

## **Embassy of India**

**Tokyo**

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### **Remarks by Ambassador Sibi George at the ICCR Foundation Day, April 10, 2023**

Mr Higuchi Takaaki, Mayor of Chiyoda city

Mr Shunichi Tokura, Commissioner, Cultural Affairs MEXT

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Congratulations to all on the occasion of ICCR Foundation Day, which we celebrate every year on April 9. I am happy to see so many people joining us today to celebrate this important day.

The Indian Council for Cultural Relations was founded in 1950 by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, India's first Education Minister. Today when we celebrate its foundation day, it is also an occasion to remember its founder. For his invaluable contribution to the nation, he was awarded India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna in 1992. I pay my homage to Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was one of the foremost leaders of the Indian freedom struggle.

Dear Friends,

Today you visit any part of the world, you see an India connection. I attribute it to two main reasons; one the strength of our civilization and our diverse culture. India is one of the oldest, largest and perhaps among the very few continuous major civilizations in the world. India, that is Bharat, is a nation of unity in diversity. The diversity is our strength. Every diverse culture in India flourishes, every religion and region in India flourishes. With this Indian culture abroad also flourishes.

In Japan, I see it at every part of this beautiful country that I visited in the last few months. Let me quote from the speech that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi delivered during his visit to Japan in May this year. He said and I quote: "Our relationship with Japan is that of Buddha, of wisdom, of knowledge. We have Mahakal, so there is Daikokuten in Japan. We have Brahma, we have Bonten in Japan, our mother is Saraswati and so we have Benzaiten in Japan. Our Mahadevi is Lakshmi, so there are Kichijoten in Japan. So we have Ganesha and Japan has Kangiten. If there is a tradition of Zen in Japan, then we consider meditation as a medium of action with the soul." Unquote. India's spirituality is attracting the entire world today. Yoga and Ayurveda have become the symbols of India abroad. I was in Marshall Islands last week, I was very happy to start my morning with a curtain raiser for International Day of Yoga celebrations in Majuro, with a group of dedicated Yoga enthusiasts.

Second, the vibrant Indian Diaspora abroad is contributing immensely in promoting Indian culture. Today we have over 30 million Indian diaspora abroad. This diaspora has branched out all over the world today. Well assimilated, it is studded with Nobel Laureates, Booker Prize winners, Emmy Awardees, distinguished physicians, engineers, businessmen, IT experts and Artists and spiritual leaders. The diaspora wherever they are, have produced successful entrepreneurs, beloved educationists, astronauts, stars in every profession and good civic minded citizens. This diaspora is now nurturing a second and third generation including in Japan that will surely outshine its parents, at the same time cherishing the fine traditions and culture of India.

ICCR is contributing immensely in strengthening the connection between India and Japan. In fact, in Japan, ICCR is actively present. ICCR had always supported us in organizing the International Day of Yoga. ICCR is a major partner in our efforts to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Japan and the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence. In coming weeks

and months we have planned a series of cultural activities in Japan in partnership with ICCR and Indian Cultural Network (ICN) in Japan.

Over the years ICCR has become the most prominent arm of India's cultural engagement with the world and also its most important instrument for soft power diplomacy. It act as a bridge between Indian culture and the world. It has taken so many initiatives that helps showcase India's rich civilizational traditions and cultural diversity abroad. Almost every Japanese artist whom I met has a connect with India and ICCR.

Dear Friends,

We are now in Amrit Kaal a journey to India's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence. In our Embassy here, we plan to celebrate India every day, celebrate every language of India, every tradition and festival of India. We are now preparing for the International Day of Yoga celebrations on June 21. During the visit of Prime Minister Kishida to India last month, both India and Japan agreed to celebrate 2023 as India - Japan Year of Tourism, with the theme Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji. I invite you all to join us in celebrating India in Japan, and thereby contributing in further building our Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Thank you.

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