



# A CIVILISATIONAL BOND

*“There’s a whole world out there to further explore to take it to the next level”*

– Indian Ambassador Vinod K Jacob

## COVER STORY

# INDIA : 'AN EXCELLENT GROWTH STORY'

**Bahrain's strategic positioning pivotal for further engagement in the region – Indian Ambassador**

India and Bahrain share a “civilisational bond,” which has the potential to scale further in the future with the nations’ leaders looking at bilateral relations through the same prism, observed the Indian Ambassador to Bahrain, Vinod K Jacob.

In an exclusive interview with *Bahrain This Week*, on the solemn occasion of the 75th Indian Republic Day, the envoy expressed optimism for a brighter future, emphasising the potential for growth and collaboration and highlighting India's evolving landscape and the vast opportunities it presents for the region.

The ambassador lauded Bahrain's deep understanding of India as a reliable partner, fostering a relationship built on confidence and purpose. As both nations navigate new challenges, the strategic positioning of Bahrain is seen as pivotal for further engagement in the region, reflecting a shared vision for elevated bilateral relations, he cited. “The Indo-Bahrain relationship is strong and robust and is based on fundamental consensus between the leadership of both sides,” said Mr Jacob.

“It was articulated in the state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in August 2019, where they reiterated the fundamental basis of the engagement, which is the long-standing historic ties, civilisational values, common interests, and the commitment to taking the relationship forward. The aim is to engage and strengthen this relationship across political, economic, trade, commerce, culture, people-to-people, defence, higher education, science, and technology—all areas—and also new frontiers in their areas like renewable energy, information technology, ideas, etc.”

Mr Jacob pointed out the prominence of Bahrain as a ‘connect’ between the Gulf and the Indian subcontinent.

“There is something significant about this bilateral relationship, quite unique in this region if you look at it, which is that this is a civilizational relationship. Bahrain used to be the place from where different people in parts of history came to the Indian subcontinent, and from there they went to different places like Sri Lanka, Southeast Asia, etc. So Bahrain is the direct connect between the Gulf and the Indian subcontinent. The leadership in Bahrain has, through the Al Khalifa dynasty for



Indian Ambassador Vinod K Jacob



**Ambassador Mr. Jacob presenting his credentials to Deputy King of Bahrain, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa**



**Mr. Jacob addressing the audience**

more than 200 years, consistently encouraged good cooperation with India, irrespective of who was in power or authority in Delhi.” He appreciated the excellent leadership on the Bahraini side, acknowledging His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the Prime Minister and Crown Prince His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, for accepting India as a partner they can work with “a sense of confidence, with a sense of purpose.”

“They realise that India offers an excellent growth story,” he added. On the flipside, he noted that on the Indian side, there is a rediscovery of the relationship.

“They see that with this region growing and prospering, taking on new challenges, and dealing with it in a very sophisticated way, Bahrain is ideally located strategically for further engagement in this region. I’m pretty encouraged by the fact that the leaders on both sides look at the bilateral relationship through the same prism.”

As the world witnesses important changes, the degree of convergence among the nations is higher, cited the envoy.

“Be it the challenge of cross-border violence or terrorism, be it the transnational issues of climate change, etc., there is a high degree of convergence between India and Bahrain, which gives further encouragement to someone like me and my counterpart in New Delhi to say that, you know, there’s a whole world out there to further explore to take it to the next level.”

Mr Jacob, who assumed office on August 4 last year, stated that his role as an envoy was to convert the consensus that the leadership has reached into reality and to take the relationship to the next level.

“And I intend to do it by promoting and protecting Indian interests, promoting and protecting the interests of Indian citizens and Indian nationals here, supporting them in their consular responsibilities and activities, and also negotiating the

relevant agreements for taking the relationship forward.”

Cultural ties and people-to-people connections are crucial in strengthening bilateral ties, said the diplomat, who acknowledged the success of the first India in Bahrain Festival hosted by the mission earlier this month. The success, he said, “is a manifestation of the deep-rooted cultural and civilisation lies between India and Bahrain, which is more than 4000 years old.”

“When you talk about culture and people to people, there are two aspects: the past as well as the present. Now, in terms of the past, we have a great past. So there’s a lot of elements that we can pick up on, and that is the aim of these festivals and outreach activities. In the present are the things that we have to do to lay the basis for the future.”

Mr Jacob said the mission aims to push for activities of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) in Bahrain and to support activities of Indian community organisations that want to promote Indian culture in the country with the help of the local authorities, among others. The embassy has initiated a programme for Bahraini journalists to visit India as well as the Visit Embassy Programme to encourage the youth in Bahrain, both Indians and Bahrainis, to understand and appreciate the bilateral relationship.

