

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Sibi George, Ambassador
"From the Himalayas to Mount Fuji: Strengthening the India–Japan
Tourism Connect"**

Embassy of India, Japan, July 24, 2025 | 1600-1700 Hrs (JST)

Dear

1. Mr. Takeshi NAKANO, Vice Commissioner, Japan Tourism Agency
2. Shri Jayesh Ranjan, Special Chief Secretary for Tourism and Culture, Government of Telangana
3. Mr. Rahul Chakravarty, Chief Operating Officer, Indian Association of Tour Operators & Mr. Deepak Kumarr Bhatnagar, CEO, Minar Travels Pvt. Ltd.
4. Mr. Tsuyoshi YAMAKAWA, Director of Market Promotion in Asia Office, Inbound Tourism Promotion Division, Japan Tourism Agency

It is my pleasure to talk to you about the vibrant and growing partnership between two ancient civilizations - India and Japan - through the lens of tourism. Today, we celebrate a theme that speaks not only of natural beauty, but of shared spiritual and cultural connect: i.e. "Connecting the Himalayas to Mount Fuji." These majestic peaks are symbols of peace, endurance, and harmony between India and Japan. I am glad to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Takeshi NAKANO, Vice Commissioner, Japan Tourism Agency which highlights the support of JTA for India-Japan tourism promotion.

[Note: Japan Tourism Agency (JTA) was founded in 2008 under Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. Its Commissioner, Naoya Haraikawa, co-chaired the 4th Joint Working Group (JWG) Meeting with Mugdha Sinha, the Director General of India's Ministry of Tourism on April 8, 2025 in New Delhi.]

The India and Japan relationship is not just diplomatic and economic - it is increasingly focusing on the people-to-people connect. In recent years, we have seen a steady increase in Indian tourists visiting Japan, drawn by its stunning cherry blossoms, meticulous traditions, advanced infrastructure, and warm hospitality. A new record was set in May 2025, with over 43,000 Indian tourists visiting Japan in a single month, - a remarkable increase compared to pre-pandemic levels. Several factors have contributed to this growth, including improved connectivity, targeted marketing efforts by the Government Agencies, Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) Delhi office, and the diverse

attractions Japan offers. As per JNTO in 2024, 233,000 Indian tourists visited Japan—a 40 per cent increase compared to 166,394 visitors in 2023, achieving a historic milestone. Indian travelers are increasingly seeking fresh, culturally enriching experiences, and Japan is perfectly positioned to meet this demand.

On the other hand, India is emerging as a must-visit destination for Japanese travelers seeking spiritual journeys, historical explorations, and natural escapes. From the Buddhist trail in Bodh Gaya and Sarnath - which connects deeply with Japanese Buddhist heritage - to the backwaters of Kerala, the deserts of Rajasthan, and of course, the Himalayas - India offers an unforgettable experience. India's revamped Incredible India portal offers curated itineraries, live event alerts, and cultural information – ideally tailored for Japanese visitors.

India has also been actively promoting its tourism potential in Japan, under the initiative of "Incredible India" and the theme #ConnectingHimalayaswithMountFuji. The Indian Embassy in Tokyo has been organizing numerous yoga sessions, promotional events, roadshows and familiarization trips to deepen engagement with Japanese travelers. Our Pavillion at the Osaka Expo is one of the most visited Pavillions, which has been promoting the 3Ts – Trade, Tourism and Technology very actively. Several Indian states have showcased their tourism potential at the Expo and audience are captivated by the same. Today we also have, Special Chief Secretary for Tourism and Culture, Government of Telangana, who will talk to you about the tourism and Buddhist connect in Telangana.

Speaking of cultural connects, the Embassy recently concluded a 12 hour non-stop cultural performance show, which attracted several Japanese dignitaries and visitors who are piqued by India's cultural offer and visit India to experience the same. We also have a Daruma special event this week, which also highlights our cultural connect. As a result of these continuous efforts, we have a lot of interest in the Indian markets from Japanese tour agencies which are guiding Japanese tourists to India. A renewed focus on wellness and spiritual tourism, with Ayurveda retreats, yoga ashrams and meditation centers are attracting an increasing number of Japanese visitors each year as these themes resonates strongly in Japan.

As we move forward, let us target more direct flights, easier visa procedures, more youth and cultural exchanges, and joint tourism circuits - perhaps a "Mount Fuji to the Himalayas" trail that symbolically and spiritually links our nations. Let us also promote Eco-tourism and sustainable travel, respecting nature - just as both our cultures teach us.

Let India and Japan walk hand in hand - from Kyoto to Varanasi, from Tokyo to Mumbai, from Mount Fuji to the Himalayas - in friendship, respect, and shared wonder.

Thank you.
