
THE STATE VISIT OF HIS HIGHNESS SHAIKH KHALIFA BIN SALMAN AL KHALIFA PM OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Thursday, 30 July 2009

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On the invitation by His Excellency the President of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Rajapaksa, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain and accompanying delegation, visited Sri Lanka From 28th to 30th July 2009. The Bahraini Prime Minister and his delegation was received at the Bandaranaike International Airport by Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake and Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama. He was accorded a red carpet welcome, gun salute and a Guard of honour.

It is recalled that Sri Lanka and Bahrain established diplomatic relations in 1992 and enjoy excellent relations in multifaceted fields. The official talks between the Bahrain Prime Minister and the President of Sri Lanka were held on 29th July 2009 at the President Secretariat. There was a frank and open exchange of views on a range of issues, reflecting on the traditionally close ties and common interests between the two countries. The Bahrain Premier extended his appreciation for the invitation, warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to him and his delegation. The two leaders discussed ways and means of further enhancing economic ties including trade, investment and tourism cooperation. They laid emphasis on the private sector involvement as a catalyst to spur bilateral economic and trade ties. During the visit, the following Memoranda of Understanding were signed aimed at strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. 1. MOU on Cooperation between the Foreign Ministries 2. MOU on Economic, Trade and Technical Cooperation 3. MOU on Tourism Cooperation 4. MOU on the Establishment of a Joint Business Council 5. MOU on Cooperation between the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and the Federation of Chamber of Commerce & Industry of Sri Lanka (FCCISL) The two countries have also initiated discussions towards finalizing an Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement as well as an Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement in order to expand bilateral trade and investments. President Mahinda Rajapaksa briefed the Bahraini Prime Minister on the defeat of LTTE terrorism and the opportunities available for the international community to invest in Sri Lanka, particularly in the North and East. Congratulating the President and the people of Sri Lanka on the restoration of peace and stability, the Bahraini leader appreciated the contribution made by the large Sri Lankan expatriate community in Bahrain. President Rajapaksa sought opportunities for skilled workers from Sri Lanka in Bahrain to which Bahraini Premier responded favourably. The Bahraini Premier also expressed support for the reconstruction and resettlement programme in the north. The President appreciated Bahrain's interest in the achievements of SAARC. The two leaders exchanged views on the developments in the Middle East. They also appreciated the understanding and goodwill that prevails between the two countries at regional and multilateral fora and agreed to continue such consultations in the future. The two sides also referred to the challenges brought about by the global financial crisis and agreed on the need to make concerted efforts to tackle the issues. The Bahraini Prime Minister met with Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake. Among other matters they referred to the need to address global issues such as terrorism, environment, economic and social problems. They also discussed the need for expanding people to people contact, through promotion of tourism and aviation links, and for exploring joint ventures in textile as well as gem and jewellery sectors. The Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama paid a courtesy call on the Bahrain Prime Minister at the Hotel. The Foreign Minister spoke of the need of the international community to focus on the international dimensions of terrorism. He thanked the government of Bahrain for the support and solidarity extended to Sri Lanka on this issue. The Minister of Industry and Commerce of Bahrain Dr. Hassan Abdulla Fakhro had separate bilateral meetings with the Minister of International Trade Prof. G L Peiris and the Minister of Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Anura Priyadarshana Yapa. The members of the Trade Chambers of the two countries, officials from the BOI together with members of the business community from Sri Lanka were also present. The Prime Minister visited the National Museum in Colombo. He was received on arrival by the Minister of Cultural Affairs. He was briefed on the historical artefacts in the Museum by the Director and the Staff. President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake hosted banquets in honour of the Bahrain Premier and his delegation. Both sides agreed that this high level visit would open a new chapter in Sri Lanka & Bahrain ties and bring about new opportunities to further strengthen cooperation for the mutual benefit of both countries. They further agreed that there should be increased exchange of high level visits between the two countries. The Bahraini leader emphasized that such visits would greatly facilitate the identification of specific projects between Sri Lanka and Bahrain including in the field of investment, port development, and reconstruction as well as cooperation in the petroleum sector. The Bahraini Prime Minister extended an invitation to the President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickramanayake to visit Bahrain, which was accepted with much appreciation. The Bahraini Premier was accompanied on this State Visit by His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister, and senior officials of Ministerial rank from the Prime Minister's Court and officials of the Government of Bahrain and the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain 30 July 2009 COLOMBO & MANAMA