“Also to understand the new India, which offers huge opportunities for growth for the region as well as for the world,” explained the ambassador. Bahrain is home to 340,000 Indians (as of October 2023), whom the envoy described as “good guests” to an “excellent host”. Mr Jacob who underscored the importance of the Indian diaspora for the bilateral relationship, testified of the support he has enjoyed from the community in the almost six months that he has been in the kingdom.

“I take this opportunity provided by your platform to convey to the Indian community my sincere appreciation for all the support they’ve given. I’ve seen that in the various open



**A monthly open house at the Indian Embassy**

houses that have been held once a month, but also when I look at the overall picture of the diaspora in Bahrain, I split it into parts: rules as well as responsibility. When we look at the rules, I would say that in the way in which they have conducted themselves, in the way in which they have contributed to the economic prosperity of Bahrain, and in the way in which they have acted as a bridge between the two societies, they have done an exemplary job. While doing that, they have carried out what are essential requirements in any ordered society, which is that they followed the laws and rules of Bahrain. I’m very happy to stay that overall the Indian community has lived as good guests to an excellent host, which is the leadership and the government of the people, and it is my hope that during my tenure the cooperation between the two societies will be strengthened as a result of the positive contribution

of the Indian diaspora.”

The diplomat reflected on the ceremonious occasion of Republic Day, on which the country celebrates the adoption of its Constitution in 1950 and its relevance in contemporary times. The embassy hosted a flag hoisting ceremony at its Seef premises on January 26, which was attended by community members.

Mr Jacob observed that the day was an opportunity to recall the sacrifices of freedom fighters, the contribution of the drafters of the Constitution, the role of the Indian armed forces, and that of Indians living all around the world.

“While also doing that, we also remember the challenges and suffering of compatriots in India and abroad and try to work together with a sense of purpose with local governments, host governments, etc. to elevate those challenges and sufferings.”

## INSIDE BAHRAIN

# CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

## Grand Indian Republic Day Festivities in Bahrain

The Indian Embassy in Bahrain hosted a magnificent celebration to mark the 75th Indian Republic Day (January 26), with a reception for esteemed guests on the eve of the day, followed by a poignant flag hoisting ceremony at the embassy, symbolising the enduring friendship between India and Bahrain. Bahrain's Foreign Minister Dr Abdullah Al Zayani was the chief guest at the Diplomatic Raddison Blu Hotel and Spa reception, held by the Indian Embassy. Indian Ambassador Vinod K Jacob who welcomed the guests, addressed the audience with a briefing on the bilateral ties between the two friendly nations. "In the important area of people to people ties, both countries have deepened cooperation," he said. "During the period January to December 2023, my embassy issued 5,329 visas. According to Bahraini data, during the period January to September 2023, almost 800,000 Indians visited Bahrain, representing a nearly 60 per cent increase over the corresponding period in 2022." Dr Al Zayani who initiated his address with a 'namaskar', the traditional Indian way of greeting, lauded the deep-rooted friendship between the two countries, which he said developed over time.

"In the past decade, our collaboration has grown stronger and has effectively worked together across various domains for the mutual benefit of our nations," he said, emphasising cooperation in various areas including the economy, culture, youth, sports, and others. "As we look ahead, we see numerous opportunities for forging avenues of cooperation and expanding existing ones, leveraging our shared strengths and potential. With our longstanding history of cultural, economic, and personal exchange coupled with our shared values and interests, Bahrain and India complement each other effectively across a wide spectrum of endeavours."

Over 450 dignitaries, including Parliament members, council heads, senior Bahraini officials, diplomats, Indian and Bahraini community members, and members of the media, attended the event. The evening also featured a Garba dance performance, the Interior Ministry band, a defence corner, and an attar corner featuring attar varieties from Kannauj, Uttar Pradesh. The dinner reception featured a culinary journey through different regions of India. On the day, after the flag hoisting ceremony at the embassy complex in Seef, Mr Jacob read out excerpts



Mr Jacob offering floral tribute to Mahatma Gandhi

from the Republic Day address of Indian President Droupadi Murmu. Subsequently, in his address, Mr Jacob highlighted that 'data speaks' for the excellent bilateral ties that the nations share.

"I expect the bilateral trade to reach \$1.4 million in the financial year 2023-2024," he said.

"Cumulative two-way investment for the period between 2000 and 2023 was around \$1.4 billion. We are very much committed to strengthening this bilateral relationship, especially on the investment side."

He once again reiterated the importance of people-to-people relations, thanking the community for their support.

"I think we are at the high point of India-Bahrain bilateral relations for the past 4,000 years, and the one critical factor (contributing to this) is the Indian community here and I thank you for that and appreciate all the work that you are doing."

The Indian School band performed at the venue, and the event was attended by a large number of people from across walks of life.



