

Remarks of Ambassador at “Celebrating India-Japan Relationship - Focus: Andaman & Nicobar Islands”

Date: 29 March 2024

Time: 1400-1530

Venue: Auditorium, Embassy of India

Mr. Keshav Chandra, Hon’ble Chief Secretary, Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Mr. D.V. Swamy, Chairman, Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA)

Mr. Kiyoshi Kimura, President , Sushi Zanmai Group

Honorable dignitaries, esteemed colleagues, and friends from both India and Japan,

A very good afternoon to you all. It is my great privilege to welcome you today at the Embassy of India, Tokyo, as we gather to celebrate and further strengthen the enduring bonds between India and Japan, with a special focus on the beautiful Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Friends,

We are celebrating the year of 2024 as the India-Japan Year of Tourism with the captivating theme of "Connecting Himalayas with Mount Fuji." This was announced during a meeting between the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, and the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Fumio Kishida, in New Delhi in March 2023. Since then, we have been on a journey to promote tourism between our both nations. The Tourism Year 2024 celebrations are also significant as we mark the 10th anniversary of India-Japan Special Strategic & Global Partnership signed in 2014.

India and Japan share a Special Strategic and Global Partnership rooted in shared values, mutual respect and a common vision for a peaceful and prosperous future. The growth of this partnership has been remarkable over the years. It covers cooperation in a wide range of areas, from trade & investment and infrastructure development to critical and emerging technologies and defense & security. Today, the focus of the event is on Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

The Andaman & Nicobar Islands, located at the juncture of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea, serve not only as a strategic gateway for India but also embody a paradise of natural beauty and biodiversity. These islands are a symbol of India's rich cultural heritage and ecological wealth. With their pristine beaches, clear blue waters, and lush tropical forests, these islands offer a perfect destination for tourists seeking tranquility and adventure.

The vast potential of the Andaman Islands remains a hidden treasure, relatively unknown to the international community, awaiting global recognition and exploration. Today, we are here to explore new avenues of cooperation, particularly in the areas of

tourism and marine products, which are vital to the economy of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

The surrounding waters are abundant in a variety of fish and other marine life, which support both local consumption and are potential drivers of export markets. The Marine Products Export Development Authority has been actively promoting the islands as a hub for the fishing industry, emphasizing sustainable practices that help preserve our marine biodiversity while boosting the local economy.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands represent a unique opportunity—a chance to develop a world-class tourism and marine products hub that respects and preserves its natural heritage. With the continued support and cooperation of our domestic and international partners, especially Japan we are on course to unlocking the full potential of these islands. It is important to note that NEC Corporation contributed to the milestone project of connecting Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the mainland of India through an optical submarine cable, that has enhanced the network connectivity of the islands significantly and has had substantial impact on the local economy.

I hope that the presentations today by senior officials of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and MPEDA will shed light on the immense potential of these islands in boosting tourism and expanding the marine products sector. These endeavors not only promote economic development but also cultural exchange and mutual understanding between our nations.

Let us continue to work together towards a brighter and more collaborative future.

Thank you.