

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR SIBI GEORGE
ON THE OCCASION OF INAUGURATION OF
INDIAN SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE,
KUWAIT,
JANUARY 14, 2021**

Chairman of the Indian Community Schools in Kuwait, Other Office Bearers, Principals of Indian Community Schools in Kuwait, Teachers, Non-teaching staff, distinguished guests, media representatives, my dear students and Parents.

Good Evening to all of you! I am very happy to join you today at the Inauguration of Indian School of Excellence, Salmiya. I wish all of you a very happy and healthy new year 2021.

2020 has been a difficult year for all of us. The pandemic which began as a health challenge, soon became an economic disruption, a geopolitical shock and a global challenge. It continues to throw up new challenges to every country, every day.

On December 31, I wrote a personal letter to all our Indian children in our schools here, wishing them a very happy and healthy New Year 2021. 2020 has particularly been a very difficult period for our children, who were, in fact, denied a full year of their childhood, the energy, the enthusiasm, and all the wonderful sounds and lights of almost an entire year & probably beyond. The pandemic forced them to be confined to their homes, kept them away from their friends, teachers, their sports and their games. It has also been an equally challenging period for teachers and parents. One lesson that we all learn from these challenging times is never to take anything for granted. We should always cherish every small thing, fully experiencing and living everything that comes our way. I urged the children to share with me their experiences of 2020 and expectations and wishes for 2021. I am moved by the overwhelming response that I received from our young brothers and sisters.

I am impressed at how well our schools and teachers have adapted and taken to new technology to make sure that the students do not miss out on learning and education for an entire year. I commend the perseverance of all the teachers and the zeal of their students to keep going, despite the challenges of the pandemic. I wish and pray that 2021 would be different and we will be able to overcome the crisis in coming weeks and months.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the leadership of the State of Kuwait for the effective handling of this pandemic crisis. The strategies that the leadership of Kuwait adopted worked well and today Kuwait has emerged a role model in effective handling of the Covid 19 situation.

India too is a success story when it comes to handling of Covid 19 crisis. It being a large population, 1.3 billion people, 1/6th of the total population, the number of cases always appear big. But the fact is that India's recovery rate is one of the highest in the world, the recovery rate today is over 96.5%, active cases are just 2% and death rate is as low as 1.4%, one of the lowest in the world. India has undertaken over 180 million tests till date, on an average a million tests each day.

An 'all India approach' that our leadership adopted has yielded positive results. India, as the 'pharmacy of the world', today, is in the forefront of the global fight against the pandemic including through our successful indigenous vaccine development programme that benefits not only India, but the entire world.

At the same time, we must remember that the crisis across the globe is far from over and we need to remain alert all the time. I am confident that we will be able to overcome these difficult times in the coming weeks.

The opening of this new school today is a very happy moment. It is indeed a re-confirmation of our confidence in the gradual return to normalcy of life. It is a signal to all, particularly to our community here, that our life is returning to normal and 2021 is going to be a year of recovery. I am confident that this would also help recover the morale of our diaspora, particularly young students, teachers and parents, in these difficult times.

I am particularly happy that we witness this inauguration in the year when we would celebrate the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. I see this as one of the shining symbols of the excellent relations that several generations have built between our two countries. A relationship that we will endeavor to strengthen further each day. I wish to see more such educational institutions come up in Kuwait including higher education institutions.

Dear Friends,

With the presence of our schools here, we have been able to address the requirement of school education for our children here. At the same time, I am aware of the need to address the requirement of higher education for the children who qualify from these schools. I urge the managements of the Indian schools in Kuwait to work with their Kuwaiti counterparts to establish institutions of higher education in partnership with the best institutions in India. The Embassy will be happy to extend full support to all such endeavors that would benefit our community and further strengthen our partnership.

India, as most of us are aware, has one of the largest networks of higher education institutions in the world. In 2020-21, there were 9,700 total AICTE approved institutes. Of the total, there were 4,100 undergraduate, 4,951 postgraduate and 4,514 diploma courses in AICTE approved institutes. India has become the second largest market for E-learning after the US. The sector is expected to reach US\$ 1.96 billion by 2021 with around 9.5 million users. However, there is still a lot of potential for further development in the education system. We are opening new IITs and IIMs all across the country to provide quality education to our new generation. In 2030, it is estimated that India's higher education will emerge as the single largest provider of global talent with one in four graduates in the world being a product of the Indian higher education system. India will be among the top five countries in the world in terms of research output with an annual R&D spend of US\$ 140 billion having more than 20 universities among the global top 200 universities. All these point to the huge opportunity that exists in developing partnership between India and countries like Kuwait in higher education. Let's explore the possibilities.

Dear Friends,

While we open this new school here today, let me recall the transformation that our homeland is witnessing in the school education sector in recent years. I would like to quote from the remarks by Hon'ble Prime Minister when he addressed the higher education conclave in August 2020. Referring to our new Education policy he said, I quote, "This education policy lays special emphasis to make India more powerful, to take it to new heights, to empower the Indian citizens and to make available maximum opportunities to them. Indian student will be able to play a constructive role

in nation building if he studies in a scientific way and according to the changing environment, whether he is in nursery or in college.” Unquote.

Hon’ble Prime Minister raised two fundamental questions in his remarks: Does our education policy motivate our youth for a creative, curiosity and commitment-driven life? Whether our education system empowers our youth and helps create an empowered society? He continued, “a new world order is emerging with a new look in the changing scenario. A new global standard is also getting readied. Therefore, it was necessary that India should effect changes in its education system.” “We have to make our students global citizens. Simultaneously, we also have to keep in mind that they stay connected to their roots. The format of this national education policy has been decided after encompassing all points from roots to the world, from man to mankind, from past to modernity.”

“So far, the focus of our education policy has been ‘what to think’, whereas, the new education policy lays stress on ‘how to think’. Why I say this because there is no dearth of information and content in the present times. There is a flood of information; all the information is available on mobile phones. What information is necessary and what needs to be learnt should be important. Keeping this in mind, attempt has been made in the National Education Policy to reduce the burden of unnecessary syllabus and books. The need of the hour is to teach students with inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based and analysis-based ways. Children will not only develop interest to learn but their participation in classes will also increase.” Unquote.

Dear Friends,

I am confident that the new school that we open today will soon emerge as one of the most sought after centers of excellence in Kuwait. I wish that as its name suggests it may emerge as an ‘Indian School of Excellence’ Kuwait. May it build and maintain the highest standards of education as envisaged in the New Education Policy, nurturing world class global citizens while staying connected to their Indian roots.

With these words, I declare the ‘Indian School of Excellence’ inaugurated.

Thank you.
