

Message of HE K. Jeeva Sagar, Ambassador of India to Kuwait

On the Happy occasion of India's 69th Republic Day, I convey my warm Greetings and Best Wishes to all my compatriots, friends and well-wishers of India in Kuwait. I would specifically like to take this opportunity to express my great joy at the continued close and friendly relations between India and Kuwait, and renew Government of India's commitment and resolve to further deepening, strengthening and expanding this mutually enriching relationship in all its dimensions. It is reassuring to note that this cordiality between the two nations is anchored in people-to-people relations, the evidence of which is loud and clear in the fact that Indian nationals form the largest expatriate segment in this beautiful and respected nation of Kuwait. Bilateral relationship between any two countries, which is rooted in history and defined by the affinity between the peoples on both sides, is a mark of vibrancy and endurance.



HE K. Jeeva Sagar

The Republic Day of India signifies the coming into force of the Constitution of India on 26 January 1950. The India that we see today — a strong, vibrant, democratic, inclusive and secular nation of over 1.3 billion people, is not a miraculous overnight happening but an outcome of the sacrifices, commitment, self-confidence and a strong will to succeed on the part of the resilient people of this dynamic nation and various governments from time to time, and their efforts towards good and responsible governance and steadily progressive reforms for the last seventy years since independence. It is no exaggeration to state that the principles and the foundations of this amazing story of hope and success are defined and encapsulated in the Constitution of India, and it is a matter of pride for every Indian to be part of this continuing saga. The Preamble of the Constitution of India begins with the words "We the people", and over the years since the inception of the Constitution, India faced many challenges but always emerged triumphant deriving inspiration from the values laid down by the Constitution. A vibrant democracy has been India's most enduring identity ever since we adopted the Constitution, which shaped India into a democratic Republic with universal adult suffrage. India is a pluralistic and inclusive society that takes pride in its unity in diversity, the diversity reflected in political ideology, ethnicity, language, religion, cuisine and geography. We are a nation which is home to all major world religions, while our people communicate in sixteen major languages and hundreds of dialects.

At the time of India's independence in 1947, we were left an impoverished and distraught nation, with Economy in a total shambles. It is a matter of immense satisfaction for us that today's India is the third largest economy in the world on purchasing power parity, and is a member of the G20 group of large and powerful economies. Major global economies have recognized and acknowledged that India was a factor of stability amidst the financial turbulence not many years ago without whose resilience the crisis could be worse and the recovery would have been much slower. Presently Indian economy is undergoing massive structural transformation. Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India has taken various initiatives including towards ease of doing business, transparency in governance and regulatory reforms. India remains among the fastest growing large economies with an open investment climate, and has launched substantive economic and investment programs such as Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities, Model Villages etc. which offer huge investment opportunities for the global industry and business. Most significantly, the uniform Goods and Services Tax (GST) came into force on 1st July 2017, which simplifies and rationalizes the tax structure of India, and its significance for the foreign investors and businesses was even acknowledged by IMF. The Indian Parliament had earlier passed the Constitutional amendment for GST in 2016. GST provides a single tax framework across the country for all goods and services thereby mitigating double taxation and creating one window for market operations. More recently, the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) limits were also increased making it competitive for the foreign investors to invest 100% in arms production industry and in civil aviation with a limit of 49% in the National Carrier Air India.

The outcome of these initiatives is visible from India's improved global rankings on diverse indicators. India's rank has gone up in World Bank's Doing Business Report. The World Bank lauded the efforts made by India and predicted that India would be fast closing the gap between business practices in India and the best in the world. India is now ranked third in the list of top prospective economies for 2016-2018 in the World Investment Report released by UNCTAD. Our rank improved by 32 positions in World Economic Forum's 'Global Competitiveness Report 2016-17'. The "Make in India" initiative, aimed at making India a global hub of manufacturing, design and innovation has now made our country the 6th largest manufacturing country in the world. It is already a strong centre for R&D and innovation as well as technology start-ups. The India start-up industry has over 20,000 companies, creating over US \$ 80 billion of

value and employing nearly 325,000 people. A large number of young Indians are employed in the Indian IT industry, which itself is generating revenues of over US \$ 170 billion and exports of over US \$ 110 billion annually. In the past two years alone, the number of mobile phone units manufactured in India has seen exponential growth. Many small manufacturers of mobile phones are producing top quality products and making them available to the common man at a reasonable price, competing confidently with other established global brands. India is now marching towards a digital economy with minimum use of cash currency. India also launched an Aadhaar-based mobile payment application called BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money). Aadhaar is a digitally captured identity of Indian citizens.

