

Address by Ambassador Kenji Hiramatsu
“Road Ahead : Frontier of Japan-India Relationship”
April 4th, 2018

Shri Bhupender Yadav,
Smt Poonam Mahajan and Honorable Members of Parliament,
Dr Sanjaya Baru, Secretary General of FICCI,
Dr Jyotsna Suri, Co-Chair of FICCI’s Forum of Parliamentarians Council,
Distinguished Guests,

[Introduction]

It is a great pleasure to address you at this special occasion organized by FICCI’s Forum of Parliamentarians. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to FICCI’s secretariat and leadership, especially Dr. Suri for your kind offer to host this gathering at your beautiful Lalit Hotel.

It’s been about 16 months since FICCI’s India-Japan Forum of Parliamentarians was re-vitalized and re-launched. I recall with great satisfaction so many exchanges and interactions we’ve had to further promote Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership. I look forward to continuing and expanding our joint endeavor.

In this regard, it is my pleasure to make a small announcement today. Our Embassy and FICCI’s Forum of Parliamentarians agreed to jointly organize a Dialogue with Indian States, in which we will hold seminars to highlight geo-political and geo-economic aspects of cooperation between Indian States and Japan that are of interest to Indian MPs, industry and academics in States. The details including the timing, location and frequency are yet to be determined, but we are hoping to show that our bilateral relations have gone deeper and wider to a level to have strategic engagements at the State level.

[Visit of External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj to Japan]

Honorable Members of Parliament and Distinguished Guests,

I was in Tokyo last week, mainly to accompany External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj for her official working visit to Japan. Cherry blossoms in Tokyo reached full bloom slightly earlier than usual, as if they welcomed the visit of Madam Swaraj.

Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono and Madam Swaraj held the 9th Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, where the two Ministers discussed ways to further strengthen our bilateral relationship, and held discussions on regional issues including North Korea, as well as global issues. At the press conference following the talks, I signed and exchanged notes concerning the provision of four yen loan projects including the Mumbai Metro Line 3 Project, in the presence of the two Ministers.

Madam Swaraj also made a call on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, where both sides emphasized the depth of the bilateral relationship we have achieved in recent years. They talked about Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan later this year, which will serve as another landmark for our bilateral relationship.

During the trip, I was impressed by External Affairs Minister's personal commitment to strengthen our Special Strategic Global Partnership and very happy to receive her in the best season of Japan with cherry blossoms in full bloom.

If I could add a word about another senior-level engagement that just happened today, Japan-India-US trilateral DG-level meeting was held in Delhi, which followed the trilateral Foreign Ministers Meeting last September and quadrilateral meeting with Australia last November. In the meeting, the officials explored practical ways to enhance cooperation in areas including maritime security and maritime domain awareness, connectivity and infrastructure development, counter-proliferation, counter-terrorism, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. They also agreed to remain engaged and strengthen cooperation in support for a free, open, prosperous, peaceful and inclusive Indo-Pacific region. Thus, I am sure the representatives of the three countries, which sit at the core of Free and Open Indo-Pacific, had in-depth discussions about our joint response to regional challenges.

[Road Ahead: Frontier of Japan-India Relationship]

Now let me turn to the main subject of my address: The Road Ahead and Frontier of Japan-India Relationship.

As you witnessed in the historic visit of Prime Minister Abe to Gujarat last September, Japan-India relationship has entered a new era. It was during Prime Minister Modi's first state visit to Japan in 2014 that we elevated our relationship to the Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Only three and half years have passed since then, but I feel we have made a dramatic progress in strengthening our partnership. The significant achievements we have made in recent years include 1) the convergence of strategies; 2) the launch of High Speed Railway project; 3) Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy; 4) the fundamental upgrading of our economic relations, and 5) the significant deepening of people-to-people exchanges.

Although these developments were unprecedented, I must tell you that we have yet to achieve the great potential of Japan-India relationship, which was described by Prime Minister Abe as “the most promising bilateral relationship in the world”.

Indeed, as we all see, the Indo-Pacific region is a place blessed with opportunities and potential, but it is also a place where various challenges are arising.

We are now working day and night to fulfil the potential, address the challenges, and further deepen and strengthen our partnership in various areas. Tonight, I would like to talk about five such areas from which we are hoping to have new signature projects.

[1. Defence and Security Cooperation]

The first priority area is defence and security cooperation. We have made tangible progress in recent years; for example, our forces are increasingly engaged in joint exercises such as Japan- US- India Malabar Exercise, and we identified specific areas of cooperation in defence equipment and technology – Robotics and Unmanned Ground Vehicles. However, we need much more in this field to demonstrate the strength of our Strategic Partnership.