Flag hoisting



Mr Jacob alongside Dr Al Zayani at the cake cutting ceremony



Guests at the Republic Day reception

# FAKHRO MOTORS REVEALS FULLY ELECTRIC MODELS



Fakhro Motors unveiled its new lineup of fully electric models at an event hosted at the Gulf Convention Centre, Gulf Hotel, last month. The event was graced by esteemed guests, including Industry and Commerce Minister Abdulla Bin Adel Fakhro, Chinese Ambassador Minister Ni Ruchi, Abdulla Yousif

Fakhro & Sons chairman Dr Esam Abdulla Fakhro, group managing director Mohamed Adel Fakhro, Fakhro Motors managing director Ahmed Esam Fakhro, Fakhro Motors director AD Huang, BYD Middle East and Africa Auto sales division general manager Santhosh Antony, Fakhro Motors

general manager, and Commercial Counselor Li Baoan from the Chinese Embassy. The launch introduced two fully electric models: the compact SUV BYD ATTO 3 and the luxury sedan BYD HAN. BYD celebrated a significant milestone as its six millionth new energy vehicle

rolled off the production line, solidifying its position as the first automaker globally to achieve this remarkable feat. Now, you can experience electric mobility with the BYD ATTO 3 and BYD HAN. To schedule a test drive, please call 17 217 217 or visit the BYD showroom in Sitra.



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## SPOTLIGHT

# A WOMAN OF VISION AND ENTERPRISE

## Celebrating Republic Day with HARSHA SREEHARI, Founder, WEBME.

In this special edition marking the 75th Indian Republic Day, we present an exclusive interview with Harsha Sreehari, the visionary founder of Webme, a Bahrain-based web and software development company that provides multiple services of superior quality and is committed to innovation and customer satisfaction. Join us as we engage in conversation with Harsha about her inspiring journey, entrepreneurial insights, and unique perspective on the significance of this special day.

**Question: As an Indian business owner in Bahrain, how do you celebrate Indian Republic Day while being away from your home country?**

**Answer:** As an Indian living away from home, celebrating Republic Day is always an emotional experience for me. I cherish being part of the vibrant Indian community here. Since 2019, attending the flag hoisting ceremony at the embassy complex in Seef district has become a special tradition. Bahrain's pleasant January weather adds to the joy of the ceremony. It's not just about raising the flag; it's a powerful reminder of our identity and the strong connections we share with our homeland. This ceremony brings us together, creating a sense of unity and patriotism. Being surrounded by fellow Indians and witnessing the tricolor flag unfurl creates an atmosphere that feels like we're right in the heart of India, making the celebration of Republic Day truly special. This wonderful experience fills us with pride and a deep sense of belonging.

**Q: What inspired you to start your business in Bahrain, and how do you incorporate elements of Indian culture into your work?**

**A:** Seven years ago, I was employed in the IT department of a group of companies, where I had the opportunity to attend a conference. During this event, I had a conversation with a woman seated next to me who shared her personal story about how an IT project affected her family's health. Her husband, a management-level professional, worked for a medical company that planned to develop a website and software. They outsourced the project to a company outside Bahrain, but it didn't work well due to cultural understanding, remote timing, and quality issues. Handling the project remotely, the stress of ensuring

quality and meeting deadlines took a toll on his health, affecting both his well-being and family life.

It was during this encounter that I recognised a gap in the market for quality local services with a dedicated team. As an IT manager, I drew inspiration from successful business leaders, particularly those who exhibited passion and talent in Bahrain. Supported by my life partner Sreehari, we took the bold step of starting our own business, WebMe WLL, with my husband contributing the initial funds.

With an engineering background and 12 years of experience in the IT industry, I now lead a dynamic team that provides innovative IT and branding solutions to corporate clients. Our motto is "stress-free IT solutions". Our journey stems from identifying a need for reliable, local services that prioritize quality and dedication, and we remain committed to delivering excellence in every aspect of our work.

Our journey is driven by the sincerity and commitment rooted in our Indian culture. I believe this cultural foundation has been our guiding light, helping us, as Indians, to succeed in the Middle East and as migrants in European countries. Our values play a crucial role in providing dedicated services to our clients, and we always bring elements of our rich Indian culture into our work.

