

Address by Mrs. Namrata S. Kumar
Ambassador of the Republic of India to the Republic of Slovenia
On the occasion of
National Ayurveda Day
29th October 2024

**Director of the Botanical Garden of University of Ljubljana, Dr. Joze Bacovic,
Distinguished guests, Dear friends from the Indian community and friends of
India in Slovenia,**

Namaste, Dober Vecer

Very warm welcome to you all at the opening of the exhibition on Ayurveda plants organised on the occasion of Diwali celebrations. We are organising this event in collaboration with the Botanical Garden.

Dear friends,

Diwali, also known as Deepawali, meaning "row of lamps," is one of the most significant festivals in India. Celebrated by Hindus and people of all faiths, Diwali is marked by the lighting of lamps. This tradition symbolizes the coronation of Lord Rama upon his return to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile and his victory over the demon king Ravana, representing the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness, and peace over conflict.

When an individual's well-being is deeply connected to the goodness of the people and nature around them, it's essential to express gratitude to those indefinable forces that all cultures recognize as the Almighty. On Diwali, we seek the blessings of deities for health and prosperity. As we offer prayers to Goddess Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of prosperity and wealth, we ask for her blessings for a prosperous and happy life. To achieve prosperity, good health is paramount. Thus, a day before Diwali, we pray to Dhanvantari, the god of health. This day is recognized by the Government of India as National Ayurveda Day, commemorating and preserving the ancient science of medicine and promoting its benefits.

This interconnected way of life between humanity, nature, and the divine is at the heart of Indian cultural values. It guides individuals to strive not only for personal and societal prosperity but also for the preservation and conservation of the natural world.

Speaking of health and prosperity, I would like to highlight some key initiatives launched by our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi. These initiatives include the International Day of Yoga in June 2015, National Ayurveda Day in October 2016, Make-in-India and Vocal for Local in 2020-21, Mission LiFE in 2022, and Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam in 2023. Rooted in India's 4000-year-old cultural and civilizational ethos, these initiatives view humans not as isolated entities but as interconnected beings. This interconnectedness extends to family, society, country, and nature, including animals, plants, and natural resources like water, air, and light. Since our

existence depends on these surroundings, it is our moral responsibility to respect, protect, and preserve them.

Dear all, these initiatives are pivotal steps towards empowering the people of India with both vision and tools for making India the third largest global economy by 2030. They encapsulate the essence of a responsible nation that preserves traditions while embracing modernity, focusing on the well-being of individuals at both national and global levels. The impact of these initiatives is profound, as they mobilize the people of India, who are the driving force behind the country's steady economic growth, currently surpassing 6%.

Ayurveda, also known as Phytotherapy in the western world, is a crucial sector contributing to India's vision of becoming a developed nation (*ViksitBharat*) by 2047. In 2019, the Ayurveda market in India was valued at 335 billion Indian Rupees and is expected to exceed one trillion Indian Rupees by 2025. This ancient knowledge system not only preserves our 4000-year-old tradition of natural medicine but also integrates seamlessly with conventional and modern medical systems and the pharmaceutical industry in India. It empowers the local economy, addresses environmental and climate protection, and significantly contributes to the national economy.

Today, we have the pleasure of inaugurating a captivating exhibition of Ayurveda plants, showcasing specimens found both in India and Slovenia. This exhibition underscores a unique connection between our two nations. The event has been made possible with the enthusiastic support of the Botanical Garden of Ljubljana, particularly its Director, Dr. Joze Bacovic, who embraced the idea during my visit just two months ago and personally oversaw the exhibition's creation. This display highlights how the same plants, valued for their medicinal properties, thrive in both countries and are used for similar remedies and treatments, playing a significant role in their respective cultures. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Director and his dedicated team for their efforts.

The event would not have been as festive and beautiful without the active involvement of our small community in Slovenia. Over the past four years, the Indian community in Slovenia has grown from a few hundred to thousands. I take this opportunity to welcome this vibrant diaspora to the annual Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas (PBD), organized by our government in India every two years. The 18th PBD will take place from January 8th to 10th, 2025. I encourage you all to register and participate in full strength.

In addition to the Indian diaspora, we invite our Slovenian friends to participate in the Bharat ko Janiye Quiz. This quiz is an excellent opportunity to learn more about India, including fascinating aspects of Ayurveda. The exhibition today can provide valuable insights and possibly help prepare for the quiz.

Today's exhibition is a gift from the Embassy of India to the Botanical Garden and all its visitors. We hope to increase the number of Indian plants that can thrive in this region's climate. On this note, I am pleased to invite Dr. Anton Vezjak, the head of the ISKON organization in Slovenia, to present a special gift - a holy basil (*Tulsi*) plant - to the Botanical Garden.

Once again, it is my great pleasure to have you all with us today. As we celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights, and look forward to Christmas next month, I wish you all a prosperous, joyous, and bright life. Today, on Ayurveda Day, I also wish you good health and long life.

Please enjoy the exhibition, learn about ayurveda, its benefits, the Indian music and Ayurveda food.

Thank you
Khvala lepa
Namaskar