

Remarks of Ambassador Hiramatsu
at the Bengal Global Business Summit 2017
on 20th January 2017

Honourable President of India, His Excellency Mr. Pranab Mukherjee,
Honourable Governor of West Bengal, Mr. Keshari Nath Tripathi,
Honourable Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ms. Mamata Banerjee,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me congratulate Hon'ble Chief Minister and your team for successfully organising this colossal event. It is my great pleasure to be here at the inauguration of the third chapter of Bengal Global Business Summit as a Partner Country representative.

Japan-India special strategic global partnership has witnessed constant and steady development. Our two Prime Ministers share the same futuristic vision and have established firm mutual trust. I would say we are enjoying the strongest relations between the two countries ever in the history.

The government of Japan and Japanese companies are contributing to the policy of the government of India such as Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, and Clean India.

Japan is also focusing on enhancing connectivity in the Indo-Pacific region. Last year Prime Minister Abe announced the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy", under which we will promote the confluence of "the two seas" and "the two continents" spreading from the Pacific Ocean and to the Indian Ocean. West Bengal is the centre of the connecting point between India and South East Asia. The BIMSTEC area surrounding the Bay of Bengal has huge potential for economic development.

To this end, improving the connectivity in this area is critical. Japan is assisting improvement of connectivity, with projects such as road development in the north-east; and the initiative of the Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth-Belt in Bangladesh. We will further advance these projects in close collaboration with India and other relevant countries in the region.

West Bengal and Japan enjoy long and strong cultural, economic,

and historic bonds: Last year was the 100th anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore's first visit to Japan. In celebrating this, I visited Visva Bharathi University in Santiniketan where the Poet Tagore started, for the first time, Japanese language education in India.

This year marks the year of friendly exchanges between Japan and India which aims to promote people to people exchange. I hope that many Japanese tourists will visit beautiful places in West Bengal such as Darjeeling, and more Bengali people will enjoy the various charms that Japan can offer.

With respect to development assistance, Japan and West Bengal have strong records of cooperation. Japan is financing various projects such as Kolkata Metro, flyovers, solid waste treatment plants, forestry management, and drinking water infrastructure, as well as the successfully completed pump-up water storage hydropower generation plant in Purulia.

As of now in West Bengal there are about 20 Japanese companies out of which a dozen companies have their factories operating in this State. These companies are all contributing to the development of the local community. Please allow me to name a few examples:

Tata Hitachi Construction Machinery Company has a factory in Kharagpur, employing 500 people, manufacturing large sized hydraulic shovels and mining machines since 2009. Recently they started exporting their products to the Middle East and Africa from the port of Kolkata.

Nippai Shalimar Feeds produces floating fish feeds for aqua farming of carp and shrimps, in its factory in Kharagpur. The company is giving advice to local shrimp cultivators how to produce more effectively.

Mitsubishi Chemical Corporation has long produced PTA, Purified Terephthalic Acid, in Haldia. Last November the company decided to transfer its majority stake to a Bengali origin firm, the Chatterjee Group. Since the Group also has stake in the neighbouring factory of Haldia Petrochemicals, we can now expect management synergy in the area, while the jobs of around 1000 employees will remain secure.

Kawasaki-Rikuso Transportation is trying to develop smaller-sized solar-powered cool storage system for agricultural products in West Bengal. This May their first pilot storage will be installed in the Krishak Bazaar in Singur, assisted by the Japanese governmental aid.

The success of these Japanese companies was not possible without

strong leadership of the Honourable Chief Minister. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to your constant support to Japanese companies.

I am sure the success of the Japanese companies here in West Bengal will not only contribute to local industrial development, but also attract new investments from Japan.

To conclude, I hope this summit will further accelerate economic activities in West Bengal by providing business and investment opportunities.

Thank you very much.