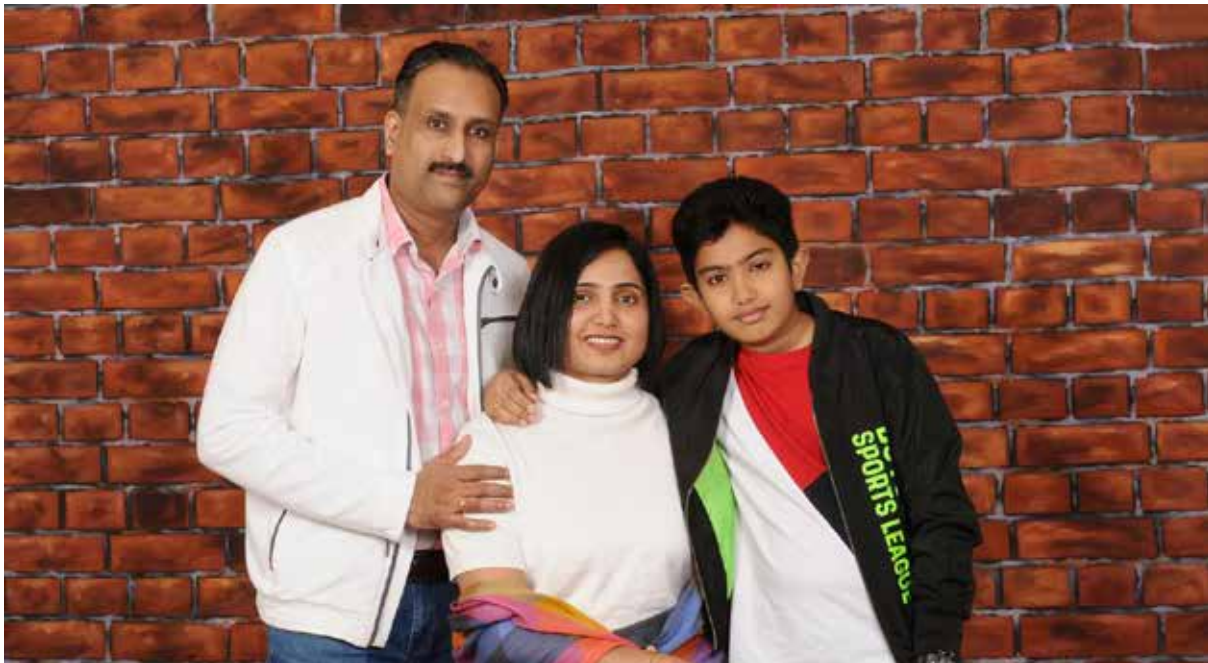
**Q: In what ways do you see the cultural exchange between India and Bahrain influencing the business landscape in the region?**

**A:** Bahraini people, in general, are incredibly welcoming and open to accepting talent. They care more about your dedication and the quality of your work than where you are from. Over the years, the strong connection between Indians and Bahrainis has been built on the Indian community's hard work and commitment. The cultural exchange between India and Bahrain has been great



Harsha Sreehari

**SPOTLIGHT**



Harsha with her husband Sreehari and son Kishan

is all about change, and the world is all about innovation. If you, as a leader, are ready to embrace change, success is yours. Bahrain has a young and talented population. Businesses can benefit a lot by using the skills of these young people. By doing this, companies can not only improve how they work but also create jobs, which helps the local economy.

**Q: On this special occasion, what message would you like to convey to the Indian community and your fellow entrepreneurs in Bahrain?**

**A:** On this special occasion, I want to send warm wishes to the Indian community in Bahrain. Our vibrant culture, resilience, and contributions make Bahrain richer and more united. Sharing my experience, I would say that trust and commitment are key to successful ventures. Work hard, use smart strategies, stay connected to your business mindset, watch for market changes, and be ready to adapt quickly. This will help your business grow and last in the changing landscape. The future of businesses cannot ignore technology. Embrace it, work with tech experts, and use innovative solutions to move your business forward. I wish everyone a joyful and prosperous celebration! (Harsha hails from Kannur, Kerala and has been living in Bahrain since 2015. She is married to Sreehari and is mother to 12-year-old Kishan.)

for our business. It has helped us connect with corporate clients of diverse nationalities thanks to events that promote cultural exchange. In our team, everyone brings their unique skills and expertise, creating a knowledge-sharing environment that benefits our clients. This sharing not only improves our services but also makes our clients happier. It's like a give-and-take that makes our business relationships stronger and more valuable.

**Q: How do you envision the future of Indian businesses in Bahrain, and what role do you see them playing in the local economy?**

**A:** Bahrain is a favourable destination for businesses due to its zero corporate taxes, making it attractive even though it is geographically small. Tamkeen plays a big part in helping businesses, making it even more appealing for entrepreneurs. A trend is in the market where companies set up their main offices in

Bahrain to provide services to Saudi Arabia. This is possible because Bahrain is in a good location and the business conditions are favorable. While Bahrain's hospitality sector traditionally relies on visitors from Saudi Arabia, the expanding tourism industry in Saudi Arabia could potentially impact Bahrain's tourism revenue. But Bahrain is good at adapting to changes, so they're likely to find new ways to grow and make tourism sustainable. The world

**NEW IN TOWN**

# RITZ-CARLTON BAHRAIN LAUNCHES EXCLUSIVE PEDI:MANI:CURE STUDIO BY BASTIEN GONZALEZ



worldwide for his unique approach to foot and hand care, brings his signature expertise and luxurious techniques to the heart of Bahrain, where guests can immerse themselves in a world of top-tier foot and hand care services and innovative beauty rituals. The partnership between Bastien Gonzalez and The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Bahrain embodies a shared commitment to delivering exceptional wellness and beauty experiences, setting a new standard for luxury spa offerings in the region." Michelle Reynolds, Director of Spa, commented.

