

Dr Jaishankar thanks Kuwait leadership for prompt supply of medical assistance

India-Kuwait relations rooted in history, have stood test of time

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KUWAIT CITY, June 12: Traditionally India and Kuwait are enjoying friendly relations, rooted in history and have stood the test of time. Over the ages, geographic proximity, historical trade links, cultural affinities and presence of large number of Indians in Kuwait have continued to sustain and nurture this long-standing relationship.



Dr Jaishankar speaking to the Arab Times.

The Indian Minister of External Affairs Dr S. Jaishankar paid a three-day – June 9-11 – visit to Kuwait during which he held high level talks with high-level Kuwaiti officials, including a meeting with HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and also announced the establishment of an upgraded Joint Ministerial Commission.

The minister during the visit also thanked the Kuwaiti authorities for Kuwait's prompt supply of medical assistance to fight the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic in India. Dr Jaishankar spoke to the Arab Times in an exclusive interview.

Arab Times: During your visit the establishment of an upgraded Joint Ministerial Commission was announced. What does it mean to the relationship?

Dr S. Jaishankar: Our bilateral relationship is age old and time tested. Over the course of centuries, it has matured into a deep dynamic partnership. We have created institutional architectures to engage in a systematic manner and collaborate in various spheres of mutual importance. However, given the tremendous latent scope that exists in our partnership, we need a transfor-

mational change in the way we engage. The upgraded Joint Ministerial Commission in that sense is a reinvigorated tool that will help us deliver to the aims and aspirations of the leadership and the peoples of our two countries.

AT: Can you describe your visit to Kuwait? Can you give a brief discussion of meetings with Kuwaiti officials.

Dr Jaishankar: This is my first visit to this beautiful and friendly country of Kuwait. I have been received with so much warmth and affection, I am touched and honored. I had excellent official engagements yesterday with the leadership of the country. I had a call on His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait. I handed over a letter to him from Hon'ble Prime Minister of India addressed to His Highness the Amir of the State of

Kuwait. I held bilateral talks with my counterpart His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of State of Kuwait. We had a comprehensive dialogue touching upon every aspect of our bilateral partnership. I am glad that we signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on domestic workers.

The MoU, I believe is a significant development which will help in further streamlining manpower recruitment. I am excited to carry forward all the substantive and I must say progressive discussions we have had during the talks.

There is so much enthusiasm on both sides to catapult this relationship to a significantly higher level. His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Issa Al Salman, Minister of Commerce and Industry also participated in the discussions

on strengthening bilateral trade, economic and commercial engagements. I see strong complementarities between the two countries and look forward to achieving tangible results.

AT: Kuwait recently assisted India in its fight against COVID. There was commitment from the Kuwaiti leadership to ensure all possible assistance be delivered to India. How do you describe this special gesture?

Dr Jaishankar: Like I mentioned earlier, relations between India and Kuwait are millennia old. They are deep rooted, anchored in strong people-to-people relations and have been sustained and nourished by civilizational affinities and vibrant exchanges at all levels. We have been standing by each other's side at all times.

Last year, during the peak of the first wave of COVID crisis, India had responded to Kuwait's call for help by dispatching a 15-member medical team to augment the healthcare infrastructure of this country. In February earlier this year, India again immediately dispatched 200,000 doses of Made-in-India Covishield vaccine to Kuwait.

When we went through the second wave in India, we in turn benefited from Kuwait's generosity. It was one of the first and largest foreign suppliers of medical oxygen during this crisis period. I am extremely grateful to the leadership of the State of Kuwait. There was never a moment of hesitancy. This signifies the strength and depth of our relationship.

AT: This year marks the 60th year of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait. Do you have any special plans on this important milestone?

Dr Jaishankar: We have a confluence of milestones this year. This year

Kuwait celebrates its 60th anniversary of its Independence. And as the one of the first countries to have recognized Kuwait's independence, we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between our two countries.

This year is also the year where we have launched the 2-year long celebrations of the 75th Anniversary of Independence of India. Such confluence is a rare occurrence; and therefore it must be celebrated in an appropriate manner. When I say celebrations, I do not just mean festivals; I am talking in a broader manner.

We have just upgraded our institutional engagement architecture; I look forward to increased official interactions which will be a celebration of the strength of our institutional engagements. We are creating a new economic chapter with the launch of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Mission and other flagship programs of Government of India as part of a vision to build a New India. Kuwait is charting its own Vision of New Kuwait, one which has diversification of the economy at its core.

