

**Address by Ambassador Mr. Piyush Srivastava
Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain**

**At the Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa Academy for Diplomatic Studies
On the occasion of the celebration of Golden Jubilee of Diplomatic
Relations between India and Kingdom of Bahrain**

[Tuesday, 12 October 2021; 1330 hrs.]

Your Excellency Mr. Tawfeeq Al Mansoor, Undersecretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;

Your Excellency Shaikha Muneera Khalifa Al Khalifa, Director General, Mohamed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa Academy for Diplomatic Studies

Your Excellency Ambassador Abdulrahman Mohammed Al-Qaud

Colleagues from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain;

Good Afternoon!

1. Let me first of all thank the Director General of Academy for Diplomatic Studies Shaikha Muneera for inviting me to talk about significant aspects of our bilateral relations. I am honoured to speak at the prestigious Academy amongst such a distinguished gathering today when we are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our diplomatic relations.

2. This year is a milestone in the journey of our diplomatic relations. It is the 50th year. Accordingly, both sides have planned to celebrate it in a befitting manner throughout this year as well as during the course of next year. We have already launched the logo in September 2021. Both governments have decided to illuminate one of their national monuments in each other's national colors. We will see later today the illumination of the historic Qutub Minar in India in Bahraini colors; and the iconic Bab-Al-Bahrain in Indian tricolor.

3. Bahraini Authority for Culture & Antiquities in collaboration with Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of India and our business community have together a week long celebrations at Cultural Hall and 'Little India in Bahrain', with events involving Indian and Bahraini artists, display of handicrafts, cuisine and seminars showcasing the rich heritage of our two countries as well as the historic connect and contemporary bilateral relations.

4. The celebrations will continue till the next year during which we will be organising a number of events focusing on culture, economic and trade and peoples' relations between our two countries.

Friends,

5. Coming back historical context of our relations, I am really not sure from where to start. Our relations are so close, deep-rooted and diverse.

6. I think I would share with you some of my personal experiences as a Diplomat. We all travel to different countries for our assignments. Besides the professional responsibility, it is a very valuable and unique experience of learning so many different cultures abroad and knowing the people. It is a process and takes time.

7. I landed in Bahrain in July last year; unlike many other places, it literally took no time for me and my family to settle down in this beautiful Kingdom. It is because of the shared culture, friendship and warmth of Bahraini people.

8. I personally felt the depth of our deep-rooted civilisational ties which dates back thousands of years to the period of Indus Valley and Dilmun civilisations.

9. Bahraini traders were having flourishing trade of pearls with spices from India. Indian families have come to Bahrain and settled over here as early as over two centuries ago. The 200-year old Shreenathji temple in Manama which is also the oldest in this region, is a symbol of our historical ties. A number of Bahraini dignitaries have also studied in India. Our educational ties remained strong. We have 8 Indian schools in Bahrain imparting quality education to not only kids of Indian expatriates but also children of other nationalities.

10. With regular high level interaction and exchange, these relations have developed into strong bilateral partnership across diverse areas of bilateral, regional and multilateral interests.

11. The strong commitment and the guidance and constant support of our Leaderships have taken our bilateral relations to greater heights, deeper engagement and broader bilateral Cooperation.

Friends,

12. Bahrain and GCC region is important for India. In addition to our historical connect, there is a presence of large Indian Diaspora in GCC countries. Our two sides have mutual maritime and energy security, trade and food security interests. Our relations today cover the entire gamut of political, security, economic, trade, educational and cultural domains.

13. I would now come to more contemporary part of our bilateral ties. The regular high level visits and interactions have been a hallmark of our relations.

14. The landmark visit of His Majesty the King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to India in 2014 set the roadmap for our present bilateral engagement. Prior to that, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince visited India in 2012. More recently, the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi to Bahrain in August 2019 provided further boost and diversified our relations to new and strategic areas.

15. Even during the times of Covid-19 pandemic when travel was not easy, this trend continued. In the last one year alone, the Hon'ble External Affairs Minister of India and Minister of State for External Affairs visited Bahrain. H.E. the

Foreign Minister of Bahrain visited India. Our Ministers of Oil and Youth Affairs & Sports have held virtual meetings. Two visits of Indian ships including that of INS Kochi led by the Western Fleet Commander on 15th August this year took place.

Excellencies,

16. We have established high level bilateral mechanisms in diverse areas of bilateral cooperation including the High Joint Commission led by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries. The other mechanisms include Foreign Office Consultation; Security Dialogue; Joint Steering Committee on Security and Counter Terrorism; Joint Committee on Labour and Manpower; and Joint Working Groups in the areas of health, and renewable energy. A number of MoUs / Agreements have been signed which are in various stages of implementation.

