**Kuwait FM visit to Pakistan**

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Foreign Minister of Kuwait Ahmed Nasser Al- Sabah arrived in Islamabad on two days’ official visit from 18-19 March 2021 with entourage of ministers representing different ministries including foreign affairs, health, interior, trade and industry. Purpose of the Kuwaiti FM visit was to expand bilateral ties between two Muslim brotherly countries. The visit was held in the backdrop of the bilateral meeting that was held during the 47th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Niamey, Niger in November 2020. Both sides agreed to closely to follow up on this meeting and in earlier in January this year, Kuwait’s Assistant Foreign Minister was in Pakistan to consult on building relations in foreign affairs, investment, economics, trade, security and interior affairs as well as overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development. Assistant Foreign Minister of Kuwait was also here for the third round of the bilateral political consultations (BPC), after a gap of four years. Building up on consultations, this visit of Foreign Minister was an important land mark in the history of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Kuwait. During his visit Kuwaiti Foreign Minister met with Prime Minister Imran Khan apart from having in-depth discussion with counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi. He has expressed to strengthen the bilateral cooperation in the areas of education, economy, trade, investment apart from building cultural ties and people to people relations. A road map was also agreed to build engagements to upgrade the bilateral relations to the next best levels through strengthening institutional mechanism of bilateral cooperation.

There are various areas where both Pakistan and Kuwait can continue building their support and cooperation. Kuwait has also extended support to Pakistan to fulfill its ever growing industrial demand of energy needs

Pakistan and Kuwait enjoy deep rooted diplomatic ties based on the shared faith and values, political, strategic and economic interests. Over the years since the inception of the relations, soon after the independence of Kuwait, bilateral ties are marked with the mutual cooperation, trust,upholding stronger ties in the Muslim world and building regional support to fight the pressing issues. Kuwait and Pakistan maintain diplomatic missions in both countries. Pakistan has a mission in Kuwait and Kuwait has an embassy in Islamabad. Pakistan and Kuwait are members of several important international and regional forums where both states support each other on issues of national importance. Both countries are members to Organization of Islamic Countries. One important pillar of the bilateral ties are diaspora living in Kuwait who are a source of support and strength for both Kuwait and Pakistan creating a bond of lasting togetherness. There are serving as doctors, nurses, engineers, lawyers and many other important positions in the country hence the remittances arehelping Pakistan economically robust. During Kuwaiti Foreign Ministers presence in Pakistan, there were discussion about Kuwait’s support in opening new opportunities for the Pakistanis especially those who are workers, professionals and others living in the country including solution to the visa issues.Both Foreign Ministers agreed to expand ties in the field of trade, economy, defense, health, manpower, export, imports and other important areas to give new touch to bilateral cooperation. Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi affirmed to further cement bilateral ties and strengthen people to people contacts between two countries. There were also consent from the Kuwaiti side to facilitate the outstanding Pakistanis building tomorrow’s Kuwait which is pacing its way forward in socio-economic development. Recently Pakistan has also announced that in Kuwait’s fight against the COVID-19, around 600 doctors will travel to the country contributing towards the long lasting partnership and good will. Both countries collaborated closely in health and food security.

Oil rich Kuwait is located at northerly edge of thePersian Gulf nestled between powerful neighbors including Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Having a strategic location especially with its massive oil reserves makes it one of the largest richest countries of the world in terms of per capita. Kuwait standout amongst the Gulf countries especially with its most open and diverse political system. In many ways Kuwait attracts foreign workforce for their infrastructural development. Pakistanis are one of the largest Diasporas living in Kuwait contributing towards building of today’s State of Kuwait. In June 1961, Kuwait became and independent and sovereign country with Shaikh Abdullah Al-Salim Al-Sabah as the 1st Amir. After 1960s till two decades, Kuwait remained the most established kingdom in the region. Amir of Kuwait, Late Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, has also played significant role in shaping country’s foreign policy and regional posture especially as being the foreign minister for four decades, and |Emir for nearly 20 years. As a result of the visionary leadership of late Emir, Kuwait has navigated through the challenging Middle East and gulf political and economic eco-system without meddling with any nation.During his reign, Kuwait pursued a neutral approach towards the regional politics by helping the countries to resolve conflicts and supporting the just cause especially Palestine. The new Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Sabah is a modest, kind and visionary man. He has remained serving at important government positions especially as Defense Minister in 90s during Saddam Hussein’ invasion to Kuwait. He has also remained as Interior and Deputy Commander of the National Guard before becoming the Emir of Kuwait. The main foreign policy principles of Kuwait are based on following the goals and principles of the international norms and laws especially to save guard the interests of the country in the international system.

On the other hand, Pakistan with its new government of Prime Minister Imran Khan is transforming the economic outlook of the country through reaching out to the global partners. Kuwait is an important ally of Pakistan especially in the Muslim world. Pakistan has played a significant role in supporting Kuwait during the Gulf War in the 90s and later rebuilding of the country. Pakistan was part of the coalition against the invasion of Kuwait. Pakistani military officers and medical contingent supported Kuwaiti Army during the war. Pakistan’s military personnel also supported mine hunting operation of the UN in Kuwait. Pakistan helped Kuwait with rebuilding of the country through manpower and institutional building. As Pakistan stood with Kuwait in those tough times, the country has also stood by Pakistan especially during the massive earthquake of 2005, floods of 2010 and various natural and other calamities. Kuwait was amongst few early responders and sent support to Pakistan during those tough days.

There are various areas where both Pakistan and Kuwait can continue building their support and cooperation. Kuwait has also extended support to Pakistan to fulfill its ever growing industrial demand of energy needs. Ties in the field of defense, both countries can reciprocally help each other. Kuwait can massively invest in Pakistan’s energy and banking sectors. China Pakistan Economic Corridor is another important and most lucrative opportunity for building bilateral partnerships. Kuwait can also benefit from Pakistan’s growing military hardware industry. Kuwait can also further invite excellent Pakistani professionals as manpower. These frequent high level visits provide both sides a time to reflect and help revise the ideas and projects to strengthen diplomatic, cultural, commercial ties and higher level. Although both countries shares mutually benefited bilateral relation, but a room of improvement is still open to strengthen bilateral relations. Pakistan-Kuwait DostiZindabad

During the meeting, the Pakistan’s Interior Minister Shaikh Rasheed said Kuwait will soon resume work visas to Pakistanis after decade long suspension. There is a huge number of Pakistani citizens working in Kuwait in different fields like science, health, banking and labor sectors. Under an agreement, Pakistan will send six thousands Pakistani medical professionals to Kuwait which is alreadysigned between the two Muslim countries.

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