Currently, we are working hard to further enhance exchanges and cooperation between our respective forces in the air, sea and land. It should be noted in this context that Japanese Chief of Joint Staff, Katsuyoshi Kawano, visited India already twice this year to engage with his counterpart and senior leadership of Indian Government.

We are hoping that bilateral joint exercises and multilateral activities should become more frequent and wide-ranging, as well as more advanced in enhancing our interoperability including on anti-submarine aspects. In the future, we will witness expanded joint exercises and cooperation, not only in the maritime domain but also in such areas as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and

counter-terrorism. We are also working to strengthen cooperation in expanding maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific region.

Cooperation on defence equipment and technology is also a crucial area to be expanded. Japan has traditionally taken a rather cautious approach in this field, but with the new Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology approved by the cabinet in 2014, Japan is determined to contribute to international peace and security more proactively through appropriate overseas transfers of defense equipment and technology. By doing so, we can also strengthen security and defense cooperation with our ally and partners. With India, we have started technical discussions for future research collaboration in the areas of Unmanned Ground Vehicles and Robotics. Our readiness to provide our state-of-the-art US-2 amphibian aircrafts has been appreciated by the Government of India as symbolizing the high degree of trust between the two countries. We look forward to more tangible outcomes in the future.

[2. Strategic Connectivity including India's North Eastern Region]

The second focal area is what we call the strategic connectivity. The concept is two-fold: the first is to share and spread our common principles on connectivity infrastructure; and the second is to materialize concrete cooperation in the Indian Ocean sphere and beyond. Working with India on connectivity enhancement is one of the pillars of our “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.”

As our two Prime Ministers confirmed, Japan and India share the principles that connectivity infrastructure projects should be implemented “in an open, transparent and non-exclusive manner based on international standards and responsible debt financing practices, while ensuring respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, the rule of law and environment”. Both countries believe in the importance of “quality infrastructure”. It is a welcoming trend that these principles are gaining renewed attention in the international arena, as the elements of these principles were echoed by the United States and other partners in the region.

Based on these principles, Japan and India are working together to extend cooperation on quality infrastructure development in the Indo-Pacific region including Africa.

Japan and India are also enhancing connectivity within India. As a prime example in this regard, Japan and India launched the Act East Forum to advance economic development including connectivity in India's

North Eastern Region as well as to foster people-to-people exchanges. The first meeting of the Act East Forum was held last December, co-chaired by the Foreign Secretary and myself. In the Forum, we discuss wide-ranging areas of potential cooperation. Building on our history of cooperation in the North East in such fields like roads, electricity, water supply and sewage, as well as afforestation and community empowerment, I am confident that the Forum will serve as a springboard for expanding cooperation in this strategically and economically important region.

[3. Cooperation in “Make in India”]

The third priority area is cooperation in “Make in India” and economic modernization. Japan has long contributed to the development of the manufacturing sector in India. Maruti Suzuki’s success is a hallmark of such cooperation.

In recent years, we have witnessed a dramatic rise in our FDI to India as well as a steady increase in the number of Japanese companies operating in India. Our investment earlier concentrated on the infrastructure and manufacturing sectors but now has diversified into retail, service and other sectors. India has been named the most promising mid- to long-term investment destination for Japanese companies. Now that most of large Japanese companies have established their bases in India, we are encouraging our small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to invest here. In late January, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the largest business organization in Japan with 1.25 million membership of which 95 % is SMEs, dispatched a high-powered mission to India.

The mission was warmly received by FICCI. Mr. Akio Mimura, Chairman of the Chamber, was profoundly impressed by the vast potential of this country and promised me to encourage its members to seriously look into the possibility of future investment in India. We look forward to another surge of our business cooperation.

The expanding investment by Japanese companies will further contribute to “Make in India” and “Skill India” initiatives. On the ground, five Japan-India Institutes for Manufacturing (JIMs) have been inaugurated to introduce and accelerate future workshop leaders’ training in Japanese manufacturing practices. Cooperation in high speed railway is another area where Japan contributes to “Make in India” and “Skill India.” bringing about technological transfer and social transformation.

Japan has been inviting young officials of the Ministry of Railways for training programmes in Japan. Past participants have expressed high evaluation to the programmes.

We will continue to invite approximately 300 officials annually until FY 2019. This way, we ensure a smooth transition to the training at the High Speed Rail Training Institute scheduled to open by 2020.

In October 2017, Japan and India signed a Memorandum of Cooperation on Technical Intern Training Programme (TITP) which enables Indian technical interns to receive on-the-job training for three to five years in Japan. Under TITP, trainees will be trained in quality management, work practices and cost awareness, etc., with a view to improving production and developing industries back in India.

