

**Address on 'Strengthening Asian Cultural Cooperation', by  
Ambassador Sibi George  
January 6, 2022**

**Our moderator Dr. Heila Al Makeemi, Secretary General of Asian Cooperation Dialogue His Excellency Ambassador Pornchai Davivathana, Excellencies Ambassador of Republic of Turkey, Ambassador of Vietnam, Distinguished Guests, Good morning.**

**Thank you for inviting me to this very interesting initiative by Secretary General of ACD with Kuwait University. I thank the University for hosting this seminar today. I thank Secretary General for ably giving direction to ACD platform under his leadership. I also thank Republic of Turkey, it is under its chairmanship last year that the ACD blue print for 2021-2030 was adopted, which identifies culture and tourism as an important pillar of ACD platform.**

**I recall India's positive contributions in the drafting of the ACD blue print including in areas of Traditional medicine, sustainable lifestyles, sustainable patterns of consumption and production, startups, skill training in schools, MSMEs etc.**

**I would like to emphasize the need for ACD to focus on materializing the envisaged activities under the ACD blue print 2021-30 with meaningful outcomes. At the same time it is important to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states while implementing the ACD blue print 2021-30.**

**As Ambassador of India to Kuwait, I bring to you all greetings from 1.3 billion people of India; I know it is a lot of greetings. Greetings from one sixth of the total population of the world. As I am in Kuwait, I also bring to you greetings from almost one million Indians in Kuwait. That again is a lot of greetings. In fact the Indian community in Kuwait, which most of you present here are familiar with for generation, is a cross section of India, representing its rich and varied cultural resources, civilizational ethos and its diversity.**

**In fact, while talking about 'strengthening Asian Intercultural cooperation' I would like to start from Kuwait, India's bilateral**

**engagement with Kuwait. Our cultural engagement with Kuwait is deep rooted, spanning over several decades. In fact our Kuwaiti friends, several generations ago, travelled across the Arabian Sea for trade and business. That engagement contributed immensely in strengthening our relationship. We can see the symbols of that cultural engagement at various levels. The wooden boat, Dhow, is a symbol of our cultural engagement. The similarity in our food is another best example of the cultural engagement of India and Kuwait.**

**This year we are celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait, we are organizing a series of cultural engagement spanning over a year. My objective is to organize 600 events in Kuwait during the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations with the participation of our Kuwaiti friends. A series of joint events are planned covering the entire spectrum of culture, art and letters with National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). It has music activity days, cultural weeks covering Indian movies, culture performances, seminar on historic relations between two countries, seminar on wellness tourism opportunities, joint musical evenings, joint activities on antiquities and maritime trade routes, clothing exhibition, pottery exhibition, symposium on the connect between India and Kuwaiti cuisines, currency and jewelry exhibitions and so on. Another example is the movies, Indian movies are continued to be shown in Kuwaiti theaters and homes.**

**We also have MoU on cultural cooperation with Kuwait and is finalizing a CEP cultural exchange program for the next four years. This engagement with Kuwait is exactly the way our engagement with other GCC countries in the Gulf region which is part of our extended neighborhood. What I said about Kuwait is similar to our engagement with other Gulf countries. It is also similar to our East as well. India has a very active Act East Policy which is contributing in building our engagement with East Asia, South East Asia including Thailand and Vietnam, both present on the dais today.**

**I would like to highlight three important institutions of India: ICCR – Indian Council for Cultural Relations; which is under the Ministry of External Affairs which has several initiatives to develop cultural engagement including scholarships to foreign students to study in India. Ministry of Culture of India which is spearheading cultural**

**agreement with the world, generating international cooperation in culture. Ministry of AYUSH which plays a very important role in promoting Ayurveda and Yoga. We have an AYUSH information cell in Kuwait. In short the essence of India's engagement with the world is deep rooted in its civilizational ethos – the essence of which is vasudaivakudumbakam (world is one family).**

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