

Joint Statement on Third India-Bahrain High Joint Commission Meeting (7 April 2021)

April 07, 2021

1. The Third meeting of the India-Bahrain High Joint Commission (HJC) was held in New Delhi on 7 April 2021. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India and H.E. Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The HJC was established pursuant to an MOU signed between the two sides during the State visit of H.M. King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, to India on 18-20 February 2014. During the visit, the Bahraini dignitary called on Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri Venkaiah Naidu on 7 April 2021.
2. The HJC meeting was preceded by a Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on 31 March 2021 in virtual mode. The SOM was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Sanjay Bhattacharyya, Secretary (Consular, Passport and Visa & Overseas Indian Affairs), Ministry of External Affairs of India and H.E. Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Undersecretary for International Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain.
3. H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar welcomed Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the accompanying delegation to India. He thanked the Bahraini side for the warm reception extended to him during his first visit as External Affairs Minister of India to Bahrain in November 2020. H.E. Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani expressed appreciation for the gracious hospitality extended to him and the accompanying delegation.
4. The historic visits of H.M. King of Bahrain to India in February 2014 and that of H.E. Prime Minister of India to Bahrain in August 2019 were recalled by both sides. They underlined that these visits had provided renewed energy and vigour to various facets of their bilateral relations. Both sides agreed to keep the momentum in high level bilateral visits. The Indian side reiterated the invitation to HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister for visiting India at an early date.
5. Both sides appreciated that the HJC at the level of Foreign Ministers reflects the depth and strength of ties between the two countries. They also expressed satisfaction at the regular high level exchanges between the two friendly countries which has led to further strengthening and diversifying of their bilateral cooperation.
6. The Indian side thanked the leadership and Government of Bahrain for safety, security and welfare of the Indian community, especially during Covid-19 pandemic. It also expressed appreciation to the Bahraini side for its facilitation of repatriation flights under Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) and for providing free Covid vaccination to all including Indian community in Bahrain.
7. The Bahraini side appreciated India for keeping open the supply chains to Bahrain of essential items including food and medicines during the Covid-19 pandemic. It particularly thanked India for gifting 100,000 doses of 'made in India' Covid vaccine to Bahrain.
8. Both sides highlighted the measures taken by their Governments in handling the Covid-19 and agreed to continue their collaboration in fighting the pandemic. They also highlighted steps taken by them for economic recovery and appreciated the need for closer economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries once the Covid-19 situation subsides. Both sides expressed satisfaction on working of the temporary Air Bubble arrangement between the two countries which is facilitating travel between both countries.
9. The two sides discussed ways and means to expand cooperation in a range of fields including oil and gas, infrastructure, investments, food processing, health, renewable energy, IT, data centres, cloud computing, space, tourism, education, culture, youth and sports.

10. The Bahraini side renewed its desire to strengthen cooperation in tax matters and to develop economic, commercial and investment opportunities between the two friendly countries.

11. While expressing satisfaction at the current bilateral trade and investment ties, both sides reaffirmed that there remains significant untapped potential. They noted the progress made by Mumtalakat, the sovereign wealth fund of Bahrain and the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) of India to promote Bahraini investment in India. The Indian side highlighted the economic reforms undertaken in India in the past few years and the opportunities for collaboration flowing from Atmanirbhar Bharat.

12. Both sides stressed the importance of business and industry in taking forward the economic and commercial cooperation between the two countries. In this context, they looked forward to early convening of a B2B meeting of Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

13. Recalling the MoU between National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and Bahrain's Electronic Network for Financial Transactions (BENEFIT) for launch of RuPay card signed during the visit of Prime Minister of India to Bahrain in August 2019, both sides agreed to expedite negotiations for early launch of Rupay Card in Bahrain.

14. Both sides emphasized the importance of bilateral collaboration in the field of health and pharmaceuticals. Having signed an MOU on cooperation in the field of healthcare on July 15th, 2018, both sides have been in constant talks to seek the most suitable areas of collaboration and to further discuss areas of collaborations as stated in the MOU which includes, health services and medical care, health, medical and clinical research, social health insurance, pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

15. The Bahraini side expressed interest in setting up of pharmaceutical and vaccine production unit(s) in Bahrain with Indian collaboration. The Indian side welcomed Bahrain's keen interest and agreed to facilitate dialogue between relevant stakeholders. The Indian side requested the Bahraini side for greater acceptance and market access for Indian pharmaceutical products in the Bahraini market. It also proposed that products related to traditional Indian health systems (AYUSH) may be given official recognition in Bahraini market.