Last month, 22 Indian entities were designated as the first set of Indian sending organizations that provide pre-dispatch training to intern candidates and facilitate their recruitment at India-based companies after their repatriation. Currently, 15 candidates are receiving the pre-dispatch training including language education.

High-skilled professionals are more than welcome to contribute to the Japanese economy as well. In April 2017, Japan has introduced preferential immigration policy for highly-skilled foreign professionals applying for permanent residency in Japan, aiming to approve 20,000 highly-skilled foreign professionals by the end of 2022.

Also, Japan commenced visa relaxation measures for multiple-entry-visa for short-term stay to Indian nationals, as well as relaxation of visa requirement for Indian students.

[4. Environment]

The fourth area is environment. Japan is actively assisting India in carrying forward its “Clean India” campaign. Japanese people strive to live harmoniously with the environment, as they have a sense of reverence towards nature and they themselves once experienced severe environmental pollution in the past. Indeed, it is often forgotten that Japan too suffered from grave environmental pollution in the late 1950s and 1960s.

During the period of high economic growth and industrialization, people were oblivious to the byproducts of industrialization – pollution. The level of pollution was unprecedented, leaving no references for quick solutions, and it took toll of people’s health and living environment.

However, with concerted efforts of the government, companies, civil society groups, and individuals, Japan eventually overcame the hardship and reclaimed its blue sky and clean water.

Bearing in mind their own gloomy past, Japanese people are eager to cooperate with other nations in finding solutions for similar kinds of suffering. Recently, the Embassy of Japan in India launched the “Blue Sky Initiatives” with an aim to mitigating air pollution by ensuring that the best and latest technologies are made available to India. For instance, exhaustion from coal thermal power plants is one of the primary causes of air pollution in India, therefore Japanese companies have developed equipment that can filter out particulate matters.

In the future, we expect even more advanced applications of Japanese technology to help improve the environment for the people of India.

With immense confidence in the ability and commitment of the Indian government and its people in combating environmental pollution, Japan is eager to deepen our cooperation in this field. By combining Indian resolve with the technological expertise of Japan, the two nations can win the fight against pollution and regain cleaner and greener environment.

[5. Japanese Language Education]

The fifth and final area is the promotion of Japanese Language Education in India. We should not neglect the people-to-people aspect of our bilateral relationship, which is the fundamental element that brings our people closer. Fluency in Japanese language greatly benefit the Indian people, not only in terms of better mutual understanding, but also for augmenting businesses and job opportunities.

An increased number of Japanese language speakers will also benefit Japanese entities in India which endeavour to enhance their scope of operation in India.

We saw great progress in this area during Prime Minister Abe’s visit last year, where the two leaders agreed to promote Japanese language education, and I signed the Memorandum of Cooperation with former Foreign Secretary Jaishankar, to further materialize such efforts. To implement this MoC, Foreign Secretary Mr. Vijay Gokhale and I co-chaired the first meeting of the Steering Committee last week and discussed the preparations for the establishment and management of the Teachers Training Centre, as well as the importance to identify 100 institutions to

establish Japanese Language certificate courses.

We will continue the discussion in the steering committee, and I look forward to seeing a lot more Japanese language speakers in India.

[Message to Indian Stakeholders Who Engage in Japan-India Relationship]

Given the limited time, I have only focused on five areas of current and future cooperation this evening, but we have many other up-and-coming avenues of our cooperation, such as start-ups, food processing, sanitation and health, disaster risk management, smart cities, science and technology, intellectual exchanges and sports exchanges.

We are also working very closely with India on various regional and global challenges. As mentioned earlier, we have the critically important Japan-India-US trilateral dialogue, as well as the quadrilateral with Australia to achieve a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific. We are working towards achieving the great potential of Japan-India-ASEAN cooperation based on deep historical ties among the three parties. In this regard, we welcome wholeheartedly the great success of the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit. Furthermore, Japan is keen to work with BIMSTEC, IORA and other regional frameworks in which India plays a key role.

Lastly, I would like to emphasize our strong desire to advance our Special Partnership to an even higher stage. Japan and India are countries that share values including our commitment to democracy, openness, and the rule of law. The Japanese and Indian economies complement each other, as Japan shares advanced technologies and finances projects with India, which in turn provides a large market and a huge young and talented working force. We have deep historic and spiritual ties, which brings our people closer. It is my firm conviction that Japan-India relationship is an element of certainty in an increasingly uncertain and volatile world. As Prime Minister Abe said, a robust Japan-India relationship is a global common good that underpins the regional order. I hope that every one of you in this auditorium and many more in this country will join in our common endeavor to further strengthen our Special Partnership.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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