

**Embassy of India
Tokyo

**Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George at the Hanami Reception,
March 24, 2023**

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Ambassador of India to Japan, I bring to you all greetings from 1.4 billion people of India. I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to all of you to the Sakura Festival that is celebrated every year in the premises of the Indian Embassy. I am told that we are located in one of the most scenic areas of Tokyo and indeed this is one of the best places to view the Sakura flowers.

Yesterday, I returned from India after a short visit in connection with the official visit of His Excellency Prime Minister Kishida. India and Japan share traditionally warm and friendly relations which are cemented by close historical bonds and civilizational linkages. It is on this strong foundation that we have built over the years our relationship which encompasses not just cultural bonds, but also high-level political exchanges and a growing convergence on issues of economic and strategic significance.

In recent years, our relationship witnessed a complete transformation from mostly a G to G relationship into to a B to B relationship and then to our Special Strategic and Global Partnership. We are also witness to steady progress in our partnership within the bilateral and plurilateral framework like the QUAD which is key to stability and freedom in Indo-Pacific and beyond.

This year is of special significance in our relationship, as India is chairing the G20, and Japan is chairing the G7. This is the perfect opportunity for both countries to work together on our respective priorities and interests. Giving voice to the priorities of Global South is an important pillar of our G20 Presidency.

The visit of His Excellency Prime Minister Kishida this week further reinforced the Special Strategic and Global Partnership that our two countries established under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and former Prime Minister Abe in 2014.

During the visit it was decided to celebrate the year 2023 as India – Japan Year of Tourism under the theme ‘Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji’. I see the Cherry Blossom festival today as part of our endeavor to Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji. I invite my Japanese friends to visit India and experience for yourself the wonderful culture and traditions of India that truly make it an Incredible destination. I thank each one of you dignitaries for joining us today.

Thank you.
