

TO BOOST TIES PROBED

India 'set on reforms to liberalise economy'

THE Indian Government will not deviate from the process of liberalisation of the economy, Commerce Minister Dr B B Ramaiah said yesterday.

Speaking at the opening session of the 13th NRI Congress, he also praised the open economic policy pursued by the Government of Bahrain, which made the country an ideal location for investments.

Dr Ramaiah said there was some kind of confusion or suspicion in the minds of investors when the present United Front Government came to power.

He reassured the business community about the political system in India and the government's commitment towards economic liberalisation.

"Our successive governments have genuinely created a general consensus in favour of economic reforms," said Dr Ramaiah.

"There will be no deviation from the process of liberalisation of the economy and integrating it with the world economy."

Dr Ramaiah said liberalisation had a very positive impact on India's economy.

"Proposals involving an amount of \$25.7 billion (BD9.7bn) of foreign direct investments have been approved from 1991 to August 1996," he said.

Encouraging

Dr Ramaiah said the Indian community constituted 20 per cent of the population, and they had become "part and parcel of this beautiful country".

"I am grateful to the Bahraini authorities in encouraging and supporting the Indian community here," he said.

"Bahrain has been operating an open economic policy for many years.

"With no personal and corporate taxes, no exchange control restrictions and with a very comfortable and stable currency linked at a fixed rate to the US dollar, Bahrain makes itself an ideal country for investments.

"The economic strategy of Bahrain to create a stable infrastructure to attract inward investment reflects a forward looking approach of the Government."

Dr Ramaiah said there was a lot of potential for Indian companies to invest in Bahrain in the areas of petrochemicals, plastics and engineering.

Dr Ramaiah expressed his gratitude to Commerce Minister Ali Saleh Al Saleh for inviting him to attend the congress and the NRI Welfare Society for helping to strengthen the ties between the two countries.



Commerce Minister Ali Saleh Al Saleh and Bahrain Promotions and Marketing Board chairman Jack Bennett hosted a dinner last night, to mark the holding of the NRI Congress. Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala was the guest speaker at the event, at the

Bahrain Conference Centre, Holiday Inn. At the event are Mr Al Saleh, right, Mr Bennett, second from left, with, from left, Indian Ambassador Rajanikanta Verma, Shura Council member and businessman Rashid Al Zayani, Shura Council chairman Ibrahim Humaidan, Mr

Al Sho'ala, Indian Commerce Minister Dr B B Ramaiah, Bahrain Monetary Agency Governor Abdulla Saif, Education Minister Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Fadhel and Shura Council member and businessman Jassim Mohammed Ibrahim Al Saffar.

Roads plan 'holds key to growth'

A PLAN to construct billions of dollars worth of roads in India offers a lucrative opportunity for foreign investors, the conference heard yesterday.

About 10,000km of roads need to be built in India to strengthen the country's infrastructural base, said former External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshheed.

Mr Khurshheed said construction of roads, a basic and critical element in the flow of goods, offered a "fantastic opportunity".

This would unlock a massive wealth of business with spin-off effects encompassing many sectors including agriculture and entertainment.

Joint ventures call to Indian companies

From Page One
S A M Jaffari.

The opening ceremony was attended by Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala, under-secretaries, diplomats, senior Government officials, leading Bahraini and Indian businessmen and NRI delegates from around the world.

Mr Al Saleh said Indian businessmen were present in the world.

"Our two countries have been conducting mutual trade for centuries," he said.

"In the past, it was predominantly spices, for which Bahrain was India's link with the West.

"Before the discovery of oil, when Bahrain's economy was based on pearl, India was our main trading partner."

Mr Al Saleh, in his speech, highlighted the incentives which Bahrain offered as a place to do business and outlined some specific investment opportunities.

He said Bahrain offered one essential ingredient to successful business, which was perhaps unique in the region - "legitimacy".

"Our reputation as the regional financial centre has been built on this feature, which has developed as a result of our progressive attitude towards the administrative and legal framework," said Mr Al Saleh.

"Our laws and regulations are transparent and our openness to foreign investment is, I think, more than fairly demonstrated by our third place ranking in the Heritage Foundation's index of

economic freedom.

"We do not tax your earnings or profits, you are free to transfer your capital and dividends without restriction.

"We are providing incentives to make your business successful, such as duty free imports of capital equipment and raw materials for your export products, low power tariffs, long-term terms, labour incentives and much more."

He said company registration formalities had been simplified

"Since the region as a whole is a net importer of manufactured products and commands an aggregate gross national product (GNP) in excess of \$165 billion, you may begin to grasp the extent of the opportunities available."

