

TRANSCRIPT OF THE REMARKS BY AMB SIBI GEORGE AT THE OPEN HOUSE AT THE EMBASSY, DECEMBER 23, 2021

Good Afternoon everybody,

A very warm welcome to you all.

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.

This is the last open house of 2021. Greetings of Christmas and New Year 2022 to all.

I have a few important issues that I propose to cover in this Open House one by one.

Carrying Medicines to Kuwait: In recent weeks, we have come across several cases when passengers who are carrying medicines are faced with difficulties at the airport customs. On many occasions I had to depute officers to visit airport to take out passengers stuck there, after being stopped for carrying medicines. So my advice is not to carry medicines.

Omicron: We had a difficult year of 2021. Too many challenges associated with Covid 19. We thought we managed to overcome the many challenges of the pandemic. Life was returning to normalcy, but the situation seems to be difficult due to the new variant of Omicron. You have seen the new guidelines issued by the Kuwaiti authorities starting on December 26. There has to be ten days home quarantine arrangements for all arrivals, three PCR tests. Also the importance of booster shot. I urge all to go for booster shot immediately. Please do not delay it. I have taken my booster shot. I urge all associations and media groups to please spread this message. Let's get the booster shot. Please also continue to take precautions of Covid 19 pandemic. We do not want a repeat of what we have gone through in 2020 and 2021.

Covaxin: We have requested the Kuwaiti authorities to accept Covaxin as approved vaccine. We have informed them that WHO and many other countries have also approved it already. I met the authorities in both Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health and requested for the approval. We have also shared the information about those stranded in India after taking Covaxin. We will continue to follow up.

Engineers' Issue: I continue to get mails from some of the engineers based in Kuwait and also new recruits from India on the status of the engineers' issue. While we have made some progress in addressing the issues including settling many cases, we still have the main issue of NBA accreditation of institutes remain unresolved. We continue to visit Kuwait Society of Engineers to address the issue. We continue to take up the matter with the authorities. We are also happy to take up specific cases with authorities. To those new engineers who are checking with us whether they could join Kuwait as engineers, our response is no. They should take up jobs only if their colleges and courses are accredited with NBA. Otherwise they should not take up jobs in Kuwait till this issue is addressed to our satisfaction.

Nurses' Issue: I continue to get requests from nurses on various issues related to their leave, their certificate verification, and indemnity after resignation etc. We are following up with the authorities on each of these issues. We will be happy to take up any particular cases with the authorities if brought to our attention. I have also requested authorities on direct recruitment to MoH. We are not approving recruitment of nurses to MoH through manpower supply companies at this stage. This was stopped as the supply companies were not offering the salary which was mandated in the tender documents.

Change in Passport Centers: I would like to inform that we are changing the outsourcing centers for passports, miscellaneous services like attestations and visas starting from January 10. It will not be CKGS anymore. There will be change of venues of passport centers. It will be again Sharq, Fahaheel and JaleebAbassia. We hope for a smooth transfer. If there are any issues during the interim we will move the services to the Embassy. We will keep you informed of the new facilities.

I stop here today, let me reiterate again that we have institutionalized eleven WhatsApp numbers for public to contact the Embassy team directly 24x7; please send whatsapp messages or video messages. Now my colleague Dr. VinodGaikwad, First Secretary will make a presentation and then I will be happy to get your suggestions and also answer your questions.

Thank you.