Known for his transformative approach to foot care, nails, and skincare, Bastien Gonzalez has garnered global acclaim for his discerning clientele, including celebrities, royalty, and beauty enthusiasts. The launch of his exclusive Pedi:Mani:Cure Studio at The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Bahrain marks a significant milestone in the realm of high-end beauty and wellness, introducing a fusion of luxury and advanced podiatry techniques that redefines the art of pampering. The Pedi:Mani:Cure Studio by Bastien Gonzalez, exquisitely designed to reflect elegance and sophistication,

will offer a curated range of lavish treatments, from Bastien's famed signature pedicures and manicures to specialized services. The incorporation of innovative techniques and premium products ensures that each guest is treated to a bespoke and transformative experience that transcends traditional foot and hand care. General Manager, Bernard de Villele, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We are thrilled to introduce Bastien Gonzalez's revered Pedi:Mani:Cure Studio to The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Bahrain, offering our guests a coveted

opportunity to indulge in world-class luxury spa services. This collaboration exemplifies our unwavering commitment to providing exceptional wellness and beauty experiences, further solidifying our position as a premier destination for luxury and indulgence in Bahrain." The grand opening of the new Pedi:Mani:Cure by Bastien Gonzalez at The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Bahrain signals a new era of luxury nail care and beauty refinement, inviting patrons to embark on a journey of rejuvenation, opulence, and impeccable wellness.

Elevating the standard of luxury pedicure and manicure to new heights, The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Bahrain announced the grand opening of an exclusive Pedi:Mani:Cure Studio by renowned podiatrist and beauty artisan, Bastien Gonzalez. Situated within the serene ambiance of the resort's award-winning spa, the new studio promises an unparalleled indulgent experience for discerning patrons seeking meticulous care and opulent treatments for their hands and feet. "Bastien Gonzalez, celebrated



## TRULY LOCAL

# YOGA TRIUMPH

## Bahrain Yoga Team dedicated its World Championship to India

The Bahrain Yoga Team has etched their names in history by clinching the prestigious World Championship title at the Yoga Olympiad held in the serene landscapes of India, the birthplace of yoga. The happy and proud team members of the Bahrain Prop Yoga Team, who cherish the historic victory, have dedicated it to the 'colourful and vibrant' India as the nation celebrates its 75th Republic Day.

The team headed by Bahraini Ehsan Asghar features technical director Dr Komal Satpal Saini and programme director Rudresh Kumar, and Bahraini athletes Nuzhat Najam, Reham Farhat, and Zahraa Matar. They defeated four other international teams from China, Nigeria, Kenya, and Syria to win the Champion of Champion Awards at the Himalaya Yoga Olympiad in Bangalore, India. The team performed the yoga exercises, or asanas, and the advanced technique of Danda Dhauti, which involves passing a 91.4 cm-long, 6mm wide rubber stick into the oesophagus and taking it out again. It helps to remove excess bile from the intestine, excess mucus, and balance PH levels.

In an interview with Bahrain This Week, Ehsan, a visionary leader with a profound passion for yoga, said that he perceived this triumph not only as a personal milestone but also as a significant leap forward for his homeland. With a dream to see yoga recognised as a sport in

the Olympics, he is committed to nurturing this vision through the guidance of his numerous students across the kingdom.

"I myself was sick... and I found my cure through yoga, and it was under my master, Shri Bandi Ramulu... and I carried on from there - it's the parampara (legacy) as in the Indian tradition," said Ehsan who set up the Bahrain-based Prop Yoga and Therapy Centre in Budaiya. Including students in Bahrain and India, Ehsan has passed on the tradition to thousands of students since 2005.

"The whole point is to bring yoga, which is in India, to an international level," he explained. "Our team has set those standards up right now, and we are expecting them to soon be on the next level. We were looking forward to yoga being a part of the Olympics later."

Yoga, beyond a fitness solution, has a soul and a philosophy, explained Bahraini women Reham and Nuzhat, who were part of the team that went to India.

"The championship was quite a surprise—as much as we were looking forward to it, it came like a wave that just shook us all from our seats, and we didn't know what to do," said Reham, an interior designer. "We just jumped on the stage. We were very happy and relieved that all of our efforts and discipline paid off. It still feels like a dream and an experience that I will forever

remember and cherish. It was my first time to go to India; it was colourful and vibrant. Everyone is really smiling, and it is very welcoming. It's very much the culture that is so beautiful."

