

Joint Statement: 4th India-Bahrain High Joint Commission Meeting

December 09, 2024

The Fourth meeting of the India - Bahrain High Joint Commission (HJC), co-chaired by H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs (EAM), Republic of India and H.E. Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Alzayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, was held in Manama, Bahrain on 9 December 2024.

2. H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India visited Bahrain from 7 – 9 December 2024, at the invitation of Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. Alzayani. Reflecting the warm ties and deep bilateral bonds, H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar met the Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa during the visit.

3. 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.

4. H.E. Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani welcomed Minister of External Affairs of India, H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar and the accompanying delegation to Bahrain. He recalled the warm hospitality accorded to him and his delegation during his visit to India for the third HJC held in New Delhi on 7 April 2021. H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar thanked the Bahraini side for the warm reception and gracious hospitality extended to him and the accompanying delegation. Both sides appreciated that the regular meetings of HJC reflect the robust relations between the two countries.

5. Both sides acknowledged the importance of the occasion, which marks the 10th anniversary of the historic visit of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to India in February 2014 and the 5th anniversary of the state visit of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India H.E. Shri Narendra Modi to Bahrain in August 2019. The role of these visits in giving a new momentum to the long-standing bilateral relations was acknowledged. EAM reiterated Hon'ble Prime Minister's invitation to His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Kingdom of Bahrain to visit India at an early date.

6. The Bahraini side appreciated the increased political engagement since the swearing in of the new Indian Government led by Prime Minister H.E. Shri Narendra Modi. EAM expressed gratitude for the message of congratulations from His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister to the new Government, and vowed to continue the momentum of bilateral relations.

7. The two Ministers appreciated the progress achieved in the bilateral relations pursuant to the discussions held during the third HJC held in April 2021, and the subsequent fifth and sixth Foreign Office Consultations, held in March 2022 and May 2023 respectively. Both sides agreed to continue the pace of high-level bilateral visits and meetings, and expressed satisfaction at the regular high-level exchanges between the two friendly countries.

8. The two Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to explore avenues of cooperation in diverse areas including Energy and Hydrocarbons, Renewable Energy, Infrastructure, Trade and Investments, Defence and Security, Health, Food and Agriculture, Hospitality, Pharmaceutical Industry, Electronic Industry, downstream Aluminium, IT and data centres, Space, Tourism, Environment, Youth and Sports.

9. Both sides acknowledged the deepening of political and people to people ties since the historic state visits. The Indian side highlighted the increase in Indian investment in Bahrain since the state visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister in 2019. Both sides welcomed the visits by trade delegations including the visit led by H.E. Abdullah bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce of Bahrain, to India in March 2023 and December 2024, and the visit led by H.E. Noor bint Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development, and Chief Executive of Bahrain EDB, in September 2024. Bahraini side welcomed the Indian Investments and the arrival of global Indian brands to Bahrain, especially since the beginning of 2024.

10. The two sides also expressed satisfaction at the stability, sustainability, and diversity of bilateral trade. They agreed to work towards strengthening these trade and investment ties, and in this regard agreed to work towards creating a bilateral Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment.

11. Bahrain's National Standardization Body and the National Testing Center aim to cooperate with the Indian Standardization Body and the related official bodies in India, by exchanging information, official notes and identifying opportunities and obstacles in standards development, conformity assessment, metrology, accreditation, metal assay, pearls and gemstones testing activities.

12. Bahrain renewed its desire to conclude a bilateral agreement to eliminate double taxation with India (DTA), with the aim of strengthening cooperation in tax matters and developing economic, commercial and investment opportunities between the two friendly countries.

13. The two sides welcomed the inauguration of negotiations for a Bilateral Investment Treaty held on 3 - 4 September 2024, and agreed to work towards an early conclusion.

14. The two Ministers agreed to expedite negotiations for early launch of acceptance of Indian RuPay Card in Bahrain. They also agreed to work towards closer cooperation in the sectors of FinTech and Digital Payments.

15. Both sides emphasized the importance of bilateral collaboration in the field of health and pharmaceuticals and expressed satisfaction at the successful first Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on Healthcare Cooperation, held on 22 February 2022. It was agreed to work towards the implementation of the decisions taken in accordance with the country's national policies, rules and legal frameworks and noted with satisfaction that the Ministries of Health of the two countries are working towards holding the second meeting of JWG on Healthcare Cooperation at the earliest.

16. The Indian side highlighted the role of Indian Pharmaceutical Industry as one of the world leaders, and conveyed the importance of market access for Indian pharmaceutical products in the Bahraini market in compliance with the Kingdom of Bahrain's established regulatory requirements. Both sides also agreed to facilitate private sectors of the two countries to increase trade in pharmaceuticals, vaccines, and medical devices.