He said there was no industry or service in Bahrain where Indians were not present.

"When it comes to manpower, we either have trained Bahrainis available, or else we will allow you to bring in your own workers," said Mr Al Saleh.

On Bahraini companies' investment opportunities in India, Mr Al Saleh said his Under-Secretary would accompany a business delegation to India shortly.

"The Arab insurance and re-insurance company, Arig, will be proposing to establish a branch to develop insurance operations in India," he said.

"I feel that marriages between our two business communities will bear significant results."

Mr Al Saleh said Indians made up the single largest foreign community in Bahrain.

"This is a good indication that our lifestyle here is attractive," he said.

Mr Al Saleh paid tribute to the efforts of Dr Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Mr Jaffari in making the conference a high-profile event. He also thanked Indian Ambassador Rajanikanta Verma for his efforts in promoting the bilateral ties between Bahrain and India.

'Bahrain offers legitimacy, one of the most successful ingredients to successful business'

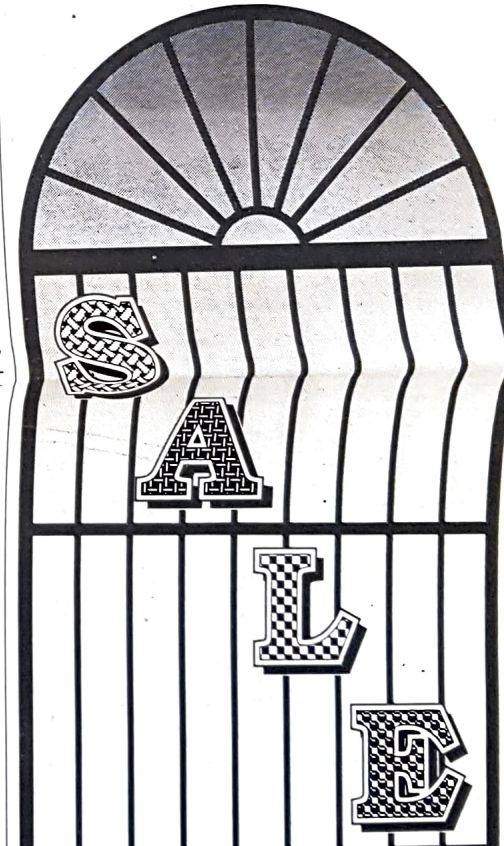
and a brochure on the same had been produced to help investors.

"It is not only the sophisticated legal and administrative infrastructure that we have to offer; we also have state-of-the-art telecommunications and Bahrain is a regional hub for aviation," continued Mr Al Saleh.

"Investors, therefore, are able to contact their business partners quickly and move cargo and people around efficiently.

He said Bahrain was an ideal base for Indian companies for their operations in other parts of the region.

"A joint venture arrangement will effectively provide you with local status, and allow you to fly under the GCC radar" when it comes to duty free access of your manufactured products, provided you meet the required value-added content," said Mr Al Saleh.



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SPOTLIGHT ON TRAINING

● 40-member Bahrain delegation for key exhibition



BAHRAIN'S training facilities are to be aggressively marketed at a major international conference and exhibition, opening in Cairo tomorrow.

The delegation from Bahrain, comprising more than 40 people, will be led by Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala.

By SOMAN BABY
The four-day conference and exhibition is being organised by the International Federation for Training and Development Organisations (IFTDO), the largest international

forum of organisations involved in training and development projects. The US-based organisation holds its annual conferences in different countries.

"This is the first time IFTDO is coming to the Middle East," said

Mr Al Sho'ala. "Next year's conference will be held in Dublin. We have invited IFTDO to hold its 1999 conference and exhibition in Bahrain."

He said Bahrain's delegation would be the single largest group

from any Arab country, outside Egypt.

"This reflects the importance given by Bahrain to issues related to training and human resources development," said Mr Al Sho'ala. "Besides marketing our training facilities, the event will also be used to introduce the incentives being provided by the Bahrain Government to international training institutions of proven track record."

Institutions

He said the Bahrain stand at the exhibition would feature various training institutions from Bahrain, which would demonstrate their facilities and strategy for human resources development.

More than 2,000 delegates, representing top training institutions from around the world, will take part in the conference and exhibition.

Mr Al Sho'ala will be one of the keynote speakers at the opening session tomorrow.

Four other papers will also be presented from Bahrain at various sessions of the event.

Bahrain's delegates will include the officials of the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry, Bahrain Promotions and Marketing Board, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bahrain Society for Training and Development, Specific Councils for Vocational Training, private sector training institutions and companies which have established their own training centres.

