Remarks of Ambassador at the 'Festival of India – Yarmouk Centre', March 18, 2023

Under Secretary of Ministry of Culture and Information H.E Mr Mazin Al Ansari and Chief Guest of today's event
Excellencies,
Friends of India in Kuwait,
Friends from media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Mas'aa al Kheir, Good evening,

I welcome you all to the Festival of India event in Kuwait. It is special because it is the first such event outside India in the post-pandemic period. This festival is a celebration of the rich cultural heritage of India and a testament to the strong and longstanding relationship between India and Kuwait.

2. The inaugural event of the Festival of India yesterday at the Salmiya theatre was a huge success with over 700 people attending it. I am sure you will not be disappointed today as we witness the three very unique and different genres of Indian dance and music.

3. The Qutbi Brothers are renowned for their soulful rendition of Qawwali, a form of devotional music that originated in India. Their music transcends boundaries and brings people together uniting them in the devotion of the almighty. The Hasan Khan and team will be presenting the vibrant Rajasthani Folk, which is a blend of music, dance, and storytelling. It is an expression of the rich cultural heritage of Rajasthan, a state in India that is known for its colorful traditions and vibrant folk culture. Finally, the Anirudh Verma Collective will be performing a fusion of classical and contemporary music, which I am sure will mesmerize us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. India and Kuwait have always shared a deep respect for each other's culture and traditions. Our cultural exchange has not only enriched our cultural ethos and traditions but has also played an important role in strengthening our bilateral relations. Indian films have been very popular in Kuwait traditionally and are still shown on KTV every week. The young Kuwaiti generation identifies and follows Bollywood films and stars a lot. The Oscars awarded recently to the song 'Naatu Naatu' from the Indian film RRR for the best original song and to 'The Elephants Whisperers' for the best documentary short film speaks of the international

popularity and recognition of Indian films, songs and culture. Today, as we celebrate the Festival of India in Kuwait, we are proud to showcase some of the most vibrant and diverse forms of Indian music and dance.

5. As we delve into the beauty and intricacies of Indian music and dance, let me take a moment to reflect on the historical and cultural ties between India and Kuwait. Our relationship dates back to ancient times when Kuwaiti used to go to India on wooden *dhows* carrying dates, Arabian horses and pearls to trade for wood, cereals, clothes and spices. What could be more significant then the fact that India rupess was legal tender in Kuwait till 1961. These age-old ties still continue to feed the current people-to-people contacts be it - cultural, business, trade or other ties. In recent times, Kuwait has been a key partner for India in the Gulf region. Our strong bilateral ties are evident in our trade, political, and cultural relations. Our people-to-people contacts have also been growing with the presence of a large Indian community in Kuwait. The Indian community has made significant contributions to Kuwait's economic and social development, and we are grateful for the warm hospitality and support extended to them by the Kuwaiti people.

6. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the leadership of the country His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister and the government and people of Kuwait for their patronage in promoting cultural exchanges between India and Kuwait. I would also like to extend my warmest greetings to all the performers and participants who have come all the way from different parts of India to perform in Kuwait. And last but not the least, my special thanks to the Dar-Al-Athar Al Islamiyaah for providing the auditorium today and for all the support in organizing this event.

Thank you.