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GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

SHRI KAPIL SIBAL MEETS AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

New Delhi: March 03, 2010

The Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Kapil Sibal met with the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Stephen Smith, here today. Shri Sibal expressed his appreciation for the recent statement of Mr. Smith on the Australia-India Relationship in the Australian Parliament. The measures announced by Australian Federal and State Governments to resolve the problems faced by Indian students in Australia, particularly the safety and security issues, were discussed.

With regard to the desire expressed by the Australian side to develop a set of principles for the regulation of education agents recruiting Indian students to study abroad, Shri Sibal requested the Australian side to provide to the Indian side, a list of education agents signed up by Australian institutions. He also emphasized the need for institution to institution linkages. Shri Sibal emphasised the need of making suitable arrangements for Indian students who have been affected by closure of dubious institutes of vocational education recently.

Shri Sibal pointed out that we should also look towards cooperation in the higher education and vocational education sector. Shri Sibal stated that India is in the process of introducing suitable legislative framework in regard to Foreign Education Providers, which would regulate the entry of Foreign Education Providers as per our national priorities. Though 100 per cent FDI is allowed in education sector, the present legal structure in our country does not allow granting of degrees by foreign educational institutions on Indian soil.

The HRD Minister pointed out that there is a tremendous scope for collaboration in the area of vocational education & training. He also mentioned that the EEP signed between the two countries in 2003 envisages development of exchanges and cooperation between the educational institutions of the two countries including exchange of research material and publications, organisation of joint conferences, workshops, seminars etc., organisation of training programmes, joint research programmes, faculty exchange programmes and twinning arrangements between institutions of higher learning.

MV/Hb