Pupils gain from trip

By FARISHTA SAEED

EIGHT Ibn Khuldoon National School students have just come back from a four-day Model United Nations (MUN) course, in Cairo, Egypt.

After the educational trip, the participants aged 15 and 16 said they had stronger personalities, gained more confidence and learnt more about the global world.

The MUN general assemblies were organised by Cairo American College in Egypt and by the Rotary Club of Adliya in Bahrain.

The students and their country assignments were; Dina El-Wakil, Costa Rica; Mazen Al Alawi, Kuwait; Safa Al Tajir, Romania; Suad Al-Moayed, Uruguay; Nader Al Ansari, France; Zahraa Al-Hilli, Portugal; Mayas Baluch, Uganda and Amani Saleh, Vietnam.

The three issues debated were, the question of the sustainable use and conservation of the earth's resources, the question of international drug trafficking and the formation of extradition treaties between nations with regard to drug dealers and the question of Israeli and Palestinian practices affecting the human rights of people in Israel and the occupied territories.

Each delegate researched his or her nation, wrote a national policy statement on each issue, developed at least one resolution, and presented a speech to the assembly on the opening night of the General Assembly.

Representing France, 16-year-old Nader Al Ansari said the whole trip was a rewarding experience.

"I am very pleased that my resolution on human rights was debated and passed with 77 votes against six votes," he said.

"All of us, the Ibn Khuldoon National School students, represented our country and the school in the best possible way. "I had to search for all the information I needed regarding the country I selected and then prepare the research as well as a one-minute opening speech."



■ The school delegation in Egypt, top. Above, from left, Nader, Mayas, Mazen, Suad, Safa, Zahraa and Amani.

Amani Saleh, 15, who represented Vietnam, said, "it was a good trip, we had lots of things to do, which kept us busy most of the time."

"We had to lobby our resolutions and sit and talk about it with other countries," she said.

Amani said she had learnt a lot during the "exciting trip." "I feel more independent now, I meet people and know how to talk and discuss matters with them," said 16-year-old Mayas Baluch, who represented Uganda.

"I know more about international issues and the way people live in other countries."

She said she had worked very hard during the MUN, but at the end it was worth it.

Representing Uruguay was 15-year-old Suad Al-Moayed.

"During this assembly, I learnt

more about the country I represented and the way its people live.

"I also got a better idea of how issues are handled in my home country," said Suad, who met new friends and visited few touristic areas with her colleagues.

Mazen Al Alawi, 16, represented Kuwait.

"I am pleased that my resolution was chosen in the book. I worked hard trying to merge my resolutions with other countries and doing my best to convince them that I was right," he said.

"I have more confidence in myself now, I learnt how to speak and discuss important matters and gained more information about the outside world," said Zahraa Al-Hilli, 15, who represented Portugal.

"The people I met in Cairo were very nice and friendly and

hopefully for the next assembly we will be better prepared."

Safa Al Tajir, 16, represented Romania.

"It was a great educational and fun trip for all of us," she said.

Safa said she had built-up her personality and confidence.

School MUN director Gordon Kerr said it was exciting to see a group of high school students transform themselves into ambassadors.

"They were excellent in adopting their roles and in acting as diplomats," he said.

"Hopefully this generation of students will be able to pass resolutions they adopted when they become the next world leaders."

"MUN is one of the best learning and teaching experiences for every student."



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JOBS BUREAU IS PRAISED

CHAIRMAN of the board of trustees of the Bahrain Centre for Studies and Research (BCSR) and Defence Under-Secretary Shaikh Sulman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday visited the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry offices.

He was welcomed by Labour and Social Affairs Minister Abdulnabi Al Sho'ala, Under-Secretary Shaikh Ahmed bin Sager Al Khalifa, Ministry assistant under-secretaries, and a number of senior ministry officials.

Shaikh Sulman toured different sections of the Employment Services Bureau, which was recently set up at the Ministry to find jobs for Bahrainis.

He heard from consultants the methods of screening applicants and assigning them to suitable companies, based on the information already compiled and



■ Mr Al Sho'ala explains some details to Shaikh Sulman

periodically updated on computer.

Shaikh Sulman also visited the family exhibitions produced by the Social Development Affairs.

He praised the Ministry's efforts in finding jobs for Bahrainis and the key role it was playing in improving Bahrainisation levels in various companies.

Shaikh Sulman underlined the co-operation and co-ordination between the BCSR and the Ministry in preparing social and labour studies.

Mr Al Sho'ala thanked Shaikh Sulman for his interest in the working of the Ministry and said they discussed ways to further boost co-operation between the two organisations.