

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR SIBI GEORGE AT THE FIRST OPEN
HOUSE AT THE EMBASSY, AUG 19, 2020**

My Dear Friends,

Good Afternoon, A very warm welcome to Embassy of India,

I would speak in English, if any one who finds it difficult to understand, we have a team of officials who could translate to other languages. We will be happy to do that.

I am very happy to represent India in Kuwait, which is a very important partner for India. You know, how important this region is for us. In fact, Kuwait is a key partner in our extended neighbourhood. I am also happy to be in a country which has welcomed Indians in large numbers.

Let me begin today's open house by thanking His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait. I pray for the good health of His Highness. I thank the Government of the State of Kuwait and Kuwaiti friends of India for their friendship and support.

I arrived here in the first week of August and this week I presented a copy of my credentials to Hon'ble Foreign Minister of Kuwait. I thank HE the Foreign Minister and many friends of India for the warm welcome that I received here in this friendly country.

I am meeting most of you for the first time. Let me begin by introducing my team here. You know most of them, but I would like to introduce them again. Deputy Chief of Mission Shri Raj Gopal Singh, he coordinates all the work in the Mission.....

This being my first open house, let me make a few introductory remarks.

I am delighted and honored to come to Kuwait as representative of the Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji representing the Government of India and all the citizens of India. As Ambassador I am representing the 1.3 billion people of India here in Kuwait. I am also representing all our State Governments, all district administrations, all village councils and all households of India. Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji has entrusted me with the task of building on the bilateral relations, our partnership with Kuwait, covering the entire spectrum of relationship. I take this responsibility very seriously and seek your support in performing this task.

I am sure that I am not disclosing a state secret with you today, when I say that during the last two weeks, I received over a thousand emails/letters from many of our fellow citizens in different parts of Kuwait and in India, from all walks of life, on a number of

topics of interest, general topics, community related topics and many on personal issues. On an average fifty to sixty letters, including on Fridays and Saturdays, most with detailed background briefing. Many letters are written on behalf of thousands of people, on issues that affect several thousands. I thank you for these letters, it helped me to better understand many of the topics. Personally I welcome this overwhelming response. I also get several crisp comments, suggestions and queries as tweets and comments on other social media, some off course, without even mentioning their names or contact details. I also read the many suggestions placed in the suggestion box here at the Consular hall. In the last few days, I also met with some of our community members, who briefed me on many topics. These are difficult times, everyone is facing many difficulties.

I checked with my colleagues, they told me that each one of them also receive e-mails and suggestions in equal numbers or more. This is in addition to the hundreds of people visiting the embassy and our outsourcing centers.

Let me tell you this, today I have a fair understanding of many of the topics. These issues include very important topics such as Indians stranded in Kuwait, Indians with resident permit in Kuwait and currently stranded in India, those with children stranded in India and wanting to join their parents, Indians stranded in other countries and wanting to transit through Kuwait, those who want travel documents, those who applied travel documents but yet to receive them, those who received travel documents but could not travel during amnesty, expiry of resident permits, groups who face nonpayment of salary, nonpayment of arrears, labor disputes, cheating by agents, loss of jobs and livelihood, loss of documents, those who do not have food, shelter and medicines, request from those who got stranded in ships, engineers issues including on NOC for engineering degrees, medical professionals issues including on promotion avenues for some category or nurses, delays in getting appointments for consular services at the Indian passport centers, dispatch of mortal remains of loved ones who died here, pending death compensation cases, family disputes, it continues. Most of it is work in progress, and I thank the Government of Kuwait for its support and guidance. These are difficult times for many. As our Prime Minister said in his Independence Day address, Coronavirus crisis is a big crisis, but is not big enough to stop us in building Atmanirbhar Bharat.

One of the first things that I told my personal staff on my first day in office was that I want to reply to all letters and emails, at least an acknowledgement. I find that it is an impossible task to acknowledge thousands of emails. But let me assure you that I read each one of them. I understand the urgency in each of these letters and how crucial it is for the person who wrote it to me. There are so many who want to write but chose not

to write, but others are writing on their behalf. We in the Embassy will take action on each of the mails, as appropriate in coordination with the concerned authorities in Kuwait and India. In this regard, let me reiterate, when we are abroad, we have a responsibility to obey each and every laws of our host country and respect the customs and traditions of this land. Under no circumstances we should knowingly or unknowingly, wittingly or unwittingly, violate any of the laws of this country.

Let me tell you this. I said this before, I repeat again. Those who need help and support are not liabilities, they are not strangers; they are our brothers and sisters, they are not problems, they are our priorities. Many of these issues I do not have ready solutions, we will coordinate with concerned authorities in Kuwait and India to find reasonable solutions. I look forward to ideas and suggestions from each one of our fellow citizens to strengthen our efforts. It is in addressing these priorities that I need your support, support of the well-wishers, community, associations, small and big, social workers, media representatives, volunteers and each one of you. Please reach out to all who need support and keep us informed. Let's be in regular contact. We are updating your contact details. Please send your updated contact information to community.kuwait@mea.gov.in.

Let me remind you, there is absolutely zero tolerance in the Embassy for any form of corruption, nepotism, favoritism, dishonesty, exploitation, fraud, prejudice, bias or partisanship. We have kept Suggestion/Complaint Boxes prominently at the Chancery premises and our passport offices. I am getting some useful suggestions on better utilization of ICWF funds. I assure you every suggestion and complaint will be taken seriously and acted upon, in coordination with concerned authorities in Kuwait and India as appropriate.

Once again thank you for coming in to my first open house. I look forward to meeting you on every Wednesday. We will do this following all the guidelines and instructions of the host government including on Covid related social distancing.

I conclude by again thanking His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for hosting the Indian community in Kuwait. I also thank the Government of the State of Kuwait and Kuwaiti friends of India for their support to the community here in these difficult times. Together we will work towards increasing our engagement and strengthening our partnership with Kuwait.

Thank you. Let's start our interactions.

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