operating the Visa Application Centre in Damascus for the UK Border Agency. If you need a UK visa talk to them. Contact details are given in the article on p.34.

If you are a British National visiting Syria (or living here) you can now register on-line (see p.35).

I hope you had a chance to see the stunning world Ceramics Exhibition housed at the Khan As'ad Basha on loan from the V+A London hosted by DACC and sponsored by Shell.

Enjoy these snapshots of Embassy work and our partners and let us know if you are interested in any of the events listed below or in following up projects featured in this edition. You can find me at [Anne.Petrie@fco.gov.uk](mailto:Anne.Petrie@fco.gov.uk).

### Diary Notes- 2009

#### January

10-16 York University visit to Al Furat University to discuss potential nursing programme  
26-29 Arab Health Exhibition-dubai

#### February

8-9 UK Bilateral Air Services negotiations  
19-22 Motex Textiles Exhibition- Damascus  
25-26 Healthcare mission to Syria  
24-25 4th international Conference on Investments

#### March

2-4 Construction mission to Syria  
tbc Seminar on regulatory aspect of Offshore Oil and Gas  
26-28 Education Show Birmingham  
tbc Royal Society mission