

**Opening Remarks by Amb. Sibi George on the occasion of
International Day of Yoga, June 18, 2021**

His Excellency Dr. Issa M. Alansari, Assistant Secretary General,
National Council for Culture, Arts & Letters, State of Kuwait,
Excellencies Ambassadors who have joined us viturally,
Shri Rajpal Tyagi ji, Members of the Indian community,
Distinguished guests from India and Kuwait,
Office Bearers of various Indian associations in Kuwait,
Media Representatives,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning to you all!

Congratulations to all on the occasion of the 7th International Day of Yoga. Also Greetings of the 60th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. Welcome to you all.

I thank 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 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.

Let me tell you a story, a story from ancient Indian history. We all heard about Alexander the Macedonian, whom some call Alexander the Great. After having crossed Persia, he came to India, met a sage on the banks of the river Indus, under a peepal tree who Alexander referred to as a wise man, in Greek. This sage sat on a rock, with eyes closed and in complete peace, experiencing the transformative shift which refreshes our body, mind and spirit. Our curious Alexander asked the saint what he was doing and the sage replied, "Experiencing nothingness." In fact, he was in deep meditation. The sage asked Alexander what he was doing. Alexander replied, "I am conquering the world." Both laughed. For Alexander, the sage was wasting his one and only life. For the sage, Alexander was wasting his time trying to conquer a world that has no limits, with a sense of urgency that made no sense when one lives infinite lives.

When we look back today after a few thousand years, one thing we know for sure that the empire that Alexander built collapsed within a few years or decades of his death. But Indian spirituality that the sage was experiencing, yoga that the saint was practicing, continues to attract the world towards India, continues to serve the world for good, a festival that we celebrate all across the world this week. This festival of yoga is all the more important when we face

the biggest health challenge of our generation and perhaps several generations to come in the form of deadly Covid 19 pandemic.

Dear Friends,

We all agree that COVID-19 has underscored the importance of collective action, nationally and internationally. No single country around the world has been immune to this deadly pandemic. And in a highly interconnected, globalized world that we now live in, we cannot isolate ourselves either. So, it is imperative that we join hands together to defeat this pandemic, and that is what most of the countries are doing. What we need today are all encompassing solutions for the entire humanity which can be applied universally to deal with both the immediate need to protect ourselves through vaccinations and also the longer term need of holistic health management. I am glad to say that we have global solutions to address both these needs.

The first of the solutions is indeed vaccines, which are already being administered around the world. I am happy to note that India as the pharmacy of the world has been at the forefront of vaccine development, production and supply to many countries around the world. I am happy to note that the Covid situation in India has improved considerably and we are on the steady path to recovery. Today the recovery rate is 96.03 percent with a daily positivity rate of less than 3.4%. We have given 269 million doses of vaccines till date.

The second global solution that we have today which addresses the measures for holistic health management. The fight against COVID-19 is not just physical. The pandemic has also left lasting impacts on mental health, with many left in psychological suffering, depression, and anxiety dealing with the pandemic-necessitated restrictions and loss. There is no better remedy than Yoga to deal with this aspect of the pandemic. That is where our Yoga comes to picture and quite prominently so. Let me quote from a statement issued by the United Nations on the importance of Yoga. I QUOTE "A growing trend of people around the world embracing Yoga to stay healthy and rejuvenated and to fight social isolation and depression has been witnessed during the pandemic. Yoga is also playing a significant role in the psycho-social care and rehabilitation of Covid-19 patients in quarantine and isolation. It is particularly helpful in allaying their fears and anxiety," UNQUOTE.

Dear Friends,

Yoga truly belongs to the world. It was in the environs of ancient India that the secrets of a harmonious way of living, in sync with nature, focusing on balance and alignment of body and mind was painstakingly discovered by sages after long years of enquiry, practice and penance. Yoga has a home in India, and as you all know, this home is always open. And hence, very rightly, the tenets of yoga spread far and wide. Often, it has become part of learnings of different diverse systems of knowledge in various parts of the world, under various religions, languages or beliefs. Yogic learnings have inspired so many and overtly or subconsciously guided in the

pursuit of various systems of knowledge, such as in physics, biology, medicine, psychology, various forms of arts and music.

Dear Friends,

Almost a month ago in May 2021, we had set up the AYUSH Information cell at the Embassy here and had also organized the curtain raiser for the celebrations of the International Day of Yoga. I am quite delighted to inform you that over the past month in the run-up to today's event, we have organized a number of events to celebrate yoga with all our dear friends in Kuwait. We had the quiz competition, yoga with family photo contest, a drawing competition and a series of daily video posts on yoga from various practitioners of Yoga. I would like to thank all the yoga organizations in Kuwait for partnering with us in executing many of these promotional activities. I would also like to thank all the yoga enthusiasts who have actively participated in these events. My special thanks to Kuwait Chamber of Chorale, the members of which have always been ready to join us to sing our national anthem and our patriotic songs. I am happy that we could have them today amongst us.

