

**Opening Remarks by Amb. Sibi George on the occasion of  
Inauguration of AYUSH Information Cell and Curtain Raiser of  
International Day of Yoga celebrations, May 21, 2021**

Shri Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Hon'ble Secretary, Ministry of AYUSH,  
Government of India,  
Excellencies Hon'ble Ambassadors and Diplomatic Colleagues, who are  
present virtually in this meeting today,  
Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awardee Shri Rajpal Tyagi ji,  
Distinguished guests from India and Kuwait,  
Office Bearers of various Indian associations in Kuwait,  
Members of Indian Cultural Network,  
Media Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all!

I would like to begin my remarks by thanking His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, and His Highness Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, for hosting the large Indian community in Kuwait and for their leadership in strengthening the bilateral relations between our two friendly countries. 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.

In India, we are now faced with a crisis situation similar to the one some countries and many cities across the globe faced last year. India faced the first wave of COVID-19 effectively with very low daily numbers of infection and fatalities. The whole of society and the whole of government approach adopted by our leadership in India helped us win the fight against Covid 19 in the first phase. Through Operation Sanjeevani and Vaccine Maitri, India reaffirmed its credentials as a healthcare hub with medical capabilities and capacities second to none on global standards. India established itself as a reliable global pharma hub supplying medicines and equipment to 154 countries and Made in India vaccines to over 70 countries even in the face of daunting logistical challenges.

I am confident that we will defeat this pandemic comprehensively in coming weeks and months and save lives. It is most heartening to see our friends across the globe strongly coming out in support of India. Kuwait was one of the first countries to come forward and offer support to India.

India and Kuwait have always stood with each other in times of difficulties. We have here established an India-Kuwait sea and air medical oxygen supply bridge which is fully functional. I thank the leadership and the citizens of the State of Kuwait for the support extended to India.

The relationship between India and Kuwait is historic and deep rooted; it is anchored by civilizational affinities tracing back centuries. At the heart of this relationship are the people-to-people bonds which have sustained and nurtured this close relationship over centuries. These strong bonds have transformed the relationship substantially into a mutually beneficial long standing dynamic partnership.

Our Community in Kuwait, of around one million brothers and sisters, are widely respected and loved by all sections of the society in Kuwait. The admiration and affection garnered by our Community is not a mere coincidence, rather it is the result of the hard work put in by generations of our people living and working here. It is a testimony to our values and ethos of peaceful and harmonious coexistence that we as Indians stand for. There are many challenges that the community face today including those many stranded in India. We are working with the Kuwaiti authorities in addressing each of these issues which is a work in progress and we are making progress in each of the issues involved.

Dear Friends,

Today we have gathered here to talk about the eternal gifts of India to humanity in the form of traditional medicinal systems: Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy. All these Indian sciences are universal, but they have a home and that is India. I am happy that our Hon'ble Secretary of AYUSH Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha is with us virtually to inaugurate the Ayush Information Cell in Kuwait and also the Curtain Raiser for International Day of Yoga 2021. Sir, we are honoured with your presence here. On behalf of the Indian community in Kuwait I welcome you to this function. Under your leadership the AYUSH Ministry has been able to take all these medicinal streams, including Yoga and Ayurveda, to all corners of the world.

I recall that during my last assignment as Ambassador of India in Switzerland, I witnessed how Yoga contributed immensely in strengthening connect between not only India and Switzerland, but also with entire Europe under the theme 'Connecting Himalayas with Alps'. I particularly mentioned this today as His Excellency Ambassador of

Switzerland to Kuwait is here with us in this event. It was so gratifying to see that there is no village in Switzerland where yoga was not practiced.

I welcome His Excellency Dr. Benedict Gubler, Ambassador of Switzerland, His Excellency Mr. U.L. Mohammed Jauhar, Ambassador of Sri Lanka, His Excellency Mr. Ngo Toan Thang, Ambassador of Viet Nam and Madam, His Excellency Archbishop Eugene Martin Nugent, Apostolic Nuncio and Ambassador of the Holy See and other senior diplomats of various diplomatic missions who have joined us today.

I am convinced that the initiative to set up Ayush Information Cell in Kuwait at this point of time is a right step towards addressing the stress and strain that many face due to the pandemic. The top most concern for us all today, is the concern for health- health of our own, our family, our society and country so as to say – the Global health. The challenge that we face today is singular, but it is not a new challenge. Pandemics have been a feature in the past. Diseases used to be almost a regular occurrence in the lives of our forefathers. What is so different about the pandemic that we face today? For once, this is probably the first ever such crisis of a phenomenally interconnected world.

While we address all these challenges, holistic health and rejuvenation approaches like yoga could play a significant role in reducing the stress and strain that confronts us. When secondary psychological challenges associated with Covid 19 pandemic are taking its toll on individuals, especially the most vulnerable ones in the society, our traditional health approaches can play a vital role as these positively influence mental health, while at the same time improving the immunity function of the human body. These systems rest on the basic premise that health and wellness depend on a delicate balance between the mind, body, and spirit. These systems focus on some universal principles - such as harmony, balance, regard for cause and effect analysis, and overall a holistic, systemic approach to complexities. Balance in what you eat, how you spend your day, how you live your life, how you interact with the surrounding.

Speaking on the occasion of Global Ayurveda Festival in March 2021, the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi said, and I QUOTE “Ayurveda could rightly be described as a holistic human science. From the plants to your plate, from matters of physical strength to mental well-being, the impact and influence of Ayurveda and traditional medicine is immense.

The current situation presents a right time for Ayurveda and traditional medicines to become even more popular globally. There is growing interest towards them. The world is seeing how modern and traditional medicines both are important to further wellness. People are realising the benefits of Ayurveda and its role in boosting immunity”, UNQUOTE.

I am happy to see that we have very talented Yoga instructors and Ayurveda practitioners in Kuwait. We in the Embassy look forward to working with each one of them to make it popular among all our Kuwaiti friends. I once again welcome all of you who have joined us today virtually. I know you value yoga and Ayurveda, and here at the Embassy of India, we look forward to work with you to make it possible for everyone in Kuwait to know more about Yoga and other AYUSH streams.

Our new AYUSH Information Cell at the Embassy, with an information kiosk, a regular AYUSH newsletter in English and Arabic and an online depository of resources on AYUSH will promote yoga and Ayurveda in Kuwait. I congratulate the team led by Dr. Vinod Gaikwad who himself is a qualified Ayurveda expert for this initiative in setting up the cell and bringing out a very informative bulletin in English and Arabic. I thank the various organizations and associations who despite the many challenges of Covid 19 joined hands with the Embassy to make today's event a success. I am happy to note that we are following all the guidelines and protocol associated with the Covid 19 pandemic in letter and spirit.

Dear friends,

Before I conclude, I invite you all to join us on June 18, 2021 for the International Day of Yoga celebrations in Kuwait. We want to make this Yoga Day an opportunity for each of us and our friends here in Kuwait to take a moment, pause and reflect. 'Be with yoga, be at home' is our theme. I would like this yoga day to be an occasion to spread a message of optimism to all our friends in Kuwait in these most difficult times.

I once again welcome you all to today's program.

Thank you.

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