

Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George
at “Swagatam India : Next Destination Uttarakhand” event
at Embassy of India, Tokyo, 17 May 2024

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening,

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to all of you to today's special event: **"Swagatam India : Next Destination Uttarakhand"**

Friends,

We are celebrating the year of 2024 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. The Tourism Year 2024 celebrations are significant as we mark the 10th anniversary of India-Japan Special Strategic & Global Partnership signed in 2014.

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.

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

Dev Bhoomi of Uttarakhand is truly blessed and aptly termed as *Simply heaven*. It is nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Untouched nature in all its splendor — this is what Uttarakhand has to offer visitors. The state has been blessed with abundant natural beauty, across mountains and forests. The fact that almost half of its geographical area is covered by dense forest, makes it all the more remarkable.

The state is sprawled across the mighty Himalayas, which house a cornucopia of unique flora and fauna, pleasant climate, and a peaceful and serene environment. The major rivers of India, including the Ganga and the Yamuna, trace their origins to the many glaciers here. Snow-covered mountain peaks, like Nanda Devi, Badrinath, and Kamet, offer stunning views, while dense forests of oak, rhododendron, deodar, and pine leave one in awe.

Uttarakhand's helping and hardworking people are as diverse as its many natural features. Several indigenous tribes peacefully co-exist, each keeping alive its own distinct culture. Beyond its unique tourism offerings, Uttarakhand with its natural and cultural variety is a goldmine for historians, trekking enthusiasts, yoga practitioners, anthropologists, ornithologists, naturalists, linguists, geologists... You name the discipline, and the state has something to offer.

The state is a multi-faceted destination, from being sacred & religious to a heaven for adventure activities with rich biodiversity in its purest form. The geographical, cultural, and environmental diversity of Uttarakhand has positioned it as one of the most visited states in North India. The State is also recognized as the has Yoga Capital and is drawing the global interest in the ancient practices of healing such as Ayurveda and Yoga.

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

I want to express my profound gratitude to each and every one of you who joined us today for making this event successful & look forward to have fruitful discussions.

Thank you.
