

Remarks by Ambassador Hiramatsu at Advantage Assam  
on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018 in Guwahati, Assam

Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi,  
Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, Mr. Tshering Tobgay,  
Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. Sarbananda Sonowal,  
Union Ministers, Political leaders, Leaders from industries,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good Morning.

It is indeed my pleasure to join you to inaugurate the “Advantage Assam with the presence of Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, here in Guwahati, the portal of the North-Eastern Region of India.

The North-Eastern Region is the place where India's “Act East Policy” and Japan's “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” converge. Japan has been cooperating with road connectivity and other development projects in the region and will continue to support India's efforts to develop the North Eastern Region as a gateway to South-East Asia. Japan's commitment in this regard is symbolized in the establishment of Japan-India Act East Forum, which was launched last December. The Forum is a platform to discuss and identify areas and projects of further cooperation between Japan and India in the North-Eastern Region. We will keep this dialogue moving forward, so as to expand our cooperation in the North East, deepen friendship between Japan and this region, and reinforce Japan-India relationship even further. The Government of Japan will continue to assist the development of Assam in various fields such as road connectivity, water supply, sewage, and electricity.

I had the honor of meetings with Hon'ble Chief Minister Sonowal a couple of times. I am impressed by his energetic and dynamic attitude, and his enthusiasm seeking the growth of Assam. I am convinced that the State of Assam will steadfastly develop under his strong leadership.

Last November, the Minister of Finance of the Government of Assam, Dr. Sarma, led a delegation to visit Japan for investment promotion, and met with Japanese companies. We are also pleased that big Japanese Business Delegation headed by the Chairperson of Japan Chamber of Commerce interacted with Assamese authorities 10 days ago in Delhi. I hope today's event will further encourage the Japanese companies

to expand their business opportunities in Assam, so that they can directly share the economic profits with the local societies. In fact, a leading Japanese venture business, Terra Motors, is actively operating in Guwahati, producing Electric Rickshaws. Japan stands ready to contribute to the development of smart cities and food processing among other areas.

We are keen to promote people-to-people exchanges as well. Assamese universities are already conducting joint researches with Japanese counterparts. I am especially happy that IIT-Guwahati has opened a Japanese language course in January last year. Japanese language education is one of the areas that Japan and India are committed to promote. I hope more and more talented and motivated young people in India study Japanese language, and get involved in business with Japanese people.

The North Eastern Region is a treasure trove of sports talent. I am sure that people-to-people exchanges can become more active in the field of sports as well, in view of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games that will be held in Tokyo.

In addition, I would like to inform you that the Government of Japan recently eased the level of the security advisory to the Japanese travelers, with respect to the City of Guwahati, to the same level as Delhi, the lowest level in India. This is in reflection of the stability achieved in the last couple of years, with fewer incidents. I hope this will further encourage Japanese people to visit the beautiful city of Guwahati.

To conclude, once again, let me celebrate the inauguration of the “Advantage Assam”. We will keep working on deepening the relationship between Japan and Assam, and turn the potential of the North Eastern Region into reality.

Thank you very much.