

‘Culture a bridge between 2 nations rooted in values’

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Lucknow: UP and Japan are looking to deepen their engagement beyond economics, with discussions underway to expand cooperation in tourism, culture and people-to-people exchanges.

The roadmap for collaboration was discussed during a meeting between a Japanese delegation from Yamanashi prefecture, led by its vice-governor Junichi Ishidera and UP govt officials headed by tourism and culture minister Jaiveer Singh.

Addressing the gathering, Singh said culture remained one of the strongest bridges between

BUZZ India and Japan, rooted in shared civilisational values and a deep Buddhist legacy. While economic cooperation between the two sides was important, he said tourism and culture offered a more enduring foundation for long-term engagement.

Singh highlighted UP's unique position in the Buddhist world, mentioning that the state brings together all major stages of the life of Lord Buddha within a single



ON THE TABLE: Invest UP team and Japanese delegation hold talks in Lucknow on Wednesday

geography. Apart from Bodhi Gaya in neighbouring Bihar, key Buddhist sites such as Sarnath, Kushinagar and Kapilvastu are located in UP.

He said the state was well prepared to welcome Japanese tourists and investors with improved hospitality infrastructure, investor-friendly policies and a focus on emerging sectors such as wellness tourism, which is witnessing growing global demand.

Additional chief secretary for tourism, culture and religious affairs, Amrit Abhijat said concepts deeply rooted in Japanese philosophy — such as Ikigai, Wabi Sabi and Zen — resonate with India's spiritual traditions and could shape new pathways for wellness and cultural tourism. He also highlighted the continued presence of Japanese Buddhist institutions in Sarnath

and Kushinagar as evidence of a long-standing spiritual connection.

Beyond pilgrimage, Abhijat highlighted opportunities in sports tourism, citing golf courses in Agra, Lucknow and Varanasi, as well as scope for cuisine-led experiences, literary exchange, medical tourism and learning-based travel. Singh said there was a strong possibility of organising a UP festival in Japan around April-May, which could serve as a platform to showcase the state's culture, heritage and tourism potential to Japanese audiences.

Ishidera said that since the signing of an MoU in Dec 2024, UP and Yamanashi prefecture held a series of meaningful engagements aimed at building a sustained partnership. He said Yamanashi aspires to act as a gateway for UP in Japan, promoting its tourism destinations and broader engagement.

He also confirmed that a delegation of over 200 Japanese members is scheduled to visit UP in Aug, with visits proposed to Varanasi, Sarnath and other key cultural sites, focusing on spiritual, cultural and policy engagement.