17. The two Ministers acknowledged the significant potential for collaboration in advancing both nations' positions as hubs for medical tourism.
18. Both sides emphasized enhancing cooperation in developing the agricultural and livestock sectors. The Indian side highlighted the significant opportunities for investments in food parks in India, and in increasing food exports from India to Bahrain. The Bahraini side emphasized the importance of exchanging experiences between the two countries to foster bilateral projects aimed at achieving food security.
19. Energy remains a historically important area of partnership between Bahrain and India. Both sides recognized the significance of hydrocarbon trade as a vital component of this cooperation, contributing to mutual energy security and economic growth. Both committed to take steps in enhancing energy cooperation especially in upstream and downstream sectors of Oil and Gas in Bahrain and exploring avenues for expanded trade, joint ventures, and mutual investments.
20. Both sides noted the satisfactory bilateral developments in the renewable energy sector since the signing of the MoU in 2018 and agreed to convene the 2nd meeting of the Joint Working Group at an early date. They agreed to deepen the cooperation by engaging government agencies and the private sector in the bilateral engagements particularly in the field of Solar, Wind, Green Hydrogen & Green Ammonia. The Foreign Ministers recalled that Bahrain became a member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2022.
21. The two Ministers expressed satisfaction at the progress made by ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) and NSSA (National Space Science Agency) of Bahrain in deepening collaboration in building and launching Nano/Cube-satellite and providing assistance in capacity building to Bahrain. Both sides are currently working on finalizing the draft MoU between NSSA and NSIL (New Space India Limited) to further strengthen the cooperation within the space sector.
22. Both sides agreed to work towards developing and strengthening the defence cooperation between the two countries, which may include the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two countries' Armed Forces. Additionally, the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomed India joining the Combined Maritime Forces headquartered in the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2023. Bahrain appreciated participation of the Indian Air Force Sarang Aerobatic team consisting of 05 Dhruv helicopters in the 7th Bahrain International Air Show (BIAS) in November 2024.
23. The Indian side acknowledged that the bilateral security dialogue and the Joint Steering Committee (JSC) in the field of combating international terrorism, are important mechanisms in institutionalizing cooperation in the area of security cooperation including Cybersecurity. Both sides agreed to hold the third security dialogue and the third JSC at the earliest.
24. The two Ministers 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.
25. Both sides appreciated the role of the Indian community in Bahrain as an important link between the two countries, and their vital contribution in the development of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Indian side commended the Kingdom's liberal policies of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, as well as their welcoming society in making Bahrain a preferred destination for Indian professionals and workers, and their families. Both sides acknowledged the close cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic, which helped in mitigating its impact. The Indian side thanked the Leadership and the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain for the royal pardon of more than 125 prisoners of Indian Nationality in the last year, reflecting Bahrain's generosity.
26. The two Foreign Ministers expressed satisfaction at the exponential increase in two-way tourism, and its impact in cementing people to people ties and the trade and economic relations between the two countries.
27. Both sides also agreed to deepen the cooperation on consular issues and welcomed the decision to establish a Joint Consular Committee to discuss issues of mutual interest in Consular affairs and to strengthen cooperation in Consular issues.
28. Both sides recalled the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) signed by them for 2019-23 and expressed happiness at the implementation of the CEP in strengthening the historical cultural ties. EAM conveyed happiness at the successful visit of H.E. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed bin Abdulla Al Khalifa to India for the 46th WHC of UNESCO in New Delhi in July 2024, and his meeting with H.E. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Minister of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of India, to take bilateral cooperation in the field of Culture ahead. Both sides agreed to continue discussions regarding the renewal of "The Cultural Exchange Program - for the period 2025-2029."
29. The two sides also agreed to expand the scope of bilateral cooperation in the education sector. In this regard, the Indian side welcomed more Bahraini students wishing to enrol in leading higher education institutes in the Republic of India. The two sides also stressed the importance of working to sign a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Governments to enhance education cooperation.
30. The Bahraini side congratulated India for the successful conduct of G20 summit in India held in the theme of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, One Future." The Indian side expressed gratitude for Bahrain's participation, including in the Y-20 Summit.
31. EAM appreciated the participation of Bahrain in all of the three editions of the "Voice of Global South" Summits, reflecting the commitment in bringing together countries of the Global South to share their development perspectives and priorities. EAM also thanked H.E Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid AlZayani for sharing his valuable perspectives and ideas in the Foreign Ministers' Session on "Global South and Global Governance" of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit held in August 2024 and noted that both countries have strong convergences on a number of contemporary global issues, including on the need for effective global governance reforms and equitable access for Global South countries to clean and green technologies.
32. The Indian side congratulated Bahrain on assuming the Presidency of the Arab League this year and commended the exceptional organization of the Arab League Summit in Manama in May 2024. The Indian side expressed hope that Bahrain will remain a partner in strengthening India's strong ties with GCC countries, in view of the successful India – GCC Joint Ministerial Meeting for Strategic Dialogue in Riyadh, held in September 2024.

33. Both sides discussed key global developments, regional, and multilateral issues of mutual interest. The two countries view each other as key partners in the region, working together to foster a more peaceful and inclusive global community in West Asia. The Indian side welcomed the proposal by the Bahraini side to host an international conference for peace in the Middle East.

34. Both sides stressed the importance of holding early meetings of existing bilateral mechanisms including Foreign Office Consultations (FOCs), and Joint Committee Meeting under the MoU on manpower & development. It was agreed that the seventh FOC should be held in New Delhi at a mutually convenient date to follow up on the decisions of the HJC.

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

Manama,

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