17. The 3rd India-Bahrain High Joint Commission, as well as bilateral mechanisms in the area of health, renewable energy and security and counter-terrorism have met this year. Cultural Exchange programme has also been operationalised. Joint Working Group meetings in the areas of health and traditional medicines are also likely to take place later this year.

18. The close collaboration between India and Bahrain in dealing with Covid-19 pandemic is testimony to the strength and resilience of our bilateral relations. The Government of India and in fact, the global community, has acknowledged and praised Bahrain's constant efforts and initiatives in this direction which are led by HRH Crown Prince and Prime Minister himself. The way the Kingdom has treated its expat population, of which Indians form the majority, at par with their citizens in terms of medical facilities, tests and free vaccination is exemplary.

19. Besides the welfare of Indian community, the Government of Bahrain facilitated in their travel back home and now back to Bahrain, and supported India with supply of oxygen during the 2nd severe pandemic wave. India, on its part, has ensured that the supply lines remained open to Bahrain and the Gulf countries, and supplied necessary medicines, vaccines and facilitated travel of medical professionals. The continued Air Bubble arrangement between our two countries has ensured uninterrupted travel of people of both sides.

20. HM the King and Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, as well as our Foreign Ministers held telephonic conversations in April last year to discuss our joint efforts in fighting this pandemic. Besides Foreign Ministries; the health, civil aviation and other concerned authorities of our two countries remained in regular touch. We look forward to further collaboration in this regard including the mutual recognition of the vaccine certificates and each others' Covid App which will further ease the travel of people of our two countries.

Colleagues,

21. The talk of our bilateral relations is incomplete without mentioning about the contribution of Indian community in Bahrain. Indian community comprising over a quarter of Bahrain's population has been living here for several decades.

They are present in virtually all sectors of economy. These include businessmen, professionals, CEOs, doctors, engineers, Chartered Accountants, teachers, nurses as well as skill and semi-skilled labour. They love Bahrain and Bahraini people and treated as their second home. It is a dynamic refresher community. Their contribution to the development of the Kingdom and in promoting our bilateral, economic, trade and cultural ties is acknowledged by the Leadership of both countries.

22. While speaking about our community, let me also add that the success of our community in Bahrain is a result of Kingdom's visionary policies of tolerance and co-existence which has provided an environment to our community in which they not only excel professionally, but also enjoy comfortable social and family life.

Excellencies, Dear Colleagues,

23. We are working to diversify to new and strategic areas of space, maritime security, fintech and renewable energy. We look forward to Bahrain joining International Solar Alliance as a member. Our two respective agencies are working for collaboration in space sector and launch of Rupay Card.

24. We are working for the visit of His Excellency Dr. Shaikh Abdulla, Undersecretary Political Affairs to India next month to hold 5th round of Foreign Office Consultation. The visit of NSA His Highness Shaikh Nasser is also in pipeline during which the 3rd Security Dialogue will also be held.

25. India is also looking forward to welcome His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister at a mutually convenient time. We are also working on finalising the MoUs / Agreements in the critical areas of defence, trade and investment, environment, education and traditional medicine.

26. On trade and economic front, there are positive signs. Our bilateral trade is up over 40% this year and is expected to be well over US 1 billion dollar. India is the 6th largest investor in Bahrain with the investment of 1.75 billion US dollar. Bahraini investment has also shown an increasing trend. Besides organising sector specific B2B meetings to promote bilateral trade, the concerned investment agencies such as Mumtalakat, EDB, Invest India and National Investment & Infrastructure Fund of India are in touch with each other to promote investment. The opportunities are immense. There is huge potential for further collaboration in areas of health and pharmaceuticals, IT and Big Data, energy, infrastructure and food security.

27. Our two countries share wide convergence on a range of global and regional issues and we have shown support to each other's candidature in the international fora. We share the views on peace, stability and security in the region, and welcomed the signing of Abraham Accords Declaration between the Kingdom of Bahrain and Israel. We look forward to further strengthening our traditional, close and historical ties with GCC countries under the Chairmanship of Bahrain.

Excellencies, Friends,

28. I have tried to provide an overview and bring out several areas of bilateral cooperation. As you can see, our bilateral relations have steadily progressed and today these covers all important areas of our development priorities as well as issues of mutual concerns in the recently and multilateral fora.

29. The Golden Jubilee of our diplomatic relations is an occasion to re-commit ourselves to work towards further strengthening the long standing dynamic partnership between India and Kingdom of Bahrain.

Thank you.

The video of the above Address by Ambassador can be seen at

<https://youtu.be/4fInq0KuHNw>