

**Address by H.E. Ms Neeta Bhushan, High Commissioner
on the occasion of MahaKumbh Mela & significance of UP & Uttarakhand states
(28th February 2025)**

Namaste! Kia Ora!

Swami Ram Govind Das, Dr Arpita Das and Mr Jim Gounder,

Members of the DevBhoomi Association of New Zealand,

Community Leaders & distinguished Guests,

Dear Friends,

Ladies & Gentleman!

It is a great privilege for me to stand before you today as we gather to celebrate the profound spiritual significance of the MahaKumbh. This sacred event holds a deep place in the hearts of millions of people around the world, and it is with great pride that we come together to honor this remarkable tradition.

2. Maha Kumbh Mela is the largest congregation of faith and culture known to humankind, a remarkable gathering that attracts millions from across the globe. The event offers a special opportunity for personal growth and cultural exchange, allowing everyone to experience India's rich traditions, rituals, and values. It is a living symbol of the unity that defines India's spiritual and cultural heritage. The Kumbh Mela occurs every 12 years and is considered the "festival of festivals" in India, drawing a mix of sadhus, ascetics, pilgrims, and tourists. This year MahaKumbh is especially important because it happens only once every 144 years, marking a special celestial alignment of the sun, moon, and Jupiter.

3. Uttar Pradesh, the host of this grand event, has always been a land of Gods, Incarnations, and Divinity. Home to three out of seven 'Saptapuris', or sacred cities in India, including Ayodhya, Varanasi and Mathura, it is here that Lord Vishnu incarnated as Lord Ram in Ayodhya and as Lord Krishna in Braj. Varanasi, another jewel of this sacred state, is where Lord Shiva resides, embodying the spirit of spirituality and reverence. Uttar Pradesh is not only a land immersed in Hindu traditions but also a cradle of

Buddhism and an ancient centre for Jainism showcasing the harmonious coexistence of various faiths.

4. I am also taking a moment to acknowledge the indelible role of Uttarakhand in shaping the spiritual and cultural fabric of our nation. Uttarakhand is a land of stunning natural beauty and revered religious sites, serves as the very heartbeat of India's spiritual consciousness. The sacred town of Haridwar, where the Ganges flows with divine grace, has been a pilgrimage site for countless generations. The sacred rivers, temples, and holy sites of Uttarakhand continue to inspire millions of pilgrims who journey here seeking peace, enlightenment, and spiritual renewal. Uttarakhand is not only a destination for those seeking spiritual solace but also a growing hub for Uttarakhand Tourism. Whether it's trekking through the magnificent Himalayan ranges, visiting revered temples like Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri, or simply embracing the tranquility that this beautiful state offers, Uttarakhand is a treasure trove for those who wish to connect with nature and the divine.

5. As we celebrate the spirit of the MahaKumbh, I wholeheartedly invite you to explore the wonders of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh—two states where spirituality, culture, and nature converge in the most harmonious of ways. Let us come together, with hearts full of devotion, to promote the richness of India's cultural and spiritual heritage, and share this treasure with the world.

6. In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to Girish Sajwan Ji and the members of the DevBhoomi Association of New Zealand, whose efforts continue to uphold the values of spirituality, peace, and unity. Let us all, together, celebrate this sacred occasion and work towards fostering greater understanding, respect, and love for our shared spiritual heritage.

7. Thank you, and may the divine blessings of the Lord Shiva continue to illuminate our paths, bringing peace and harmony to the world.
