

Address by H.E. Mr. Kenji Hiramatsu, Ambassador of Japan to India,
at the National Day Reception of Japan in New Delhi,
on 13 December 2017

- Distinguished Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Opening)

- Good evening to you all.
- Thank you very much for taking the time today to attend this reception in celebration of His Majesty the Emperor's Birthday.
- December 23rd marks the 84th birthday of His Majesty, and I would like you to join me this evening in wishing for his continued good health and happiness.

(Japan-India relations)

- The eventful year 2017 is now drawing to a close. This year was characterized by the historic visit of Prime Minister Abe to Gujarat in September, and by the visibly enhanced people-to-people exchanges on the occasion of the Year of Japan-India friendly exchanges.
- Prime Minister Abe's visit to India was truly a remarkable one. Through the visit, I realized how close our relationship has become in recent years and how much this friendship is cherished by the peoples of both countries today.
- Based on the bond of trust between Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Modi, Japan and India have dramatically expanded the scope of cooperation and broadened their ties politically as well as economically.
- The strategic dialogue between the two Prime Ministers on regional

and global issues is becoming increasingly deep and substantial. India is an obvious, essential and most reliable partner for Japan to work together with, in coping with the challenges that the world faces today. Japan places India at the centre of its Indo-Pacific strategy.

(Economic relations)

- In the economic and business spheres, the relationship between Japan and India has leapfrogged. Indeed, Japanese direct investment into India has almost doubled from 2.6 billion US dollars in FY 2015 to 4.7 billion US dollars in FY 2016. This clearly illustrates the huge upsurge in Japanese companies' interest towards entering the Indian market and expanding their operations.
- Japan and India are also discovering new avenues of collaboration, for instance, in the retail, services sectors and start-ups. We are proud to see how Japanese brands penetrate the Indian market and become more popular all over India.

(People-to-people exchanges)

- A strong political and business relationship cannot be sustained without the core foundation of mutual understanding through people-to-people exchanges at all levels.
- Through my work as Ambassador, I have nurtured friendships with many Indian people. I am glad to see all my friends expressing their feelings of goodwill and respect toward Japan. Now is the time to share these positive sentiments toward each other more widely and transform them into a long-lasting friendship
- To this end, this year 2017 we celebrated the Year of Japan-India Friendly Exchanges. I hope more and more Indian people were able

to develop affinity towards Japan through the various events we organized this year.

- We will not stop our efforts here, but will continue and accelerate them further to encourage people-to-people exchanges through tourism, youth exchanges, sports and Japanese language education.
- Our relationship has been thriving in all areas, and in keeping with this momentum, we are now determined to move full-steam ahead towards achieving further concrete outcomes in the coming years.

(Closing)

- In closing, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of 20 Japanese companies, whose names you can see on the board behind me. They have very kindly supported and enriched this National Day reception today through the exhibition of their products and new business initiatives in India. There is also a special booth here providing useful information about studying in Japan.
- Let me conclude my address by thanking all of you for extending your cooperation and friendship to us so graciously throughout the year.
- I hope you enjoy the evening.

(End)