Personally, for Reham, yoga helps maintain balance in her busy life. "Yoga balances my lifestyle because my work is very demanding and requires a lot of hard work. It requires a lot of time—a lot of sitting in the office, a lot of moving around—so at the end of the day or at the start of the day, there's always a bit of yoga to balance this kind of life."

Nuzhat also shared similar views. "Only our team performed Danda Dhauti, and when we finished our performance, it was really a proud moment—coming all the way from Bahrain and we were doing it in India—it was an amazing moment," she said.

She has been practicing yoga for almost five years and believes that it is beyond sports and a life skill. As a preschool teacher, she begins her day passionately by sharing the basic yoga breathing exercises with her students.

"I learned the asanas from Baba (Ehsan); he is our mentor and teaches us life skills to move forward," she said.

"Yoga is basically our lifestyle; for us, yoga is basically not an exercise, not a sport.

"My children always start with some relaxing exercises before the

lessons."

Both women underlined the need for yoga to be delivered with its essence.

"It's way beyond an exercise; it's a philosophy that must be adopted into a lifestyle," they reiterated. Ehsan added to his students' views, citing that yoga should not be considered only as a fitness solution. "You need to live by it instead of just taking it as a way to be flexible or a way to be fit physically without being fit mentally," he said, adding that the championship was very important for him and the team.

"This award means a lot because it's something that was never there, and it's taking yoga in Bahrain to the next level of where our next step is going to be. We are moving it forward in different directions; it is going to be sports as well as research and development."

He added that the Prop Yoga team has signed up with different universities to support research and gracefully acknowledged the support and encouragement of the Bahraini government.

"I would want people to adapt yoga as a complete life. They should know where it is coming from and have a scientific approach with a lot of evidence. And if they can start adapting the complete cycle of yoga, it will help them physically and mentally. It will gift them better breathing, better lungs, better health, and better postures."



From left Reham, Ehsan and Nuzhat with the trophy



# LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

Global Travel reopens branch in Gudabiya, Bahrain, and looks to the future



Suhaib Kidwai and Faisal Alireza

Global Travel announced the reopening of its branch in Gudabiya, marking a significant step forward after the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. This move reflects the company's commitment to the local tourism industry and its dedication to bringing a greater number of tourists to the kingdom.

As a pioneering Online Travel Agency

(OTA), Global Travel caters to over 300 non IATA travel agents in the GCC region and has established regional offices in Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Canada. With a comprehensive range of services including airline tickets, hotels, and travel insurance, Global Travel has strategically positioned itself as a leading online portal in the region. "Travel combined with technology has inspired the rebirth of online travel,

giving travel agents a greater sense of freedom and exploration with more options for flights, hotels, and travel insurance," said Global Travel Group managing director Faisal Alireza, emphasising the transformative power of technology in the travel industry. Looking ahead, chief executive Suhaib Kidwai expressed the company's commitment to innovation and growth.

"We are constantly looking for new areas to innovate, and the future of travel is an exciting one. We are thrilled to be at the forefront of this transformation in Bahrain."

With a wide array of offerings, including 450 airlines, 387,000 hotel properties, and partnerships with top travel insurance companies, Global Travel's website, [www.globaltravelbh.com](http://www.globaltravelbh.com) provides clients with competitive prices, easy booking, and convenient payment options. As the only OTA mobile app in Bahrain, Global Travel is dedicated to making travel easier for customers and travel agents alike. As the world emerges from the challenges of the past, Global Travel is poised to lead the way in shaping the future of travel, with a positive outlook for 2024 and beyond.



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## PR THIS WEEK

## AVIS BAHRAIN OPENS SEEF BRANCH



Avis Bahrain has proudly unveiled its third prime branch in the Seef District, marking a significant expansion for the company. As the exclusive licensee partner for Avis in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Al Haddad Motors celebrated the grand opening of the Seef branch, located opposite Seef Residence.

The new branch introduces a diverse range of vehicles to meet various transportation needs, including the introduction of the first-ever Electric Range of Mercedes-Benz EQA, EQB, EQE, EQS, and EQS SUV, starting from BD 45 per day. This initiative aligns with Avis Bahrain's commitment to providing luxurious and eco-friendly driving experiences. The Seef branch opening was attended by management and representatives from the Board of Al Haddad, emphasizing the significance of this expansion. In line with Avis Bahrain's dedication to sustainable mobility, the Seef branch

proudly features a BEV charging station, offering convenience for electric vehicle drivers in the heart of the capital.

To enhance the customer experience, Avis Bahrain stands out as one of the few rent-a-car companies in the region to provide a dedicated lounge at the Movenpick Hotel Branch, located next to the Airport. This lounge offers a comfortable environment with refreshments and entertainment while customers wait for rental procedures and vehicle preparation.

Additionally, Avis Bahrain extends additional lease agreements, catering to both short-term rentals and long-term leases with flexible options and competitive rates. The Seef branch invites customers to explore exceptional service and quality synonymous with the Avis brand, with a professional team ready to assist in choosing the perfect vehicle for a hassle-free experience.