I look forward to increased business collaborations, trade events, and bilateral visits of high level business delegations from both sides and a whole lot more; this is what I would call celebration of the partnership of the future. And of course, we have centuries of shared civilizational history, so I would like to see celebrations in the domain of culture, art, sports and a plethora of other areas.

AT: Indian healthcare sector is world renowned; we have many Indian medical professionals working here in Kuwait. Is there any scope to explore a special partnership in this domain?

Dr Jaishankar: Yes, definitely. We also have an existing Joint Work-

ing Group and a MoU in the domain of medical cooperation. We are reinvigorating this existing mechanism. Healthcare is one area which I would call is the low hanging fruit. The time is also ripe to explore forging a special partnership in the healthcare domain as we battle the ongoing pandemic together. I am well aware of the excellent work being done by Indian medical professionals, including doctors, nurses and other para-medical staff in Kuwait. India is a leading destination for healthcare in the world. India's expertise, talent reservoir and world class offerings in this domain are noteworthy. Our two sides have already started discussing further enhancing collaboration in this important field.

AT: How do you see India's current and long-term role in the region; and also in the world as a major geopolitical-economic power?

Dr Jaishankar: This region is India's extended neighborhood. The region, and its peace and stability, has from times immemorial been and will continue to remain crucial for the progress and the development of our country.

We have shared views on many of the global issues, be it our commitment to reform the world order to reflect the realities of the 21st century and our keenness to work together to address contemporary challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, sustainable development and terrorism. We will continue to work closely with our partners in the region and deepen our engagement across all spheres.

As far India's role at the global stage is concerned, we will continue to be a major pillar of the rebalanced international world order across the political and economic domains.

India and Kuwait initial MoU on domestic workers' recruitment

New Joint Working Groups eyed



KUNA photos

Top: Part of the EPA team's inspection tour. Above left and right: Birds on the island of Kubbar.

Birds help maintain ecological balance: Dr Al-Zaidan

EPA determined to protect islands, biodiversity

KUWAIT CITY, June 12, (KUNA): The Environment Public Authority (EPA) said it is keen and determined to carry out inspection tours of the Kuwaiti islands periodically during the weekend, especially the islands that the people frequent during the summer such as Kubbar, Qaruh and Umm Al-Maradem to follow up on the situation of these islands.



KUNA photo

EPA team tours Kuwait's islands.

endangered species.

He explained the authority recently documented the nesting of terns (a tern is a seabird related to the gulls, typically smaller and more slender, with long pointed wings and a forked tail) in cooperation with the EPA 'lens team' on the Kubbar Island, where they are found in abundance and are considered one of the most important habitats in Kuwait.

He mentioned there are three species of terns that inhabit the island in the summer from May to August, -- Legema, white-cheeked and small crested -- indicating that these birds migrate to Kuwait in March and then leave south at the beginning of September, and few of them are seen in the winter on the

island of Kubbar.

He stated in July 2001, about four thousand birds were recorded in the hatchery in Kubbar, and indicated these birds travel thousands of kilometers, thus linking ecosystems in different parts of the world, where they feed on fish and crustaceans.

Dr. Al-Zaidan stressed the importance of preserving these birds, whose presence helps to maintain the ecological balance due to their role in transferring seeds and nutrients from one place to another and help preserve the environment of these islands to ensure the sustainability of the existence of these types of birds and the preservation of biodiversity.

KUWAIT CITY, June 12, (Agencies): During the recent visit of India's External Affairs Minister to Dr. S. Jaishankar to Kuwait to enhance high level political exchanges in the context of 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Kuwait, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between both sides within the ambit of a legal framework which streamlines the recruitment of domestic workers, says a press release issued by the embassy.

The employment contract ensures the rights and obligations of both the employer and the domestic workers and establishes a mechanism for 24 hours assistance to the employees of this denomination. It provides for the establishment of a joint committee for periodic review and assessment and to follow up the implementation of the MoU which will conduct annual meetings.

The MoU was signed on behalf of India by Ambassador of India to Kuwait Sibi George and on the part of Kuwait Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait Majdi Ahmad Al-Dhafiri put his initial on the document that will facilitate the employment of Indian domestic workers in Kuwait.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, State of Kuwait and Dr S. Jaishankar.

