

**Speech by Ambassador Nagma M. Mallick at the Inauguration of
13th State Bank of India Cup- Inter Corporate Cricket Tournament
14th March 2026**

- Hon'ble Mayor of Sano City Mr. Yutaka Kaneko,
- Mr. Naoki Miyaji, CEO of the Japan Cricket Association,
- Mr. Senthil Kumar, CEO of State Bank of India in Japan,
- Professor D. Sakthi Kumar and his team at the Tigers Cricket Club,
- Corporate participants and cricket enthusiasts,
- Members of the Indian and Japanese community,
- Distinguished guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to join you today at the beautiful Sano International Cricket Stadium for the inauguration of the 13th State Bank of India Cup - Inter Corporate Cricket Tournament.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the organisers, particularly the Tigers Cricket Club, the Japan Cricket Association, and State Bank of India for bringing together such an impressive gathering of companies, players, and friends of cricket. The participation of 40 corporate teams reflects the growing enthusiasm for cricket here in Japan.

Friends,

Sport has a unique ability to bring people together beyond language, culture, or nationality. Cricket in particular has long been a bridge connecting India with many parts of the world. It is therefore wonderful to see the game gaining momentum in Japan, and especially here in Sano City, which has become an important hub for cricket development in Japan.

For this, I would like to thank Mayor Kaneko and the city of Sano for their consistent support in promoting cricket and fostering people-to-people exchanges between India and Japan. Such initiatives help deepen the bonds between our two societies in a very natural and enjoyable way.

In fact, cricket is increasingly finding a place even in our diplomatic conversations. During the recent visit of Japan's Foreign Minister H.E. Toshimitsu Motegi to India in January this year, cricket came up as a warm and engaging topic

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of discussion between India's External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar and Foreign Minister Motegi. Mr. Motegi handed over the Japanese cricket team uniform to our Minister and our Minister gifted him a cricket bat with signatures of all the national players of India. It was a light but meaningful reminder that sport can often become a powerful connector between our societies and cultures.

Today's event is particularly special because it combines sport, culture, and community. Alongside the cricket tournament, we are also celebrating Indian Matsuri- Holi, the festival of colours. Holi symbolizes joy, renewal, and friendship, and I cannot think of a better setting to celebrate it than on a cricket field where teamwork, camaraderie, and fair play are at the heart of the game.

Events like these beautifully reflect the spirit of the India-Japan partnership. Over the years, our two countries have built a strong relationship based on shared democratic values, economic cooperation, and deep people-to-people connections. Increasingly, these connections are also being strengthened through cultural exchanges, education, tourism, and of course sports.

Corporate participation in this tournament also highlights another important dimension of the India-Japan relationship- the growing economic engagement between our countries. Japanese and Indian companies are working closely together across sectors ranging from manufacturing and infrastructure to digital innovation and finance. Platforms like this tournament allow professionals from different organizations to connect in a relaxed and friendly environment.

I am also delighted to see the enthusiastic participation of the Japanese community in today's cultural programs, including music and other performances. Such exchanges enrich our mutual understanding and bring our cultures closer together.

To all the teams participating today, I wish you an exciting and spirited tournament. Whether you win or lose, the true victory lies in sportsmanship, friendship, and the memories you create together.

Let me conclude by once again thanking the organizers, sponsors, volunteers, and the city of Sano for hosting this wonderful event. I hope today's matches are full of energy, good competition, and great enjoyment for everyone present.

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I wish the 13th SBI Cup Inter Corporate Cricket Tournament great success and look forward to seeing cricket continue to grow in Japan.

Thank you very much.

Arigatou gozaimasu.
