

Embassy of India
Tokyo

Remarks by Ambassador of India to Japan Mr. Sibi George at the
event to mark the India – Japan Tourism Year 2023

Your Excellency Mr. Shimada, Your Excellencies Ambassadors, Madam Ambassadors, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Good Evening and Welcome,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to today's event when we present Padmavati- An Avatar, a Bharatnatyam Recital by one of the most renowned artists of India Madam Bala Devi Chandrashekhar. I thank and congratulate Madam Bala Devi Chandrashekhar and her team for the performance. I welcome each one of you who have joined us on this occasion.

This year marks the India-Japan year of tourism 2023 with the theme Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji. This was announced in March 2023 during the meeting between Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and of Hon'ble Prime Minister of Japan HE Kishida to India in New Delhi. Since then the Mission has been organizing a series of events to celebrate this year.

I am amazed to see the India connection in every city that I visited in this beautiful country. We have well established connect over several centuries. Daikokuten, Mahakal, Benzaiten, Goddess Saraswati, Kangiten Lord Ganesh. Almost every shrine that we visited we found a connect with India. I recall my visit to Hiroshima during the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister to Hiroshima for the G 7 summit. I visited the Saraswat temple next to the Itsukushima shrine in Miyajima and was happy to hear the head priest reciting Ohm Saraswtae Namaha. When you are in Hiroshima please visit the statue of Mahatma Gandhi that

was unveiled by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi during his visit for G 7 summit.

Excellencies, Friends,

Japan indeed is a great example for all to follow on how to attract tourists. Today several hundreds of thousands of Indian tourists visit Japan every year to enjoy its spectacular landscape and the beauty of its mountain setting. During my travels to the length and breadth of this landscape during the last six months, I realized that what makes this country the attraction of the world, is that here in Japan, every prefecture, every city, every small township and every village has something unique to offer. Wherever you go, you return with the satisfaction of having experienced something unique. The more you explore, the more you realize that there is much more you need to enjoy and explore.

This is exactly what you hear from those Japanese friends who have been to India. Many have spent a few weeks in some part of the country. Most speak about their experience and experiments in the Himalayas with Yoga and Ayurveda and their houseboat ride in the backwaters of Kerala. Many share their memorable experiences in Rajasthan , Varanasi and Agra, most of them are eager to visit India again. Ajanta and Ellora are a major attraction for Japanese tourists. I am getting great feedback from those who visit India this year to attend the over 200 meetings that we organize in various cities of India as part of the G 20 Presidency of India.

Dear Friends,

India is full of historical places and monuments, great shrines, and temples, places of pilgrimages, wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations, sea resorts, places of winter sports, etc. It offers a great variety of cultures, religions, festivals, languages, fairs, music, etc. India's tourism is as vast as it is varied. The Statue of Unity in Kevadia in Gujarat has become a major tourist destination. India as the birth

place of Lord Buddha and Buddhism is a great pilgrimage destination for our Japanese friends, particularly Varanasi which is the ancient city in India with a continuous cultural and civilizational connect with the past. A visit to India is the wish list of almost every Japanese. It is also in the wish list of most foreigners working in Japan. As Ambassador it is my job to move it from wish list to do list.

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.
