



■ The Crown Prince is welcomed by Mr Chandy, second from left, Industries and IT Minister P K Kunjali Kutty, front row, second from right, Rural Development, Planning and Culture Minister K C Joseph, right, LuLu Group managing director Yusuffali M A, third from left, and other top officials at Nedumbassery International Airport in Kochi. Right, the Crown Prince at a dinner banquet with the Kerala chief minister, Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahamed, Mr Yusuffali and other dignitaries

Dialogue crucial...

From Mandeep Singh in Kochi

BAHRAIN'S political future relies on the success of the National Dialogue, according to the Crown Prince.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, said there was no other choice but for the talks to succeed.

He was speaking last night during a reception organised in his honour by Kerala state Chief Minister Oommen Chandy at the Le Meridien Hotel in Kochi.

"It is good in particular for my beloved Bahrain, and it is good for everyone who stays in Bahrain, including the nearly 350,000 Indians," he said.

"There is no choice but for the dialogue to succeed. I am saying that with a lot of conviction and I mean it.

"I have the strongest of desires that it does and I am closely watching its progress. I wish the best of luck to the participants."

The Crown Prince will conclude his two-day visit to Kochi, Kerala's commercial capital, today after which he will leave on a state visit to Japan and Malaysia.

He said Bahrain has faced several challenges in the last few years, but will overcome them.

"I have been moved by the culture and religious diversity of India, particularly Kerala, and would like to assure everyone that Bahrain is no less," he stressed.

"Bahrain is a peace-loving nation where all are treated as equal. That is all the more reason we will overcome the challenges that we have been facing."

He also pledged to continue the labour market reforms in Bahrain.

"As part of that, we are committed to abolishing the sponsorship system completely, which is good for everyone," he said. "The labour market reforms in Bahrain are ongoing and will continue until the system is revamped."

mandeep@gdn.com.bh



■ Mr Kutty, fifth from left, with the Bahraini delegation

Major investment in Bahrain are on way

MEMBERS of a Bahraini business delegation discussed investment opportunities in tourism, hospitality and infrastructure with their Indian counterparts.

Kerala's Industries Minister Kunjali Kutty said the state was looking at massive investments from Bahrain in all sectors.

He was speaking during a lunch in honour of the visiting delegation, accompanying the Crown Prince, during a two-day trip to Kerala's commercial capital Kochi. The event was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Kochi.

"We are ready to welcome investments from Bahrain in these and other fields, and will do all we can to support these investments," he said.

Mr Kutty, who also holds additional charge of Information Technology, said the sector was another field that could boom with investment.

"The time has now come for us to look ahead and attract investments," he added.

"We are very pleased with the visit of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier, to Kerala which shows the seriousness Bahrain's leadership attaches to the state.

"There is a lot of development happening in Kerala and it will be great if Bahrain's businesses take part in that development.

"For too long we have just spoken, but now it's time for action."

Kerala Works Minister Ebrahim Kunju, Excise Minister K Babu and Minister for Rural Development, Planning, Culture and Non Resident Keralite Affairs K C Joseph were also present during the event.



■ The culture of Kerala was showcased during last night's event. Inset, top left, the Crown Prince receives a memento from the Kerala chief minister as Indian Minister for Overseas Affairs Vayalar Ravi looks on

Luxury resort plan for Hawar Islands



■ Mr Kurian ... tourism vow

A FIVE-STAR luxury resort will soon open at Hawar Islands.

Al Namal Group chairman Varghese Kurian said a deal has already been signed to completely revamp the existing hotel on the islands.

"We are looking at attracting people from all over the world to business and tourism-friendly Bahrain and will develop the resort keeping the needs of diverse cultures in mind," he told the GDN in Kochi.

"Bahrain is already a world-class tourist destination and this new resort will enhance that reputation further."

Hospitals deal to be signed today

A MULTI-MILLION dinar agreement to run a new state-of-the-art hospital in Manama will be signed today between a Bahrain-based company and an Indian organisation.

The 10-year deal will see Calicut-based Baby Memorial Hospital managing the 100-bed Middle East Hospital in Bahrain, said VKL Holdings Company managing director and Al Namal Group chairman Varghese Kurian.

He said Indian expertise in the medical field was being tapped into by other medical groups in Bahrain and the GCC.

"The agreement is part of the initiatives we are taking with regard to Kerala," he told the GDN ahead of a lunch hosted by Kerala's Industries Minister Kunjali Kutty at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Kochi.

"In the future, we have more initiatives lined up to take advantage

of the state's expertise.

"Kerala has a lot to offer to Bahrain in terms of other fields like hospitality and tourism as well as the food and restaurant business."

Mr Kurian said the hospital is set to open in Segaiya by the end of the year.

"The opening of the Middle East Hospital, set up at a cost of BD6.5 million, will be followed by the opening of a 50-bed

BD3m hospital in Muharraq and a BD2m medical centre in Hidd," he added.

He said all three projects will be managed as part of the new deal with Baby Memorial Hospital.

Mr Kurian also revealed the company had signed on with Best Western Premium to manage and operate a BD20m hotel opening soon in Hidd.

The group already owns four hotels as well as two large malls.