

Remarks by Amb Sibi George at the 'Launch of IDF Health Guide' July 17, 2021

His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Al-Kashti, Assistant Under secretary, Ministry of Health, State of Kuwait; Hon'ble President of Kuwait Medical Association Dr. Ahmad Thuwaini Al Enizi; Dr. Fawaz Al-Refaei, KIMS Secretary General; President of Indian Doctors' Forum Dr. Amir Ahmed; Senior Doctors who have joined us today; Esteemed dignitaries, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening to you all. Welcome to Embassy of India.

I begin my address today by thanking His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait and His Highness Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait and for the care and support the Government and the people of Kuwait extend to the Indian community during the Covid 19 pandemic.

As we get ready to celebrate the Eid Al Adha this week, I wish all present here, to all friends of India in Kuwait and all Indians in Kuwait Eid Mubarak. In India, which has the second largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia we celebrate this occasion with great fervour and enthusiasm. In complete consonance with India's age old ethos of vasudaiva kudumbakam, the world is one family, this day is celebrated across the country in the spirit of compassion, commitment to the welfare of society, spirit of sacrifice and universal brotherhood.

I am delighted to welcome among us today, His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Al-Kashti, Assistant Under secretary, Ministry of Health, State of Kuwait, who is here with us representing the Hon'ble Minister of Health of the State of Kuwait. I also acknowledge the presence of Hon'ble President of Kuwait Medical Association Dr. Ahmad Al Enizi who has joined us and agreed to address us today. I am glad that our cooperation with Ministry of Health and KMA continues to grow strong.

I have always said that cooperation in medical sector is a key element in our multifaceted bilateral relationship, and this is truer now than ever when we jointly fight against this deadly pandemic. I recall during the recent visit of the Hon'ble External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar to Kuwait, healthcare was one of the areas identified as priority sectors of cooperation between our two countries. I congratulate Indian Doctors' Forum, its President Dr. Amir Ahmed and all its members especially the editorial team for their support in further strengthening our cooperation in this sector.

Dear Friends,

Let me reiterate what I have said before; that is, the IDF team is a trusted partner of the Embassy. The team is always in the forefront of the efforts of the Embassy in ensuring the welfare of the Indian community in Kuwait. Our partnership with IDF continues to grow and I thank IDF not only for its humanitarian efforts but also for its many endeavors in supporting the Indian community in its efforts to fight the pandemic. They have worked closely with the Embassy in many activities, be it organization of dedicated seminars, awareness campaigns, roundtable discussions to educate people about COVID-19, or by conducting medical camps for distressed nationals, or offering free of charge tele-consultations, and now through this informative Health Guide, that we release today.

Dear Friends,

Today's event is part of our continuous efforts to contribute towards the ongoing fight against COVID-19. The global battle against this deadly pandemic appears to be a protracted one. We have made significant progress with COVID-19 vaccinations around the world; however, we still have a long way to go until each one of us is vaccinated. New variants of this disease are being discovered adding to the difficulties already faced. It is thereby imperative that we do not relent in our efforts. It is understandable that we may be fatigued in this long arduous struggle; but eternal vigilance is the price we must all pay for our

own safety and that of our loved ones. The “new normal” forced on us by COVID-19 is here to stay; we just need to adapt to it.

Whilst each one of us deals with the challenges being thrown up by COVID-19, it is important that we thank our doctors, nurses and other medical personnel all over the world who work day in and day out to save lives, in our fight against this pandemic.

Dear Friends,

I am also pleased to inform you all that India has acted with resolve during this unprecedented crisis. In India, the rate of spread of infections, the number of fatalities and the number of cases requiring hospitalisation and critical care have all shown a consistent decline in recent months. India’s recovery rate today is over 97%, which is higher than global averages. India’s fatality rate is 1.3 % which is much below the world average. An all-country, all-government approach has helped overcome both the phases of peak infections in India. Prime Minister regularly addressed the State Governments and the people directly launching various programs aimed at taking this ‘all India effort’ forward.

Today, the Government is also taking all measures to prevent a potential third wave. India’s vaccination drive, which is the largest in the world, is proceeding smoothly with over 400 million vaccinations administered in record time. Health infrastructure is also being ramped up as a precautionary measure. India’s technological prowess is being leveraged to deliver much needed healthcare solutions. The Co-WIN application, which forms the technology backbone of the vaccination programme in India, is an example of the success of Digital India.

While India implements these innovative solutions to combat the global pandemic, it keeps the needs of the international community at the center of its concerted efforts. The CO-WIN platform has been designed on an open source platform for the benefit of all friendly countries around the world. The recent international digital conclave on CO-WIN was attended by senior officials and experts from all across the globe including from State of Kuwait. I am pleased to inform that many countries

around the world have expressed interest in leveraging from the COWIN created by India.

We have been doing this right from the start of this fight against COVID-19. In his address to the UN General Assembly in September last year Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi had assured the global community that India will use its production and delivery capacity to help all humanity in fighting the virus. This is exactly what we have done. India extended medical and other assistance to more than 150 countries India has sent essential drugs, testing kits and other medical assistance. Medications made in India were shipped to destinations across the world in daunting logistical circumstances imposed by lockdowns. Indian rapid response teams were deployed in 8 countries. Indian naval vessels and air force airplanes delivered supplies along a wide arc to friends and partners. Through Vaccine Maitri, the global health diplomacy operation, we have supplied vaccines - made in India – to more than 90 nations across the world, including to the friendly State of Kuwait.

It is an age old saying that good deeds beget good results. True to this saying, it was no wonder then that when India faced a difficult situation during the second wave with a severe shortage of medical oxygen, countries around the world stepped up to assist India. I am particularly happy to inform you that the friendly State of Kuwait was one of the major suppliers of medical assistance to India. On behalf of the Government and the 1.3 billion people of Republic of India, I extend my sincere gratitude to the leadership, Government and people of the friendly State of Kuwait for all the kind assistance. My special thanks to all the concerned authorities who worked tirelessly, even during the holy month of Ramadan and the day of Eid-ul-Fitr, to ensure continuous flow of the much needed medical oxygen from Kuwait to India through successful air-sea bridge operations. I am happy to announce that on July 29 we are organising a virtual event to express our gratitude to all those who helped India overcome the second wave. I invite you all to join us.

Dear Friends

Coming to today's event, we are very delighted to partner again with IDF and be part of an initiative which I strongly believe will be highly useful for everyone. I am honoured to inaugurate and release the IDF Health Guide which addresses the most relevant theme "COVID-19". It is appropriately titled "COVID-19 explained"; I happened to glance through the entire edition, I must say it is rich repository of invaluable information on all that we need to know about COVID-19 and all the associated nuances explained lucidly by our medical experts in plain, simple language. You would also be happy to note that the health guide is being made available free of cost.

I once again congratulate the entire IDF team, its President Dr. Amir Ahmed, and the entire editorial team who have worked hard to compile this health guide. Best wishes to you all. I now look forward to hearing from esteemed dignitaries who have joined us here today.

Thank you. Stay safe and stay blessed.