

**【Ambassador Suzuki】**

Upon the conferral of Decoration of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, I extend my warmest congratulations to Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh. The Decoration conferred upon Dr. Singh is in recognition of his enduring contribution to promoting the mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and India.

We appreciate that Dr. Singh has earnestly dedicated himself to deepening the bonds between Japan and Manipur. During his tenure from 2012 to 2017 as President of Manipur Tourism Forum (MTF), Japan and Manipur rediscovered each other and got even closer, going beyond our historical ties.

This place is where the souls of numerous Japanese soldiers are laid to rest. Dr. Singh recognized the importance of passing down the history and nurturing a future-oriented relationship. Dr. Singh proposed to hold the Ceremony of 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Imphal Campaign, the first commemoration event in Manipur. Since then, Manipur Tourist Forum has been holding the ceremony almost every year, and these ceremonies have reminded both the Manipuris and the Japanese of our historical ties and the friendship established since then.

Another symbolic achievement of Dr. Singh is his enormous contribution to building the Imphal Peace Museum. The Museum which was opened in June 2019 could not have materialized without his leadership and support. The museum will remain as a place where our people can come together, reflect on the history and think forward. I would like to thank Dr. Singh for this enormous achievement.

I would once again like to express my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Singh, and look forward to working closely with him in the future.

**【Dr. Thangjam Dhabali Singh】**

I am honoured to have been conferred the prestigious “Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays” for the year 2020 and it is one recognition that will be deeply cherished forever. I am humbled to be placed in such distinguished ranks as the past honourees, all of whom have made important contributions in their chosen fields and worked for the promotion of Japanese culture and history. I did not expect that my small contribution for the promotion of tourism of my place and my association with the Imphal Peace Museum, the construction of which was made possible with the assistance from Nippon Foundation and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation with full support of Japanese Embassy in India would be acknowledged in the way they have been. For this, I am truly honoured and thankful.

Special thanks go to all those who had been with me in my endeavour, in particular, members of Manipur Tourism Forum (MTF) and Second World War Imphal Campaign Foundation (ICF) who had been instrumental in providing a definite direction to the promotion of tourism and for giving a boost to tourism activities. It started with the commemoration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Imphal in 2014 when we joined hands to organise the event which was attended by dignitaries from Japan, Britain and Australia. So, when we came up with the idea of a museum in memory of those who perished in our own backyard in World War II, it was well appreciated by all, considering how it could serve as a strong reminder to the people and future generations of the importance of world peace. This collective dream of MTF and ICF was finally realised with the inauguration of the Imphal Peace Museum in June 2019.

My association with Imphal Peace Museum and with it, Japan and its glorious history, has been an important learning experience. Words truly fail to express how humbled I feel for the acknowledgement of what I still consider a small contribution. I know I still have much to learn but with the continued support and encouragement from my fellow colleagues from MTF and ICF, I am sure we will be able to explore more areas to strengthen our friendship with Japan.