

## Check Against Delivery

### **Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Sibi George at the Carol Evening, Celebrating Diversity of India, at Embassy of India on 20 December, 2024**

Hon'ble Madam Yuko Kishida,

Hon'ble State Minister of Justice His Excellency Mr. KOMURA Masahira,

Excellencies, Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Hon'ble Ambassadors, Diplomats, Dear Fathers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Evening and Welcome to the Embassy of India.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to today's carol evening, a celebration of India's diversity. I thank each one of you for joining us today. I welcome Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Excellencies Ambassadors our friendly countries and Ambassadors from MoFA and each one of you who have joined us today.

I thank Choir of St Ignatius church, Choir by the Malayalee community and our Embassy team for joining us today. I know the effort they have put in to perform today. I thank our beloved Fathers and each one of the choir teams who made this event a reality today.

I am happy to mention that we are celebrating this evening as part of Namaste Japan.

Dear Friends,

As Ambassador of India to Japan, I bring to you all greetings on behalf of 1.4 billion people of India, i.e. 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the total population of the world. I know it is a lot of greetings.

It's not just the number that I represent, it is also the diversity of India. It is an eye opener to most, when one gets to know the Indian civilization. A civilization that gave rise to ancient religions such as Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and also Sikhism. In fact, India is home to many other religions, including Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism.

In fact, Christianity reached India and flourished in India since 52 CE, in the first century immediately after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, when one of the disciples of Jesus Christ St. Thomas travelled all the way to Kerala. Christianity came to India much before it reached most parts of Europe. In fact, Christianity in India is older than Christianity in Rome. India today has over 40 million Christians much more than the total population of many of the countries. While talking about religions in India, let me quote from the speech that Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi delivered during his visit to Japan in May last 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.

Dear Friends,

In Japan, like every other part of the world, one comes across a vibrant diaspora from all over India. They are symbols of India's unity in diversity. We Indians come from different parts of India, we speak several hundred languages, we worship different Gods, we celebrate different festivals, we eat different foods, we wear different clothes, but there is a feeling of oneness and a common consciousness, a civilizational bond, that keeps us together, make us all proud as Indians.

In fact, in India, we celebrate all festivals, whether it is Onam or Bishakhi, Holi or Dusharah, Deewali or Rakshabandan, Christmas or Easter, Eid ul Fitr or Eid ul Adha these are all celebrated as festivals of India, celebrated by one and all. This unity in diversity is something we are always proud of. I am happy to mention that in this Mission we celebrate each of these festivals of India. When I welcome you today to this carol evening I proudly bring greetings to you from that ancient land of India, i.e. Bharat, an ancient but continuous civilization where all major religions and cultures thrive and flourish. In fact, this year we celebrated Deewali in thirty-five Universities all across Japan.

Dear Friends,

One word about, India Japan relationship. Most of you present here today are connected with India - Japan relations. Many of you have contributed in building this relationship. Some of you have spent several years contributed in

building Indian - Japan relationship from a G to G to B to B and the most important element of people to people connect. Today we have a Special Strategic and Global Partnership where we engage bilaterally, plurilaterally and multilaterally including by deepening our QUAD partnership as we work together for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Dear Friends,

I am happy that we could organize this Carol Evening today in Japan, as part of our theme 'Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji' and Namaste Japan. In coming weeks and months we will continue to celebrate in Japan, every festival of India, we will remember and pay homage to every national hero of India and we will celebrate India every day here. Today, I conclude by joining my leadership and our 1.4 billion Indians in wishing all of you and all friends of India in Japan festive greetings, Merry Christmas and an advance happy New Year 2025.

Once again I thank Madam Yuko Kishida, State Minister of Justice Your Excellency Mr. KOMURA Masahiro, Excellencies, Hon'ble Ambassadors and their Spouses, Diplomats, Dear Fathers, Dear Friends, Dear Children thank you for joining us today.

Thank you and good evening.

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