

Remarks by His Excellency Shri Sibi George, Ambassador of India to Japan,  
at Swagatam India : Tourism Seminar on Gujarat State

(23 January 2024 )

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

Good Evening and Welcome,

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to all of you to today's special event: "Swagatam India : Tourism Seminar on Gujarat State"

Friends,

India and Japan have celebrated the year of 2023 as the India-Japan Year of Tourism with the captivating theme of "Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji." This was announced during a meeting between the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Fumio Kishida, in New Delhi in March 2023. Since then, we have been on a journey to promote tourism across India through our Swagatam India series.

India, with its rich history, cultural heritage, and diverse landscapes, stands as an irresistible destination for travelers from all around the world. Our nation offers a wide array of attractions, ranging from historical monuments and pilgrimage sites to wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, sea resorts, and venues for winter sports. India beckons tourists with diverse

experiences, including cultural, heritage, cruise, nature, educational, business, sports, rural, medical, and eco-tourisms. Our guiding principle is the traditional value of "Atithi Devo Bhava," which translates to "Guest is God," ensuring that every visitor feels welcomed, secure, and ready to explore our beautiful land.

Today, I would like to introduce you to the captivating state of Gujarat, a region of immense historical significance, cultural richness, and natural beauty waiting to be explored

Gujarat, often referred to as "The Land of Legends," is a state steeped in history, offering a plethora of historical, cultural, and natural gems that await your discovery.

The state proudly lays claim to the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, at Porbandar. This sacred place attracts countless pilgrims and history enthusiasts from across the globe, seeking inspiration from the life and teachings of this great leader.

Gujarat's historical tapestry extends to the ancient city of Lothal, one of the world's earliest known dockyards and a testament to the state's maritime prowess in ancient times. The ruins of Lothal offer a glimpse into a bygone era of trade and civilization.

Stretching out into the Arabian Sea, with a hint of the desert and with a coastline of 1600 kms long, Gujarat is renowned for its beaches, temple

towns and historic capitals. Wildlife sanctuaries, hill resorts and natural grandeur are gifts of Gujarat. Sculpture, handicrafts, arts, festivals also make the state rich. It has various kinds of ecosystem, ranging from marine biodiversity, inland wetlands, saline deserts to tropical deciduous forest.

Nature enthusiasts will find solace in the natural beauty of Gujarat, from the serene beaches of Dwarka and Somnath to the enchanting Gir National Park, home to the majestic Asiatic lions. The state offers a sanctuary for wildlife enthusiasts, birdwatchers, and nature lovers. Various iconic sites like 182 meter world's tallest statue "The Statute of Unity", built as an ode to the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the first home minister of independent India, who was responsible for uniting more than 560 princely states of the country to build the Republic of India have further boosted the tourist flow to Gujarat

Gujarat's cultural vibrancy is not confined to its history but extends to its thriving present. The state celebrates a plethora of festivals with great fervor, including Navratri, a grand dance festival that lights up the nights, and the colorful celebrations of Diwali and Makar Sankranti. These festivals provide an opportunity to immerse yourself in Gujarat's traditions and experience the warmth and hospitality of its people. Recently, UNESCO recognized GARBA , a form of Gujarati dance, with "intangible cultural heritage tag" in December 2023.

Additionally, Gujarat's cuisine is a gastronomic journey that should not be missed. From the delectable Dhokla and Thepla to the mouthwatering sweets like Mohanthal and Ghevar, Gujarat offers a culinary experience that will tantalize your taste buds and leave you craving for more

I extend a warm invitation to our Japanese friends to visit Gujarat and experience the fascinating culture and traditions that make it an incredible destination.

I thank each one of you for joining us today.

Thank you.

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