I am also pleased to inform you all that there was a tremendous response and enthusiasm from people from all walks of life here in Kuwait to join us in celebrating Yoga, which has become what I would call a universal public good with only positive externalities for every society and every country. It is the innate power of Yoga to connect people and societies. It transcends boundaries and brings

everyone together. Yoga in its true essence is a unifying force. No wonder then that the United Nations unanimously adopted 21 June as the International Day of Yoga. On 07 November, 2014 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution to celebrate 21st June, the day of the summer solstice, as International Day of Yoga every year, it was proposed by India but was co-sponsored by an overwhelming 177 countries of the world. The state of Kuwait, naturally, was one of the co-sponsor. It has been seven years since that day and the spread of Yoga continues unabated.

Dear Friends,

On this important occasion when we celebrate the 7th Anniversary of this historic day, let us all embrace Yoga wholeheartedly to ensure that everyone has a healthy lifestyle. Yoga is much more than just a health regime. It is a way of leading a fuller life. I am no expert on Yogic way of life but I can tell you from my own personal experience that Yoga has a transcendental impact on individuals and societies in more ways than one. Just to recount a few, I would like to share the following thoughts with you:

Yoga heals: From enhancement of muscular strength and body flexibility, improvement in respiratory and cardiovascular function, reduction in stress, anxiety, depression, and chronic pain, improvement in sleep patterns, to the enhancement of overall well-being; Yoga does it all.

Yoga inspires: Yoga inspires us to overcome our fears so we can grow beyond them to unleash our uncharted, latent potential. To quote Patanjali, the saint who codified Yoga thousands of years ago, “When you are inspired by some great purpose all of your thoughts break their bonds; your mind transcends limitations, your consciousness expands in every direction and you find yourself in a new, great and wonderful world.”

Yoga transforms: Yoga is about change. Gaining a fresh perspective is a powerful way to promote change within our lives. Albert Einstein said, and I quote “You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created.” UNQUOTE. Yoga helps you transcend obstacles that obscure who you really are, that it helps you come into a fuller expression of your true nature.

Yoga connects: Yoga teaches mindfulness and awareness. From this state of mind, you begin to see the world through a lens of balance and positivity. You begin to see the world in its true form, all of us connected, all of us living for today.

To sum up Yoga rekindles life: It is meditative. As we step onto the yoga mats leaving behind the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives and quietly try to find peace from within, a breath at a time, we gain this sense of calm with ourselves. We gradually undergo a transformative shift which refreshes our body, mind and spirit. Yoga is truth beyond articulation, wisdom beyond time.

Dear Friends,

We have received special video messages on this special occasion from a number of renowned yoga gurus residing in different parts of the world. We have done a short compilation of these messages which we will be showing during the course of today's event. We thank all those who have sent their good wishes.

We are also blessed with the remarks of His Excellency Shri Kiren Rijiju, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Youth & Affairs and Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Minister for his message and the kind support extended to the Embassy. I also take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of AYUSH and Indian Council of Cultural Relations for their support to the Embassy and its various promotional initiatives. In this regard, I am happy to announce the launch of the Special Edition of AYUSH Bulletin with particular emphasis on Yoga, which is the theme of the month. It is a bilingual publication, English and Arabic, which is entirely an in-house effort. I encourage all of you to make use of this extremely informative publication. I congratulate the cultural division of the Embassy, which is led by my colleague, Dr. Vinod Gaikwad, First Secretary, for bringing out this special edition at the opportune time. Every moment of preparation for this event I could feel the personal attachment Dr. Gaikwad has towards yoga and Ayurveda. One of my dreams for the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait is to make yoga and Ayurveda reach every family in Kuwait. Let the

message of 'Yoga for Wellness' reach every corner of the State of Kuwait and the Gulf and the world.

Finally, I must admit that it is truly beautiful to see so many gather here in solidarity for yoga. I thank Excellencies my Ambassador colleagues and diplomat friends who are present today. I am happy to see so many of our friends from Kuwait who have joined us in all our celebrations so far and in today's programme including through live program in various studios, schools and companies. As we all take a moment to pause and reflect, I would like it to spread a message of optimism to all our friends in Kuwait in these most difficult times. I hope all of you will cherish this day and hold it close to your hearts, today and forever.

I would like to conclude by quoting the words of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi, who had said and I quote "The way to lead a calm, creative and content life is Yoga. It can show the way in defeating tensions and mindless anxiety. Instead of dividing, Yoga unites. Instead of furthering animosity, Yoga assimilates. Instead of increasing suffering, Yoga heals".
UNQUOTE

Thank you.