For the benefit of foreign investors, an Investor Facilitation Cell has been created to guide and assist the investors. We are making it easier for companies to restructure and exit. The enactment and implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code is a crucial step towards ease of exit in India. New Commercial Courts are being set up to fast track cases involving commercial disputes. Arbitration laws have also been amended to expedite the proceedings.

We have set up the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund in collaboration with foreign funds to finance various development projects in infrastructure sector viz. up-gradation of roads, railways, ports and developing of industrial corridors across the country. With this, the average time for pending IPR application has been reduced to 18 months from earlier 5-7 years. It now takes just 1 month for completing Trade Mark registration — down from earlier 13-14 months. Similarly, environmental clearances for projects are put on fast-track and it takes not more than 180 days to get the necessary clearance. The aim is to further reduce this to just within 100 days. We want the world to "Make in India", to be a "Make for India" and "Make for the World".

Through the "Skill India" initiative, we are trying to synergize the skills with the market requirements. Many small towns are now imparting training in various skills to young Indians. It is the endeavor of the Government of India that the workers departing for working in foreign countries learn the skills and be safe — 'Prashikshit Baniye, Surakshit Rahiye'.

India is the largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices and spice related products. India's horticulture output — comprising fruits, vegetables and spices — crossed \$ 290 million in 2016-17. India now ranks third in farm and agriculture outputs, while agricultural export constitutes 10% of the country's exports. India is the largest producer of milk, accounting for 18.5% of the total world production. It also has the largest bovine population. India is the second-largest producer and the sixth-largest exporter of sugar. India is a leading country in coconut production and productivity in the world.

The Government is committed to creating and maintaining a robust countrywide network of road infrastructure. To this end, road projects of 10,000 km were awarded in FY 2015-16 and by the end of FY 2017, more than 6000 km of roads have been constructed. The ports and shipping sector had also witnessed tremendous growth in the last three years. The capacity of Indian ports had increased by 50 million tonnes in the last six months as a result of successful completion of ongoing projects.

India has made remarkable progress in the field of Science and Technology. This is evident from a range of achievements from the building of super computers to the development of indigenous space programme. Notable successes under the Space program include — Mars Mission, Lunar Mission (Chandrayaan), and Antarctic mission. After the success of India's Mars Orbiter Mission 'Mangalyaan', the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) successfully launched a record 102 satellites in a single mission last year. ISRO had also launched SCATSAT-1 for weather related studies and seven co-passenger satellites, including three from Algeria, one each from Canada and USA. Oceanographic research has also made huge strides. India believes in Technology with a human face.

India has always conducted its international relations with mutual respect and aimed at creating an environment of peace and security in which the world can be a better place for entire humanity to live with dignity and in prosperity. Our foreign policy is focused on a broad range of global issues that serve the larger interests of humanity. We work with other countries to tackle issues of common concern such as international terrorism, climate change, energy security, food security, and the reform of multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council. The significance of the Gulf and

Middle East region in India's foreign policy framework cannot be over-emphasized. We are each other's extended neighborhood, and peace, security and stability of countries in this region is imperative for prosperity and economic development of India. GCC is one of our largest trading blocs, meeting a significant percentage of India's crude oil and LPG requirements and hosts about 8.5 million Indians. In the fiscal year gone by, India-GCC trade was nearly US \$ 100 billion and accounted for about 15% of our global trade.

As regards India-Kuwait bilateral relations, as India's Ambassador, it is heartening for me to note that they have been growing from strength to strength, steadily maintaining an upward trajectory. India's relations with Kuwait are historical and encompass political, cultural, trade, economic and human resource fields. The traditional warmth and friendship was evident even when I had paid a visit to the Kuwaiti Embassy in New Delhi before setting upon my journey here, and during my initial interactions with Kuwaiti authorities in the last few days after reaching here. And on 22nd January, within two weeks of my arrival in Kuwait, I have had the honour of having an audience with His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and presented my Letter of Credentials from Hon'ble President of India.

Kuwait is a major and reliable crude oil and LPG supplier to India. It is important that both countries endeavor to maintain the crucial position Kuwait enjoys in India's energy security. We have consistently been among Kuwait's top trading partners and the total bilateral trade during the fiscal year had crossed US \$ 6.2 billion. Large Indian companies including Larsen & Toubro, Shapoorji Pallonji, Punj Lloyd, Essar, Simplex Project Ltd., Kalpataru Transmission Ltd. Tata Services India Ltd., Life Insurance Corporation of India, etc among others have been actively present in Kuwait. Kuwait is a major investing nation while India is highly rated profitable investment destination; this synergy, given the level of confidence in the relationship, needs to be explored further for mutual benefit.

