Welcome address by Ambassador Vijay Nambiar on the occasion of the 28th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture held on 15th December 2022

Mrs. Pratima Doshi, Dr Vipin Sharma, Mr. Vikram Singh Mehta, my co-trustee Bharat Doshi, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to the 28th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture. As you can see, my batchmate, classmate and good friend Ajit Nimbalkar was supposed to be here to deliver his welcome address. He has had an indisposition which has prevented him from coming and when Bharat suggested I should replace him I did it with alacrity.

This is the first function being held after two years of the COVID when the lectures were delivered in virtual mode, and therefore we are happy that we are re-establishing the tradition at the Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium. This tradition which has prevailed since 1995. Since that time the Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture has become a major event in the public calendar of Mumbai. We are happy that you have come to re-establish this tradition after this hiatus.

What shall I say about Lalit Doshi; He was an exemplary civil servant, Yes! He was a high-minded Karma Yogi, Yes! He was a loyal friend, and he was a devoted family man.

I knew him as a classmate in St. Xavier's College from the year of 1959 to 1963 and subsequently in the service, he was in the IAS, and I was in the Foreign Service our paths had crossed several times. He was an exceptional person, and I am tempted to recall what I had said, when I myself was asked to deliver this address, in more than 15 years ago.

I had said then, for many years I have shared with Lalit the same desk and bench at college, then as now I was struck by the unobtrusive seriousness of his demeanor, the fire of devotion to duty that burnt so steadily within him as well as the gentleness and compassion with which he engaged with friends and colleagues. These qualities resonated strongly with all of the people around him and exemplified the inner spiritual integrity which he represented.

At that time, I also had occasion to refer to a phrase or a set of phrases from the *Viveka Chudamani* of Adi Shankaracharya and I am tempted to repeat them today with your permission, Bharat.

It goes as follows:

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो
वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्णाः स्वयं भीमभवार्णवं जना –
नहेतुनान्या नपि तारयन्तः ॥37॥

It says that there are good Souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring and who have crossed the dreadful ocean of finitude, that is life and death, but continue to help others to cross the same without any ulterior motive. This exemplifies the singular character which Lalit Doshi represented.

I shall now seek to talk about for a very short while about the guest of honor and speaker today, (Vikram Singh Mehta), who is an accomplished corporate personality, a serious scholar, and a well-known man of letters and an articulate public intellectual. A more detailed welcome and description will obviously be given by Bharat. I have actually been introduced to him only yesterday, so I cannot claim to have known him for very long, but I did know his father, in fact both his parents (Mr. Jagat Singh Mehta and Mrs. Rama Mehta) were distinguished members of the Indian Foreign Service, which I also have the privilege of belonging to for almost 40 years in my career.

These two persons who represented exceptional gifts of intellectual and personal qualities, which have been remembered and cherished by colleagues in the service, the memory of their service to the Foreign Service and to the country.

I did not serve with Foreign Secretary Mr. Jagat Mehta in any post but had numerous occasions to meet with him and partook of valuable insights that he was able to give, because he represented in a sense The Dean or the Doyen of

China, what we call the China Mafia, but it is actually the China community in the Indian Foreign Service. My first posting, the first two years of my service, studying Chinese in Hong Kong and then went off to Beijing in 1970. Mr. Jagat Mehta had served in China but before that he was the Chair of the boundary commission which was set up after the visit of Premier Chou En-lai (Zhou Enlai) in 1960. He was the Chairman of the Boundary Commission established in 1960 and after the unfortunate conflict in 1962 he was posted during very, very, difficult years, between 1963 and 1966, as *chargé d'affaires* in Beijing, these were memories, and subsequently as Foreign Secretary. I also recall that he was instrumental in getting me posted to New York to do my first stint of multilateral work. He had met me in 1978, when I was posted in Belgrade and the ministerial non-aligned meeting was held in 1978 there and some of the senior colleagues of mine who were junior to the Foreign Secretary Mr. Jagat Mehta conspired to get him to post me to a multilateral work in the United Nations. I subsequently benefited from it, because after that it was kind of an engagement with that, I had with multilateral work which lasted almost till 2017.

While welcoming all of you and the Chief Guest to this function this evening, I think I shall straight away get on to the next part of the program, which is the LDMF – MIDC Awards, after which of course Bharat will speak to you in more detail about our Chief Guest.

Thank you.