## CAPITAL GOVERNOR HONOURS WINNERS OF GOVERNMENT BUILDING DECORATION COMPETITION



His Excellency Capital Governor Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulrahman bin Rashid Al Khalifa bestowed honors upon the creative minds behind 19 outstanding entries in the annual competition for the best decoration of government buildings. The prestigious event, organized by the Governorate, took place as part of the National Day celebrations, adding an extra layer of festivity to the significant occasion.

The Capital Governor underscored the importance of the competition in fostering a sense of belonging, loyalty, and love for the homeland among the citizens. By recognizing

and celebrating the efforts of participants, the competition not only showcases their artistic prowess but also serves as a powerful catalyst for spreading joy and happiness throughout the nation.

The carefully curated decorations not only adorned government buildings but also encapsulated the vibrant spirit of the country, embodying the rich tapestry of its culture and heritage. Governor Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulrahman bin Rashid Al Khalifa commended the winners for their creativity and dedication, emphasizing the role of such initiatives in creating a positive and jubilant atmosphere.

## LULU UNVEILS 'LITTLE INDIA' RETAIL SQUARE IN DANA MALL



With the colourful costumes and dances of different Indian States, LuLu Hypermarket unveiled a Little India@LuLu Retail Square in its Dana Mall flagship store on January 25th, to mark India's 75th Republic Day. The inauguration was presided over by Indian Ambassador Vinod K. Jacob in the presence of notable community leaders and office bearers of different clubs. They were welcomed by LuLu Group Director, Mr. Juzer Rupawala and the senior management team of LuLu.

The Little India @ LuLu is a novel concept and is an arrangement of over a hundred varieties of Indian products, from pickles to traditional breakfast foods like millet dosa mixes, flavoured poha (beaten rice) upma, dhokla to new-style popped wafers, chutneys and many more items. There is also a special promotion on Indian fruits and vegetables and unique spices such as fresh green

pepper, fresh cardamom etc. The LuLu Hot Food category will also be marking the occasion with a special menu of Indian culinary favourites over the week-end. There are also special offers on Indian-origin seafood and meat.

Ambassador Vinod Jacob expressed his appreciation at LuLu's colourful and effective flagging off of the Republic Day celebrations. "LuLu is proud of its close association with India," said Mr. Rupawala, "We have one of the largest retail chains of hypermarkets and malls as well as sourcing offices, processing plants and factories in India and this helps us to bring the best, the most varied and most affordable of Indian products, whether food or non-food, to our shoppers. We have brought together an extensive cross-section of our thousands of Indian FMCG products in our Little India in-store square and are sure it will delight our shoppers."

## BIA AND PEARL LOUNGE ATTAIN COVETED 5-STAR RATING FROM SKYTRAX



Bahrain Airport Company (BAC), the steward of Bahrain International Airport (BIA), announced the renewal of the prestigious 5-star rating by Skytrax, the preeminent global authority on airport and airline rankings. This marks the third consecutive year that both Bahrain International Airport and the acclaimed Pearl Lounge have been recognized for their unwavering commitment to excellence.

The accolade follows an thorough audit conducted by Skytrax, assessing various criteria such as direct services for departures, arrivals, diverted flights, airport facilities, customer services, security, immigration, retail, as well as food and beverage facilities. BAC's Chairman of the Board of Directors, H.E. Zayed R. Alzayani, lauded the achievement, stating, "BIA's consistent 5-star rating underscores

our dedication to providing world-class aviation facilities and services, solidifying our position among the global elite."

Gulf Air Group's Chairman, H.E. Zayed R. Alzayani, expressed pride in this accomplishment, emphasizing GFG's commitment to reshaping Bahrain's aviation industry and setting new benchmarks for excellence. BAC Chief Executive Officer, Mohamed Yousif Al Binfalah, extended gratitude to the BIA team for their relentless commitment. Skytrax CEO Edward Plaisted congratulated BIA, recognizing the airport's high standards and customer-friendly ambiance. Bahrain International Airport has received numerous accolades in recent years, including Level 1 accreditation in the ACI Accessibility Enhancement Accreditation program and distinctions such as World's Best New Airport by Skytrax.



Dr Nimisha Narayanan

# SOME PAWSOME CARE

For Your Furry Friends

As India commemorates its 75th Republic Day in Bahrain, we shine a spotlight on the Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic in Bahrain, an Indian business that has become an integral part of the local community. Speaking to *Bahrain This Week* on the clinic's dedication to serving the larger Bahraini community, showcasing its commitment to the well-being of all animals in the country, is the managing director of the clinic, Dr Nimisha Narayanan. She comes from Kerala, has more than a decade of experience in small animal practice, and has worked as a faculty member at Kerala Veterinary University.

