

Local

India seeks broader, more diverse bilateral ties with Kuwait: Dr Swaika

Indian ambassador eyes high-level visits between two countries

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India and Kuwait enjoy deep-rooted and dynamic bilateral relations and the effort is to make the partnership more diverse and broad-based to include hitherto untouched areas of cooperation, Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika said. "The India-Kuwait cooperation spans a vast number of areas as the countries share a longstanding, historical and time-tested relationship. High-level visits give an opportunity to arrive at mutual understandings and agreements on important issues," Dr Swaika said in an interview with Kuwait Times.

He spoke about his hopes and aspirations as the Indian ambassador to Kuwait, Kuwait-India bilateral relations, the embassy's consular services and diaspora issues, among other things during the interview. "We just had the foreign office consultations in New Delhi in the first week of May after a gap of over four years. We are looking forward to the visit of the foreign minister of Kuwait to India in due course. The last visits at foreign minister-level were of Kuwait's foreign minister to India in March 2021 and of India's external affairs minister to Kuwait in June 2021. We also look forward to highest-level visits from both sides at an opportune time," he said.

Talking about economic engagement between the countries, Swaika said it has grown over the years. "Just as Kuwait is central to India's energy security, India is crucial for Kuwait's food security. Our bilateral trade of \$12.5 billion is an all-time high, with a 95 percent jump in bilateral trade last year compared to the previous period," he pointed out. However, he

said that much of it is on account of hydrocarbon exports from Kuwait and exports of mainly food products from India.

"It is heartening to see exports of some other products from India like engineering goods, chemicals, 'Made in India' automobiles and spare parts, white goods, etc. It has a huge scope of diversification, particularly in view of the world-class products that Indian companies offer in a number of areas today. Clearly, there are very good possibilities in pharmaceuticals and medical devices, automobiles and related spares, electronic goods and components, high efficiency solar PV modules, textiles and apparel, white goods, ceramics and so on," Dr Swaika added.

Investments

The ambassador said the main potential area of cooperation is in the field of investments from Kuwait to India because of the attractive political and financial investment climate that the country provides. "The India-Kuwait investment seminar organized by the embassy earlier on May 8 in Kuwait presented the new India growth story. And we actually saw a lot of interest from our Kuwaiti partners in investing in India. There are some very positive experiences of Kuwaiti investments in India. KIA's investments in India are for that matter extremely significant and we are hopeful of further investments," Swaika said.

Elaborating on his aspirations and expectations as the ambassador of India, Dr Swaika said he would implement the priorities the Indian government has set for its relations with Kuwait. "And this is to fur-



Dr Adarsh Swaika

ther make our bilateral partnership with Kuwait strong and robust, which harnesses the potential of both sides. We are working closely with our Kuwaiti partners to achieve our shared objective of a much-strengthened partnership," he stated.

Diaspora matters

He said it is one of the priority foreign policy objectives of the government of India to ensure the welfare of its citizens abroad, and Kuwait, which has the Indian community as its largest expatriate community, is no exception. "We are grateful to the leadership and government of Kuwait for ensuring the welfare of the Indian community. The Indian community is a living bridge between our two countries. They have contributed immensely to the development of Kuwait and will continue to do so," Swaika said.

Asked about the recruitment of Indian nurses to Kuwait, the ambassador said: "Insofar as their recruitment is concerned, there are proper established mechanisms for their recruitment. And it is mostly working well." Indian nurses are by far the largest of the nursing community in Kuwait and they are known not only for their hard work, but for the empathy and care they bring along, he said.

Regarding the issue of Indian engineers, he said both sides are working seriously on this issue. "I will not go into further details. But I must admit that in my meetings with many senior Kuwaiti interlocutors including heads of various organizations, they have been extremely appreciative of the knowledge and skillsets that Indian engineers have been bringing to their organizations. In fact, a senior CEO said to the extent that one of the Indian engineers has been the guru of their organization," Swaika said.

Consular services

Being an embassy of a country whose citizens form the largest expatriate community in Kuwait, it is incumbent on the embassy to have very streamlined and robust consular processes and mechanisms, Dr Swaika said. "The embassy is constantly trying to improve the processes to make them more user-friendly, accessible and simple," he said.

Indian consular centers have been established since January 2022 in multiple locations in Kuwait so that applicants for passports, visas and other consular services avail of the services nearer to their home/workplace instead of coming to the embassy. A sound grievance redressal mechanism including 12 WhatsApp lines for various services is functional.

Dr Swaika explained open houses are being held almost every week in which he personally attends to tackle unresolved grievances of Indians. The embassy also commenced the new practice of consular camps to reach Indian nationals in far-flung areas. Three camps have already been held in Wafra, Jahra and Abdaly in the last three months.



KUWAIT: Ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria Dimitar Dimitrov and Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Nabil Al-Dakhil are seen during the celebration. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Bulgarian artists perform at the event.



Tens of people attended the event celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kuwait and the Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture.

Kuwait, Bulgaria to build on fruitful cooperation: Envoy

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Bulgarian Embassy held a ceremony on Wednesday to mark the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kuwait and the Day of Bulgarian Enlightenment and Culture. Bulgarian Ambassador Dimitar Dimitrov praised the depth of the historical and excellent Bulgarian-Kuwaiti relations. "Over the past 60 years, the two countries and peoples have succeeded in writing a wonderful history and build solid foundations of friendship, trust and mutual respect, until they became role models for relations between countries," he said.