16. Both sides emphasized on enhancing cooperation in the area of food security. The Indian side highlighted the significant opportunities for investments in food parks in India as also in increasing food exports from India to Bahrain.

17. Energy remains a principal area of cooperation between India and Bahrain. Both sides underlined that there are several areas of further cooperation between the two sides in both upstream and downstream sectors of oil and gas in Bahrain. This includes exploration, production and development. They agreed to take meaningful steps for further enhance energy cooperation between both countries. Both sides encouraged greater cooperation between the two countries in relations to trade remedies to achieve the public interest of both countries.

18. Both sides expressed happiness that the first meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on Renewable Energy was held on 4 February 2021. They agreed to forging deeper engagement in capacity building and focused cooperation between concerned government agencies and private sectors of the two countries in the fields of solar and wind energy as well as clean hydrogen. The Indian side extended invitation to the Bahraini side for participation in its Hydrogen Roundtable scheduled to be held on 15 April 2021.

19. Both sides stressed the importance of holding early meetings of other existing bilateral mechanisms including Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs), JWG in the health sector, Joint Committee Meeting under the MoU on manpower & development and Joint Steering Committee (JSC) in the field of combating international terrorism. It was agreed that the fifth FOC should be held in New Delhi at a mutually convenient date to follow up on the decisions of the HJC.

20. Both sides looked forward to celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their diplomatic relations. In this regard, the two sides decided to hold a number of events including issuing a memorial postage stamp for the occasion, prominent display of the national flags, seminars and webinars, cultural events, exhibitions etc highlighting the deep-rooted civilizational ties and close friendly relations between the two countries. Both sides decided to increase the participation of their youth in these events.

21. Both sides recognized that the bilateral security dialogue has helped institutionalize cooperation in the area of intelligence sharing as well as in identifying new areas for security cooperation including cyber security. They agreed to further strengthen bilateral defence and security cooperation including through regular consultations in the areas of maritime security, combating piracy and counter-terrorism. Both sides reiterated condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and called on all states to reject and abandon the use of terrorism against other countries.

22. Both sides appreciated the role of Indian community in Bahrain as an important link between the two countries and their vital contribution to the development of Bahrain. The Indian side commended the Kingdom's liberal and tolerant policies and their welcoming society, which have made it a preferred destination for Indian

professionals and workers.

23. Both sides also agreed to strengthen coordination on consular issues especially taking into consideration humanitarian cases that arise among the large Indian community in Bahrain. The Indian side proposed to continue bilateral consultations with regard the integration of India's e-Migrate system with Bahrain's Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) e-portal.

24. Recalling the MoU on Space Cooperation signed in March 2019 and a Statement of Intent for Space cooperation signed in August 2019, both sides welcomed the ongoing discussions for collaboration between NSIL (NewSpace India Limited) and National Space Science Agency (NSSA), Bahrain. This includes discussions on building and launching nano-satellite, establishing ground station and providing assistance in capacity building to Bahrain.

25. Both sides also agreed to develop cooperation in the areas of defence, trade & commerce, tourism, human trafficking, education, traditional medicine, environment etc.

26. Both sides recalled the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) signed by them for 2019-23 and agreed to expedite implementation of the CEP to further strengthen their historical cultural ties. Both sides also agreed to increasing cooperation in the education sector. The Indian side welcomed more Bahraini students in premier higher educational institutes in India.

27. The Indian side welcomed the signing of the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) by Bahrain and looked forward to its deposition of the Instrument of Ratification of the Framework Agreement of ISA with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

28. The Indian side congratulated Bahrain for taking over the GCC Presidency for 2021 and expressed hope that India's strong ties with GCC countries in all sectors will be further strengthened during Bahrain's Presidency. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the India-GCC Troika Meeting held at the level of Foreign Ministers in November 2020.

29. Both sides discussed key global developments and regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. The two countries consider each other valuable partners in the region to achieve a more peaceful and inclusive global community. Both sides underlined the importance of securing peace and stability in Asia and the Middle East.

30. It was agreed that the fourth meeting of the High Joint Commission would be held in Bahrain, dates for which will be decided through the diplomatic channels.

New Delhi
April 07, 2021