Regular High level visits and other exchanges at Ministerial level between our two countries have helped in further strengthening and deepening our bilateral ties. The visits of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait to India in June 2006 followed by the visit of His Highness the Prime Minister of Kuwait in November 2013 have provided impetus to our growing bilateral relations. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait also paid a private visit to New Delhi in July 2017. Mr. M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs led the Indian delegation for the 3rd Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting in September 2017, while Minister of State Gen. (Dr.) V.K. Singh, paid a one-day visit as recently as the 10th and 11th January of this year. The latter had an extensive interaction with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait on various bilateral and regional issues, and also met with the Acting Labour Minister.

As I underlined at the outset of this message, people-to-people dimension is a very important pillar of India-Kuwait relations. According to figures from official sources, Indian nationals working in Kuwait at present are over 900 thousands, and constitute the largest of the expatriate communities based here. This is not a mere statistic but a statement of trust and confidence demonstrated by the Kuwaiti government and the people in the peace-loving and law-abiding nature of Indian people, and is reflective of Kuwait's respect for India's cultural and civilizational ethos. I would be amiss if I don't pay tribute also to the Indian community in Kuwait, which is present in almost all segments of Kuwaiti society, for its extensive contribution to the socio-economic development and prosperity of the friendly country of Kuwait and its people, and for playing its part in making India-Kuwait relations as vibrant as they are today. It would be my endeavor as India's envoy to Kuwait to work closely with the Government of Kuwait to ensure that this human resource and people-defined dimension becomes an important and positive instrument towards furthering our already blossoming bilateral relationship.

The welfare and well-being of the Indian Community in Kuwait has always been and will continue to be among the highest priorities of the Embassy. Measures such as 24x7 emergency access and the daily 'Consular Open House' will continue to be effective. It will be this Mission's endeavour, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti authorities, Community associations, and well-wishers & volunteers of the Community, to address all issues and ensure the welfare of the Indian Community in Kuwait so that it can continue to provide a strong impetus to India-Kuwait relations.

Once again, on this profoundly meaningful and important occasion of the Republic Day of India, I wish every Indian in Kuwait good health and happiness. I also take this opportunity to convey the Best Wishes from the Indian leadership for the continued good health and well-being of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the friendly people of the State of Kuwait.

JAI HIND.

Indian Embassy marks Republic Day



Photos by Mohammad Morse

Top: Ambassador K. Jeeva Sagar with Deputy FM Khaled Al-Jarallah, and (above), some of the ambassadors.

Iraq resumes paying damages to Kuwait: Al-Jarallah



KUWAIT CITY, Jan 25: The Indian Embassy hosted a diplomatic reception on the occasion of India's 69th Republic Day at the Palms Hotel, Kuwait.

The chief guest on the occasion was the Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah which was also attended by large number of ambassadors of various countries, Kuwaiti officials, diplomats and various personalities, embassy officials and media.

The Indian Ambassador to Kuwait HE K. Jeeva Sagar and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah cut the cake along with the Dean of Diplomatic Corps in Kuwait, the Ambassador of Senegal Abdulahad Mbaki.

In welcoming the dignitaries, Ambassador Jeeva Sagar spoke about the strong and deep-rooted ties between the two countries and thanked Kuwait for its support given to the large Indian community living here.

The traditional live Indian music and cultural performance added attraction to the event.

The flag hoisting ceremony will be held on Friday, Jan 26, 2018 at the Indian Embassy premises at 9:00 am. All Indians are requested to attend the ceremony.

Meanwhile, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said Wednesday the Iraqi government resumed paying compensations to Kuwait relating to the 1990 invasion.

Iraq started, a month ago, paying the instalments of the compensations agreed with Kuwait under auspices of the United Nations Compensation Commission, he said.

Payments

The payments will continue until 2021, Al-Jarallah told reporters this evening during a reception held by the Indian Embassy in Kuwait to celebrate the Republic Day of India.

On the property of Kuwaiti citizens in Iraq, he said contacts are underway with the Iraqi authorities to enable the Kuwaitis restore these property.

Iraq was forced to stop paying the instalments of the compensations to Kuwait in 2014 due to the security challenges that added strains on the state budget.

Al-Jarallah lauded as responsive the approach of the Iranian authorities to Kuwait's demand for releasing Faleh Al-Azmi, a Kuwaiti national detained in Iran.

"During my meeting with Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Ali Reza Enayati yesterday, I felt responsive attitude towards solving this issue as early as possible," Al-Jarallah said on Wednesday.

"Ambassador Enayati affirmed that the Iranian authorities are serious in addressing this issue," he told reporters this evening during a reception held by Indian Embassy in Kuwait to celebrate the Republic Day of India.

The Kuwaiti citizen was arrested last September for entering into a prohibited area in Iran by mistake while coming from Turkey.



Above: Some more photos from the reception.