

Transcript of Remarks by Amb Sibi George at the Indian Doctors' Forum event in Kuwait, Sept 18, 2020

Good Evening everybody,

Outgoing President of Indian Doctors' Forum Dr. Surendra Nayak, New President Dr. Amir Ahmed, Office bearers of the Forum, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to the Embassy.

I begin my remarks today by thanking His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait. I thank the Government of the State of Kuwait and Kuwaiti friends of India for their efforts and support in strengthening the bilateral relations between our two friendly countries.

The Covid 19 crisis which began as a health challenge, has evolved as an economic disruption, a geopolitical shock and a social challenge. Today it has emerged as a global challenge of a magnitude that humanity has not experienced in recent memory. It is throwing up new challenges to every country and every society including in India and here in Kuwait. I thank the millions of 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. Let's pray for the success of our medical researchers in their efforts to invent a vaccine to save lives. On behalf of Government of India and the people of India I express my sincere gratitude to our doctors, nurses and other medical professionals here in Kuwait who are working to save the lives of our brothers and sisters.

I thank the outgoing team led by President Dr. Surendra Nayak for the service of the Indian Doctors' Forum to the Indian community in Kuwait for the last two years, particularly during the most difficult times of the fight against Covid 19 pandemic.

I congratulate the new team led by President Dr. Amir Ahmed and wish them a very successful tenure. They have a very important role to play in helping our community facing the Covid 19 challenge. The tenure of this Committee coincides with my term as Ambassador in Kuwait. I look forward to working very closely with IDF and its leadership in coming days, weeks, months and years starting today.

Dear Friends,

I thank you for the warm welcome extended to me today. Before joining Kuwait, I was in Switzerland representing India to three countries. Switzerland, Lichtenstein and The Holy See. It was a great honour for any diplomat to represent their country in three countries together, to go to bed every night and get up everyday morning

thinking about a President, a Prince and a Pope, a great diplomatic task for any Ambassador.

Here in Kuwait it indeed is a bigger task for an Indian Ambassador to go to bed every night and get up every morning thinking about a million Indian diaspora. I do consider this assignment as a greater diplomatic task working to expand our excellent bilateral political, economic and strategic partnership with this important country and at the same time to work towards transforming this Embassy into a 'Home Away from Home' for our large Indian community in Kuwait. This is a task I could realize only with the support from organizations like Indian Doctors Forum and those holding important positions like our Doctors and medical professionals in Kuwait. I look forward to that support.

In today's digital world of information explosion, I can see several common factors in the professional life of a medical doctor and that of a diplomat. One of my senior diplomats used to say that in order for a diplomat to be successful while posted abroad, he or she needs to know more about his/her country of accreditation than the most informed citizen of that country. A diplomat and a doctor need to be the most informed in his/her field to be successful. For me to be a success here, I need to learn more about this region every day. Another common factor that both doctors and diplomats have is that every day they face a well-informed public many armed with Google inspired questions and answers. Every suggestion of ours is faced with an eagerness to know why and how. Everything that we do or do not do is subject to public and media scrutiny. The success of a diplomat depends on whether a visit to the Embassy by the public is a pleasant experience. Same is the case with a doctor who receives a patient at his clinic. So our mutual consultations once a while is a useful exercise for us both.

Dear Friends,

Most of us might have gone through a period in our youth when we were drifting through our career options. I chose one in diplomacy. It is a great honor to represent our great nation abroad.

But my father had a different aspiration. He always dreamt of his child taking the science stream. The reason for my father's dream was that medicine was a profession he was so familiar with, and like many parents, he aspired his son to become one. The 'Ambassador' that he grew up with was the name of a car and definitely not an 'Excellency'. In fact this is the case with most people in India even

today. The links that most have, if any, with an Embassy are limited to their passports and visas.

The fact is that, even many in the diaspora including here in Kuwait, also look at Embassy only as a passport and visa office. While passports and visas are an essential part of an Embassy, diplomacy is also about building bridges and partnerships between two countries. This involves multiple stakeholders; not only political leadership and government officials, but also business establishments, industrial and commercial chambers and groups, investment boards, laboratories and factories, universities and schools, science and technology establishments, medical research and hospitals and with a country like Kuwait a vibrant diaspora including several thousands of medical professionals. Diplomacy is also about building partnerships on a series of crucial issues such as fight against terrorism, climate change, building energy security, cyber security, maritime security and cooperation in multilateral fora on many global issues. And today, we need to build a partnership among nations to face the most important challenge our generation, help protect humanity from Covid 19 pandemic.

Dear Friends,

As reputed doctors in this country you all are placed in a very good position to contribute in deepening our bilateral engagement. Kuwait is a very important country for us. It is part of India's extended neighborhood. Our natural partnership with Kuwait is something that evolved over several generations. I request for your support in further strengthening this partnership at all sectors.

Our priority today is clear, fight the Covid 19 pandemic and save lives. Let's work together to help our community overcome the difficult times that they face today. Let's together partner with our Kuwait friends in our endeavors.

Once again I wish the IDF a very successful year ahead under its new leadership.

Thank you.