Dimitrov described the political dialogue between the two countries as positive and constructive, pointing to the two countries' keenness to continue strengthening it. "We have achieved much through our bilateral cooperation in a large number of areas. The two countries have developed a reliable mechanism for trade and economic cooperation and will continue to develop them by working on projects, along with several new agreements," he said.

Ambassador Dimitrov pointed out common interest requires enhancing bilateral economic exchange, noting that Bulgaria has a stimulating investment environment and economic climate, a stable financial position, an easy tax system and a qualified workforce, in addition to easy access to European markets.

"The two countries can also build on our achievements in the field of education, as Kuwaiti graduates in the field of medicine from Bulgarian universities are among those who have contributed significantly to the advancement of the health sector in the country, and dozens of Bulgarian students have also developed their skills in the Arabic language at the

Language Center at Kuwait University," he said.

Regarding tourism, Dimitrov said: "Bulgaria is one of the popular and well-known tourist destinations for Kuwaitis. The Bulgarian Black Sea coast is very popular, and its mountain resorts provide excellent opportunities for tourism and recreation in all seasons. Bulgaria is also famous for its warm and mineral waters since ancient times and is a suitable environment for spa tourism."

The ambassador mentioned culture has a very important presence in bilateral relations with Kuwait and has a fundamental role in developing people-to-people relations. "The first bilateral document concluded between Bulgaria and Kuwait after the establishment of diplomatic relations was the cultural cooperation agreement, where a relatively small and active Bulgarian community was formed in Kuwait. It mostly includes medical staff, doctors, engineers, architects and teachers, where they are our ambassadors here and they have a fundamental role in developing our relationship and strengthening our close friendship," Dimitrov noted.

Fire force employee sentenced to 15 years for embezzlement

KUWAIT: The Court of Cassation sentenced Thursday an employee in Kuwait's fire force who embezzled KD 2 million over at least two years to 15 years in prison. The court has also ordered him to return the money, in addition to a KD 2 million fine.

The employee has allegedly sneaked increased his salary 15 times, of which he invested huge amounts in the purchase of prayer beads "mesbah" and rings. At one point, the man's salary reached KD 42,000, the highest wages paid to an employee in the public sector.

Authorities first learned of the man, who worked with the payroll department at the fire force, when detectives received a confidential tip alerting them to suspicions about his activities. The man's senior work colleague accidentally discovered a salary certificate with the employee's name on it that showed a sum higher than his KD 2,000 salary at the time.

Detectives investigated the claim and were able to uncover how the man could increase his salary without getting caught. The trick was to raise it gradually. He began by taking it from KD 4,000 to KD 9,000. Three months later, he was able to raise his salary to KD 17,000. Seeing that no one complained about his skyrocketing wages, the man finally raised it to KD 42,000.

Kuwait's envoy to UN warns of poor health conditions in Palestine

GENEVA: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain, warned of the health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, calling international community to shoulder its responsibility to protect the Palestinian people. This came in remarks to KUNA on the sidelines of the 76th session of the World Health Assembly, on the health conditions in the Arab lands occupied by the Zionist entity, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. Ambassador Al-Hain said that Kuwait has strongly condemned Zionist practices against the Palestinians, especially since the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization on the health situation in the Palestinian territories under Zionist occupation fully reveals massive amount of violations. He also called on the international community to work to protect the health services in the occupied Palestinian territories, while protecting the Palestinians from violations, including the denial of the right to health treatment, and to end the daily suffering of the Palestinians. The World Health Assembly is convening from May 21 to May 30, in the presence of representatives of ministries of health from various countries and international community organizations to discuss ways to strengthen health sectors and deal with related challenges. — KUNA

NBK marks International Museum Day

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) always shows commitment to supporting cultural activities, magnifying Kuwait's heritage, and highlighting its role, as a leading player in the private sector, in Kuwait's economic history. In this context, NBK Museum participated in the panel discussion and the exhibition organized by National Museum of Kuwait celebrating International Museum Day. As part of this participation, NBK exclusively showcased rare historical holdings dating back to 1952, when it was founded.

The exhibition is held at the Kuwait National Museum from May 18 until the end of the month, with the participation of Kuwait Heritage Society, International



Aeshah Al-Bader

Council of Museums (ICOM) – Kuwait and Quttainah Medical Museum.

Activities include displaying a variety of historical books and documents and valuable objects, which date back to 1952, when NBK was founded, which represent historical milestones in the bank's journey and the Kuwaiti economy.

Speaking on this, Aeshah Al-Bader, Museum Curator & Archivist, Public Relations and Event Management

at NBK said: "By participating in this kind of events, we aim to highlight the milestones of Kuwait's economic history through NBK Museum's archive collection including historical documents kept for decades."

"We seek to benefit from the expertise of Kuwait's museums as we are in the process of designing the NBK Museum. To this end, we communicated with several museums in Kuwait to learn from their expertise and engagements with local and international museum designers, as well as their experience in sustaining equipment quality and maintenance," she added.

"Sustainability is not limited to environmental issues, as we also have sustainability of knowledge, which we seek to accentuate through our participation in the exhibition. We aim to promote cooperation between different centers to maximize the benefit of all parties from the expertise and services of others," she noted.

The National Bank of Kuwait was



founded by virtue of Amiri Decree dated 19 May, 1952, as the first homegrown bank and first shareholding company in Kuwait and the Gulf region. Given that, NBK's history is closely connected to Ku-

wait's history and development, therefore the NBK story will not only chronicle the bank's development, rather the different stages of Kuwait's economic and social development.