

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. Vinod K Jacob, Ambassador of India at the Goa Tourism Road Show in Bahrain on 11 October 2023**

*Hon'ble Mr. Rohan Khaunte, Minister for Tourism of the Government of Goa, Mrs. Lodovina Quadros from the Department of Tourism of the Government of Goa, Distinguished Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am happy to attend today's Goa Tourism Road Show in Bahrain. At the outset, let me congratulate the Government of Goa for their initiatives for attracting tourism from around the world. It would be useful to remember that Goa, like Bahrain is highly urbanized.

According to the statistics of the Ministry of Tourism of the Government of India, in 2021, there were 10,545 foreign tourist arrivals in Dabolim Airport in Goa. Total foreign tourist visits into Goa in 2021 was 22,128. In 2021, Bahrain sent 1727 tourists to India.

You would appreciate that the data I have shared was for the Covid impacted period. I am confident that in the current post pandemic period there would be much more tourism flows between Bahrain and Goa and between Goa and Bahrain.

Let me share some data in this regard.

According to the data of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, during the first six months of 2023, there was an 87 percent surge in the number of Indians visiting with 500,000 plus arrivals compared to around 269,000 for the same period in 2022.

In 2022, my Embassy issued 4990 visas with 70 percent being tourist visas. As of mid September 2023, Embassy had issued 3906 visas of which 2498 were tourist visas.

Gulf Air flies to Goa and I have heard from Bahraini friends here that they like to visit Goa. I would encourage Bahraini friends to also keep in mind that the 54<sup>th</sup> International Film Festival of India will be held in Goa from 20 to 28 November 2023.

The theme for the festival is "Celebrate the Joy of Cinema." This theme highlights the immense happiness, excitement, and inspiration that cinema brings to people's lives. It aims to showcase the diversity and richness of Indian culture through the lens of cinema, arts, millets, textiles, and Indian scripts.

Goa is also known for its football-both the quality of the players it produces and the commitment of its fans. I am sure that Bahraini friends would like to catch a game of football while they are in Goa.

Quite apart from the tourist attractions, Goa is also known for its strengths in agriculture and fisheries as well as mining (iron ore and manganese).

Being one of the highest literacy rates in the country, the flourishing set of knowledge-based industries, including pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and IT, are exploring more investment opportunities in Goa.

I would like to conclude by encouraging the people of Goa to visit Bahrain which is a friendly place to visit for leisure and work.

I thank you.