

## **TRANSCRIPT OF THE REMARKS BY AMB SIBI GEORGE AT THE VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE AT THE EMBASSY, JULY 28, 2021**

Good Afternoon everybody,

A very warm welcome to our Open House of July 2021.

I also welcome the office bearers of various Indian associations in Kuwait and media representatives who have joined us today.

Let me begin today's open house by thanking His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait and His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmed Al Jaber Al Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Government and the people of Kuwait for the personal care and support extended to Indian community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dear Friends,

This month has not been a very good month for me personally. I had gone through the pain and pressure of Covid 19 infection. Thanks to your prayers and best wishes, I have recovered. But many of our brothers and sisters were not so lucky. Every day we see people losing their battle against Covid 19 and leaving us. My personal condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their loved ones. Our support and prayers for all those are fighting the battle against Covid. I thank our doctors, nurses and other medical professional for their continued support to many who are facing difficulties. I thank our contacts in many hospitals who share information with us on the condition of patients.

At the same time we have some good news. The decision of the GoI to have NEET exam center in Kuwait, the first center outside India. We are thankful to Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Education Minister for this historic decision which help our students and parents.

Dear Friends,

In today's Open House, I would like to focus on the following three topics: (1) New circular on the travel of stranded Indians; (2) Issues related to vaccination certificates; and (3) Procedure to be followed for Death

Registration; and (4) Assistance from ICWF. I would like to be brief in my remarks and focus more on the presentations we have planned on each of these topics today. I would also like to spend more time by taking questions during the interactive session.

On the easing of travel restrictions, we have seen the circular issued by DGCA yesterday. It is a welcome decision, as it allows entry of stranded Indians to Kuwait. I am getting several queries on this, whether direct travel to Kuwait from India is allowed, what is the position on quarantine, what is the likely airfare? and so on. We are in touch with DGCA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health on each of the issues involved. DGCA said that it is not a direct entry, but through third country, but without 14 days in third countries. It is also clarified that those doing PCR test on arrival need not go to quarantine after their PCR results are found to be negative. We are getting some more clarifications, and we will keep you updated as we get more clarifications. My recommendation is that we may wait for a few more days to get a clarity on the matter before booking tickets.

On the issue of vaccination certificates, we have issued a press release clarifying that as per Kuwaiti Health Ministry officials, Covishield is an approved vaccine as it is same as Astra Zeneca, and no one, no one who holds a certificate of Astra Zeneca will face difficulties on return. We will do a detailed presentation on the various portals for obtaining travel clearance. There is an issue related to QR code which has been brought to my attention. I have raised it with the concerned authorities in India and in Kuwait. There is also the issue of many cases getting rejected due to invalid residence permits and Civil IDs.

In view of the evolving situation, we have converted our team handling WhatsApp numbers and our 24x7 helpline numbers, as 'Rapid Response Team' for answering your queries on travel guidelines and vaccination certification registration. We keep updating the officers concerned on the new guidelines. In case anyone get stuck at airports for any reason, they may contact the 'Rapid Response Team' for assistance. Let me assure you we will extend all support.

I have an update on the assistance to the families of the Domestic workers with low salary who passed away due to Covid infection. The Indian Community Support Group (ICSG) has offered to send Rs one lakh each to

the legal heir of those with a monthly salary of less than 120 KD. We have 546 deaths related to Covid of which at least hundred people were of lower salary. I thank ICSG for this decision and support to the community. We will contact the next of kin and support them.

We will now have the two presentations one on death cases registration by Shri Kamal Singh Rathore, First Secretary. We will also have the detailed presentation on easing of travel restrictions and vaccination certificate by Shri Fahad Suri, First Secretary and Spokesperson of the Embassy. After that, I will be happy to get your suggestions and also answer your questions.

Thank you.