

Remarks by H.E., Mr. Vinod K Jacob, Ambassador of India at the ceremony to felicitate the newly appointed Global Chairman of GOPIO, Mr. Sunny Kulathackal organised by GOPIO Bahrain Chapter on 14 October 2023

I am happy to attend today's felicitation ceremony as Chief Guest. At the outset, let me congratulate Mr. Sunny Kulathakal and wish him all success. I also wish President of Bahrain Chapter of GOPIO, Mrs. Tina Mathew and her team and hope that they are able to achieve all their objectives.

As Mr. Sunny Kulathakal said in his speech, I worked closely with GOPIO in Sri Lanka when I was serving as Deputy High Commissioner. Their support in providing assistance to people stranded due to the Covid lock down in 2020 was admirable.

We all know that period as a time for friendly cooperation between India and Bahrain. My Bahraini friends, Mr. Yusuf Lori, Director of Information of the Capital Governorate and Mr. Mohamed Salahuddin, Chairman of MSCEB will recall the gratitude of the Indian side for the liquid medical oxygen given by the Kingdom of Bahrain during the second phase of Covid pandemic.

When I think about GOPIO and the friendly people from the Arab world, the word "global" stands out as a uniting factor. Like the Indians throughout history, our friends from the Arab world have travelled across the globe. They came to the western coast of India many centuries back to trade and developed enduring connections and friendships. And from the western and southern coast of India they also travelled to other parts eastward.

During my stint in Sri Lanka from September 2019 to July 2023, I visited the Northern Province many times and on one occasion went to see the famed baobab tree in Mannar. The story is that this tree is 700 years old. It was brought by an Arab trader who had picked up the seed from Africa and then travelled to the western coast of India. The intrepid Arab trader then decided to hop over to Mannar and there he left behind the seed of the baobab tree. And to this day this magnificent tree stands testimony to the longstanding spirit of adventure of the Arab people in general and the historical friendship between India and the Arab world in particular.

It is now our responsibility to renew these contacts in the contemporary period. I am committed to working with the Kingdom of Bahrain to strengthen cooperation and hope that GOPIO will also play its part in this regard.

Long live India-Bahrain friendship.

I thank you.