

Remarks of H.E. Mr. Vinod K Jacob, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain at the Bahrain India Society on 21 December 2023

I am happy to attend today's event hosted by Bahrain India Society in honour of the visiting Speaker of Karnataka, H.E. Mr. U T Khader. Let me start by welcoming our distinguished guest to Bahrain. Although I have been here for a shade below five months, I am overwhelmed by the warmth and hospitality of the people and Government of Bahrain. The way in which the Bahrain India Society has arranged today's event is another testimony to the close ties between India and the friendly Kingdom of Bahrain.

Since this is the second time I am speaking at a BIS event, let me share a few thoughts about the bilateral relations.

First, in the five months I have been here, I have seen that the degree of convergence on the entire spectrum of the bilateral engagement has maintained a healthy momentum. Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a brief interaction with His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa in UAE on the side lines of COP 28. On 17 November, H.E. Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister of Kingdom of Bahrain participated in the Concluding Leaders' Session of the Second Voice of Global South Summit, hosted by Prime Minister Modi. During this time, the leadership and people of the Kingdom of Bahrain have shared in the success of India's space endeavours, like the lunar mission, Chandrayaan-3, and the solar mission, Aditya-L1. We have had a couple of Indian naval ships making port calls at Bahrain. A senior level delegation attended the Manama Dialogue.

Second, in terms of people-to-people connections I am happy to note that in the first 10 months of 2023, nearly 800,000 Indians travelled to Bahrain for tourism purposes. The Indian community in Bahrain now constitutes nearly 340,000 and they have been actively contributing to the economic prosperity of Bahrain. Many of the successful ones are in this room, and I am happy to note their continued support to the strengthening of the relationship. When we look at the economic data, there is reason to be happy. At the current rate, bilateral trade could reach USD 1.2 to 1.3 billion for the current financial year. The total cumulative two way investment since the year 2000 has reached USD 1.5 billion. I am happy to note that Indian traders are making use of the opportunity provided by various platforms in Bahrain. Just to give an example, nearly USD 90 million worth of Indian gems and jewellery were exported to Bahrain in the period of April to November this year, of which, almost the entire amount was achieved through retail sale at the prestigious Jewellery Arabia show.

Third, I see a distinct keenness in the new generation of Indians and Bahrainis to know and learn about each other. This is an opportunity for the bilateral relationship. Towards this end, we have started a program called "Visit the Embassy" to familiarize school and college students with the

working of the Indian Embassy. We are open to more such engagements to strengthen the connection between the youth of India and Bahrain.

A few months back we had the Hon. Home Minister of Karnataka visiting Bahrain. The Kannada Sangha building is now very active, and the community has been playing a positive role. In September we also had the visit of the Karnataka Education Minister to Bahrain. The Hon. Speaker from Karnataka would have noticed during his stay here that there is high appreciation for the achievements of the state of Karnataka, and the positive contribution of the Kannada community. It is my hope that during my tenure both sides will be able to build on this foundation to take the engagement even further. There is substantial scope in my view in higher education, healthcare, IT and ITES, renewable energy, and fintech.

I would like to conclude by wishing the Chairman of Bahrain India Society, Mr. Abdurrahman Juma and his excellent team all the very best. I also wish Hon. Speaker H.E. Shri U.T. Khader a successful tenure.

Thank you.