**Question:** How has Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic contributed to the well-being of pets in Bahrain, and what role does it play in promoting responsible pet ownership?

**Answer:** We can say with confidence that 'we took the first step to make veterinary care affordable in Bahrain'. A couple of years ago, veterinary care was expensive, and many low- and middle-income families were finding it difficult to afford a pet due to the higher cost of treatment and maintenance. We truly believe that preventive care is more important than treatment, and in the long run, prevention of communicable diseases

and boosting immunity ensure the welfare of the pets and their owners. For example, our vaccination package, which includes four services – consultation, vaccination, deworming, and pet passport – was a game changer in veterinary care in Bahrain. We are happy to see that several clinics have followed in our footsteps. Our motto is "Excellent Veterinary Care at Affordable Prices".

**Q: In what ways does Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic incorporate Indian cultural values and traditions into its services?**

**A:** Adhithi Devo Bhava! Treat your customers well and with respect. Here, our customers are both pet owners and pets. We try our best to make our customers feel at home. Our customers are both Bahraini nationals and expatriates. We treat all our customers equally, irrespective of nationality. For us, your pet matters the most.

To reiterate, affordability without compromising quality is of utmost importance to us. Currently, we have two qualified veterinarians in our clinic, one specialised in preventive medicine and the other in surgery. The surgical instruments and post-surgical care facilities are world-class, and our pet store is stocked with premium food and supplements from Royal Canin and other top brands. Several of our customers fall into the middle-income category, especially the expatriate community. A proper understanding of the customer and their needs is very important, and hence we place more emphasis on preventive care and birth control.

**Q: As an Indian business operating in Bahrain, how does Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic celebrate and honour the cultural diversity of both India and Bahrain within its operations and interactions with clients?**

**A:** We take this opportunity to thank the Bahraini government for maintaining a business-friendly environment to operate in. We receive full support from the government, especially from the ministries of Agriculture and Urban Planning, Industries and Commerce, Labour, and other entities. Our landlord also

extends full support to ensure smooth operations. It's a two-way street where our operations contribute to the agriculture and animal healthcare sectors of the economy while we get an opportunity to earn our living. On the operations side and interactions with clients, we are open seven days a week from 10am to 8pm. Blue Cross Veterinary offers three major categories of services: clinic, pet grooming, and pet food and accessories. So, our customers can visit us during the weekend and meet all the requirements of their pets in one visit.

**Q: What initiatives or plans does Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic have in place to further strengthen the bond between the Indian and Bahraini communities through its services and outreach efforts?**

**A:** We work closely with several animal welfare groups, including Bahrain Strays and Bahrain Animal Rescue Centre. We contribute to their efforts in treating injured animals and in birth control programmes with discounted prices for our services. We also cater to the requests of animal lovers to attend to injured pets in their compounds. We provide pickup and drop-off services for our clients who are unable to visit our clinic, which is very helpful for elderly people. Shortly, we will expand our services to house calls so that pets are comfortable at their premises. We also work closely with kennels, breeders, and trainers. Blue Cross Veterinary Clinic, located in Sanad, offers clinical services, pet grooming, and a pet store. The vets at the clinic are Dr Nimisha Narayanan and Dr Anees Rafi, both postgraduates with several years of experience in small and large animal practice. Professional nurses and groomers ensure a friendly and hygienic environment for pets at the clinic. Services include vaccinations, preventive care, birth control surgeries such as spaying and neutering, laser surgery, laser therapy, blood and urine analysis, cherry eye, and soft tissue surgeries. The clinic is also equipped with a full-fledged grooming station and an excellent selection of pet foods and supplements in our pet store.



**EGOVERNMENT**

## Book your food truck's inspection the easy way with bahrain.bh!



With food trucks becoming a growing trend in the Kingdom, ensuring the safety of food for customers is a top priority. This is made simple through the National Portal, bahrain.bh, where food truck owners can schedule inspections with the Ministry of Health.

Launched in collaboration with the Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA), the Food Vehicle Inspection Appointment service allows for the easy arrangement, rescheduling, and viewing of inspection appointments. This service caters to a variety of food trucks, including those serving dry or chilled items such as ice cream vans and water transporters.

The booking process is straightforward. Owners must indicate if it's a new or annual inspection and provide essential details, including ID and Commercial Registration (CR) numbers. It's essential for food truck owners to stick to their scheduled inspection dates, as these are mandatory safety measures set by the government.

For more information, please visit the National Portal, bahrain.bh. For inquiries, visit the National Suggestions and Complaints System, Tawasul available via bahrain.bh/tawasul, download the Tawasul app from the eGovernment Apps Store bahrain.bh/apps, or call the Government Services Contact Center on 80008001. To receive updates on the latest news and developments, follow the iGA's social media channels @iGAbahrain.

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