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Greetings to all Indians in the UAE on the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti 2020, the 151st birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

A LOT TO LEARN FROM GANDHI

"Be the change you wish to see in the world"

Mahatma Gandhi

This is an occasion to recall the life of the Father of our Nation; as he himself said, "My life is my message". This is, indeed, so true as he was one of those extraordinary beings who always practised what he preached no matter how difficult it was for him and his family. In these trying times of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is useful to remember the core tenets of his beliefs to appreciate why he is referred to as Mahatma or great soul.

Mahatma Gandhi strongly believed that truth was the ultimate purpose of life and it can only be realised through *ahimsa* or non-violence. Truth was the end and non-violence the means. India strongly believes that by sincerely following the mantra of non-violence, the world can turn into a garden of peace, happiness and prosperity. To promote the concept of non-violence on a global scale, India worked with other countries at the United Nations to declare October 2 as the 'International Day of Non-violence'. It is in this same spirit that India has been contributing troops to United Nations peacekeeping missions and remains the largest troop contributor to date.

Mahatma Gandhi's foresight on climate change and sustainable development several decades ago was remarkable. He said, "The earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not every man's greed."

He emphasised the importance to "fulfil the present needs without compromising the needs of the future generation". In line with its commitment to climate action, India has achieved an annual reduction of 38 million tonnes of carbon emissions by the electrification of villages, providing clean cooking fuel to 80 million poor households, and introducing energy efficient measures. India targets to install 450 gigawatt of renewable energy and restore 26 million hectares of degraded land by 2030. The International Solar Alliance (ISA) initiative is another example of India's commitment to sharing the fruits of effective climate action. India is also committed to sustainable development for all based on the guiding principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* or 'the world is one family'.

Mahatma Gandhi had a dream of total sanitation for all. He wanted cleanliness and sanitation to be an integral part of living. To pursue this goal, on October 2, 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched a nation-wide cleanliness campaign — *Swachh Bharat* (Clean India). *Swachh Bharat's* aim was to provide sanitation facilities to all as a befitting tribute to the Father of the Nation during his 150th birth anniversary. India is proud to have already achieved full sanitation coverage in over 600,000 villages. In five years, India built over 110 million household toilets, which improved the rural sanitation cover from 38 per cent to 100 per cent, and overall 88 per cent of India has been verified to be open-defecation free.

To spread the message of Mahatma, the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Consulate General in Dubai have over the last two years undertaken various commemorative activities in collaboration with our community and UAE authorities. On October 2, 2018, the iconic Burj Khalifa in Dubai lit up with some wonderful sayings of Mahatma Gandhi, accompanied by

the music of one of his favourite bhajans, *Vaishnav Jan To*. The same evening in Abu Dhabi, a special lecture on Gandhiji was delivered by His Excellency Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE's Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence.

The Gandhi-Zayed Digital Museum, showcasing the vision of these two great leaders, was launched in Abu Dhabi on December 4, 2018 by our former External Affairs Minister, late Smt. Sushma Swaraj and UAE's Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The bhajan, *Vaishnav Jan To*, was also sung by the renowned Emirati singer, Yasser Habeeb, and a video of this was played during our Minister's interaction with the Indian Community in the same visit.

A fashion show featuring a prominent Indian and Emirati fashion designer was organised during our Republic Day reception on January 26, 2019 to promote *Khadi*, the favoured hand-spun fabric of the Mahatma, which he used to demonstrate the importance of self-reliance. A bust of Mahatma Gandhi was installed in the premises of our Embassy in Abu Dhabi in collaboration with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi. This was inaugurated on August 15, 2019 during our 73rd Independence Day celebrations, in the presence of a large number of our members of the Indian community.

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Emirates Post also paid tribute to Gandhiji by issuing special postage stamps to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary on August 24, 2019, in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. More recently, on September 29, 2020, the Embassy organised an online *Gandhi Katha* (Story of Gandhi) by eminent international speaker, Dr Shobhana Radhakrishna, to spread the ideals and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi in a creative form of a story, which is easy to understand for young minds. We were pleased that several school students across the UAE were able to enjoy and learn from this *Katha*.

While the 150th birth anniversary celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi will formally conclude today, his message will remain eternal, guiding us through all aspects of our lives. It is our sincere hope that everyone gets inspired by the life of Mahatma Gandhi, and his aim of universal peace through non-violence can be attained for the benefit of humankind.