

Miss Japan Priyanka in town soon



Guwahati, June 14: Priyanka - winner of a beauty pageant, an interpreter and an elephant trainer - will be in Assam.

Say *kon'nichiwa* (hello in Japanese) to Priyanka Yoshikawa, Miss Japan 2016.

Born in Tokyo to an Indian father and Japanese mother, she will be in Assam to promote tea and spread awareness on elephants on the invitation of Sonitpur-based group Balipara Foundation and participate in the Eastern Himalayan Naturenomics Forum from November 1 to 5.

"Assam is one of the most famous tea production areas in the world and tea is also part of the Japanese cultural heritage. The Japanese tea ceremony is a symbol of humility, respect and kindness towards our guests and hosts. Going to Assam to promote Assam tea will be a pleasure for me," Priyanka told **The Telegraph** in an email.

She said she would visit as many tea gardens as possible during her stay in Assam, especially "where elephants roam large, free and safe".

"I want to spread awareness on the cause for the betterment of the people and our rich biodiversity. I want to see the elephants at home, in the forests, where they ultimately belong. I look forward to my trip," she added.

Balipara Foundation founder-trustee Ranjit Barthakur, who lives in Mumbai, felt Priyanka would be "perfect symbol" of friendship between India and Japan and decided to invite her to the November event. "Young voices like Priyanka is our hope for a 'preserved' tomorrow," he said. "I was privileged to meet Barthakur this month. I am excited and humbled to work with the team for this exciting initiative," a statement, issued by Balipara Foundation on behalf of Priyanka, said. Last week, she met Assam Tourism Development Corporation managing director Kausar Hilaly in Mumbai to work out their collaboration for encouraging eco-tourism and cultural-heritage tourism between India and Japan through Assam at the forum.

Balipara Foundation representatives Sangeeta Menezes and Dalip Pande were also present in the meeting.

A certified elephant trainer, Priyanka is passionate about the well-being of elephants. She hopes to foster eco-elephant tourism between India and Japan.

She will be accompanied by Harry Hakuei Kosato, founder and managing director of La Ditta Limited, promoter of Japanese arts and culture in India for the last 10 years through The Cool Japan Festival, India's largest Japan event, during the visit.

"I will be back in India starting with this trip where I am seeking opportunities in Bollywood and the fashion scene working with Amazon.com's creative director and fashion designer Narendra Kumar. I envisage great collaboration between Japan and India," Priyanka said in the statement.

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