Kuwait and Indian has agreed to hold the first meeting of the India-Kuwait Joint Commission Meeting later this year and also to set dates for early meetings of the Joint Working Groups on Health, Hydrocarbon and Manpower. The two sides also agreed to set up new Joint Working Groups in other areas of cooperation.

On Thursday, Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah hailed the "depth" of his country's ties with India, saying bilateral relations remain on an upward trajectory.

Against the backdrop of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties, the Kuwaiti foreign minister, amid talks with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar, said relations have made tremendous progress across numerous fields.

As the world's second most populous nation fights an upsurge in coronavirus cases, fueled by an indigenous variant, the Indian minister said New Delhi appreciates the copious amounts of aid it has received from Kuwait to help cushion the blow from the pandemic.

Matters such as healthcare and food security were among the focal points of the talks, which also covered regional and international happenings, with both sides seeing more room for cooperation in crucial sectors such as trade and investment.

The talks also yielded a deal for the recruitment of domestic labor from India, one of many agreements that typify the growing proximity between the two countries.



Signing of the MoU

US envoy meets VO team

VO's Creative Hub set to welcome Kuwaiti talents

KUWAIT CITY, June 12: In the presence of Her Excellency Sheikhha Ohoud Salem Al Ali Sabah, Chairman of VO, Alina L. Romanowski, U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait, and Ms. Riham Al Ayyar, CEO of VO, the first Kuwait-based integrated youth platform for incubating young talents, has softly launched its all-inclusive, fully equipped, and high-tech Creative Hub. The studios will officially be inaugurated to welcome Kuwaiti talents on 20 June 2021.

The U.S. Ambassador's visit to VO's Creative Hub included an exclusive tour at the hub's studios and a meeting between VO's team and the U.S. Embassy's Commercial Officer, Deputy Counselor for Economic Affairs, and staff members.

"The idea of VO came in light of our strong belief that Kuwait possesses so many hidden talents and gifts that need to be unleashed and given the opportunity to grow. Kuwait is more than capable of positioning itself globally and diversifying its economy through its younger generations. Our country's resources are way beyond oil and gas. Kuwaiti youth are capable, they are full of talents, and can support the renaissance of Kuwait," stated H.E. Sheikhha Ohoud Al Sabah, Chairman of VO.

During their meeting, the U.S. Ambassador praised the efforts of VO and the potential of Kuwaiti youth and stated: "We're excited to hear about VO Studio's new model of inspiring young people and supporting them through the journey of their own creativity," said Ambassador Romanowski. "It's important for countries to create conditions where entrepreneurship and innovation are possible. This is where the creative industries can play a key role," she added.

"As a global leader in innovation and entrepreneurship, the United States is working to help Kuwait harness its greatest resource -- its youth

– to meet Kuwait's objectives under Vision 2035. The U.S. Department of State offers many initiatives and exchange programs that can support Kuwait's creative capital. Programs like American Film Showcase and Arts Envoy bring U.S. and Kuwaiti artists, filmmakers, and musicians together for collaborations and trainings that help Kuwait's youth build their skills and gain international exposure for their work," the U.S. Ambassador said.

Discussing the potential opportunities of collaboration between VO and the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait, the CEO of VO, Ms. Riham Al Ayyar, explained that VO is unlike any other youth platform. VO is building an upcoming generation that is equipped to go beyond borders and challenge all the constraints of Kuwait's development. "Our goal is to open a gateway of opportunities for Kuwaiti youth through collaborations with local and international entities so we can start exporting our talents to the global market," stressed Ms. Al Ayyar.

VO, the integrated youth platform and Kuwait's first talent incubator, was founded in July 2020 as result of a fruitful collaboration between Sheikhha Ohoud Al Sabah and Riham Al Ayyar aiming to empower local talents and position them in the global market.

The platform has already broken the record in supporting multiple Kuwaiti talents, including the production of a song bringing Kuwaiti talents and prominent celebrities, called 'BRAVO', that crossed above 13M views on YouTube in a week.

VO provides an academic program for Kuwaiti youth to identify and nurture their talents, an all-inclusive creative hub to empower and express their ideas, and a 'smart' app to promote their creative productions on a seamless, high-tech and efficient digital platform.



Sheikha Ohoud Salem Al Ali Sabah, Chairman of VO, Alina L. Romanowski, U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait, and Ms. Riham Al Ayyar, CEO of VO.