

**【Ambassador's Remarks】**

I have the distinct honour and privilege to celebrate the conferral of Foreign Minister's Commendation upon both of you, Madame Ajanuo Belho and Madame Saveena Gadhoke. I am truly delighted that your long-standing contribution and efforts in deepening the mutual understanding between Japan and India, have been complimented in the form of this Commendation. Respecting the COVID-19 protocols, the ceremony today has been restricted in various ways and the number of participants has been limited, but I am pleased to confer this Commendation personally upon you.

Madame Belho,

You had been greatly contributing to Japan and the people of Japan through collecting bones of valiant Japanese soldiers buried in Kohima, Nagaland, which was one of the stages of the Battle of Kohima during World War II.

Since you started your activities in 1975, you had been supporting the Recovery and Repatriation Missions conducted by the Government of Japan in 1970s and even recently in 2018 and 2019. I truly express my gratitude for your generous support. Because of your warm support, many families of our Japanese soldiers could heal their hearts.

In April 2019, Madame Belho established the "Indo Japan Friendship Association, Nagaland" towards promoting youth and cultural exchanges with the aim of furthering friendship between Japan and India. It is expected that the association will continue to play a central role in cementing friendship between Japan and India in the future.

Madame Gadhoke,

You have been earnestly dedicating yourself towards the promotion of both Ikebana and Bonsai in India for decades.

Since you started the activities at Sogetsu School of Ikebana and Ikebana International early in the 1990s in Delhi, you have served in every possible capacity in promoting Ikebana culture to the younger generations of India, and in furthering mutual understanding between Japanese and Indian people. One of your most commendable contributions was the goodwill demonstrations organised to support those who were afflicted by the Great East Japan Earthquake while you were serving as the President of Ikebana International

Delhi Chapter in 2011. You had also succeeded in facilitating the Ikebana International World Conventions held in Tokyo in 2012 as a member of the executive committee of the Convention.

You have been contributing toward promoting awareness of Bonsai among the Indian people. The first-ever International Bonsai Convention, held in Delhi in the early 2000s was so successful owing to your dedication as the President of Indian Bonsai Association. It is my greatest pleasure to see that the Bonsai culture has now steadily getting rooted all over India.

Madame Belho and Madame Gadhoke,

It is my earnest hope that as a person who has made numerous accomplishments, you will continue to contribute towards the expansion of the bilateral relations between Japan and India.

In celebration of your achievement, I would like to request everyone to kindly join me in giving her a big round of applause. Congratulations, Madame Ajunuo Belho and Madame Saveena Gadhoke.