

**Address by Ambassador Kenji Hiramatsu**  
**“Japan and Bihar: Spiritual Partnership for the Future”**  
**June 11<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

Shri Bhupender Yadav and Honorable Members of Parliament,  
Mr. Chanchal Kumar, Principal Secretary to Hon'ble Chief Minister of Bihar,  
Mr Harshavardhan Neotia, Former President of FICCI and Chairman of FICCI's Forum of Parliamentarians Council,  
Distinguished Guests from all quarters of State of Bihar,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

**[Introduction]**

It is a great pleasure to address you at this forum “Japan meets Bihar” co-organized by FICCI's Forum of Parliamentarians and the Embassy of Japan. This special event is the first of a series entitled “Dialogue with States”, in which we hold events in regional cities to highlight various aspects of cooperation between Indian States and Japan.

I express my sincere appreciation to Shri Bhupender Yadav for his strong leadership in fundamentally revitalizing FICCI's India-Japan Forum of Parliamentarians. I am also deeply grateful for FICCI's secretariat and leadership, especially Mr. Neotia for his personal commitment to this dialogue series. It's been a year and a half since FICCI's India-Japan Forum of Parliamentarians was re-vitalized and re-launched. I recall with great satisfaction of the many interactions we've had to further promote Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership. I look forward to continuing and expanding our joint endeavor.

**[Japan and Bihar: Spiritual Partnership for the Future]**

Bihar is the State best suited to inaugurate this new initiative. This State is not only the ‘Heart of India’, but also represents the spiritual and religious ties which ushered in the long, deep and wide-ranging relationship between Japan and India.

Our two civilizations were first connected through Buddhism, which was virtually born in Bihar. Historic documents record that, as early as in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, an Indian monk reached Japan after a long and difficult journey crossing the Himalayan mountains, deserts and the sea. This

Brahman Buddhist high priest, whose name is Bodhisena, assumed the role of Master of Ceremony for the Consecrating Ceremony of the Great Buddha at the Todaiji Temple in Nara Prefecture in 752.

More than twelve centuries after this historic event, Honorable Chief Minister Nitish Kumar visited Nara Prefecture including Todaiji Temple in February, and discussed with Nara Governor, Mr. Shogo Arai, about pursuing a friendship arrangement between the State of Bihar and Nara Prefecture. I strongly hope that future-oriented cooperation between the two provinces with common Buddhist heritage will be materialized.

I was asked by the people of Nara to promote the beauty of their land and culture today. Please refer to the distributed leaflets about Nara, and allow me to play a short video clip to show you what this beautiful Prefecture looks like.

### **(Video clip screening)**

Bihar is attractive for Japan, not only for its historical and spiritual ties with us, but also for its strategic location in connectivity, human resources, Buddhist heritage sites and its unique art and culture. Bihar Museum houses vast collections which demonstrate these great features of the State, and I am proud that a renowned Japanese architect, Mr. Fumihiko Maki, designed the magnificent museum building.

During the February visit to Japan, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar met Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Foreign Minister Taro Kono, among others, and had substantive discussions on ways to further enhance economic partnerships and people-to-people connections between Japan and Bihar. I have received a personal instruction from Prime Minister Abe to make sure that the outcome of the visit is duly followed up on.

For this purpose, I am meeting with the Chief Minister this afternoon to discuss potential areas of cooperation which include tourism, urban infrastructure development, disaster risk management and Japanese language education. We will pay special attention to the improvement of the living standards at the grass-root level in our cooperation with Bihar.

### **[Japan-India Relationship]**

Now let me place these potential collaborations between Bihar and Japan in the broader relationship between Japan and India. As witnessed

in the historic visit of Prime Minister Abe to Gujarat last September, Japan-India relationship has entered a new era. The significant achievements we have made recently include 1) the convergence of India's 'Act East Policy' and Japan's 'Free and Open Indo Pacific Strategy'; 2) the launch of the 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.

Despite these unprecedented developments, we have yet to unlock the great potential of Japan-India relationship, which was described by Prime Minister Abe as "the most promising bilateral relationship in the world".

We are now working nonstop to fulfil this potential and further strengthen our partnership in various areas. Let me touch upon four such areas which are particularly relevant to our cooperation with Bihar.

### **[1. Strategic Connectivity including India's North Eastern Region]**

The first area of cooperation is what we call strategic connectivity. Bihar is a critical logistical bridge between Delhi and Kolkata metropolitan economies, and vital gateway to the North Eastern Region and ASEAN. There is great potential for cooperation between Japan and Bihar to further enhance connectivity. Currently, Japan is providing another 44 billion loan for the development of National Highways 82 and 83 and its bypasses.

What our two governments are striving to achieve regarding strategic connectivity is two-fold. The first is to globally promote our common principles on connectivity infrastructure, such as openness, transparency and non-exclusiveness based on international standards and responsible debt financing practices. We believe in the importance of "quality infrastructure".

The second is to materialize concrete cooperation in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. Currently, Japan and India are working together to extend cooperation on quality infrastructure development in various countries and regions including Africa.

Of course, we are also enhancing connectivity within India. As a prime example, 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 was held last December. In the Forum, we discuss wide-ranging areas of

potential cooperation. I am confident that the Forum will serve as a springboard for expanding cooperation in this strategically and economically important region. When we discuss connectivity in the North Eastern Region, we would like to keep in mind how we connect them toward West through Bihar.

## [2. Urban problem solution]

The second area is finding solutions to the overwhelming urban problems, be it environment pollution, waste, and sewerage. Patna is not an exception in confronting negative consequences of urban development.

Japan actively assists India in its “Clean India” campaign. Recently, the Embassy of Japan in India launched the “Blue Sky Initiatives” with a view to mitigating air pollution through introducing the best and latest coping technologies of Japan to India, such as Japanese companies’ equipment that can filter out particulate matters. The initiatives are welcomed and endorsed by the Environment Minister, Hon. Vardhan. On the issue of waste management, Japanese incinerator plant companies are now marketing the “Waste to Energy” concept in India. In Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, the technologies for generating power during the incineration process was introduced in 2016. Andhra Pradesh is to follow suit shortly. We have also presented waste management practiced in Japan known as *Tokyo Model* to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. Patna is blessed with the eternal flow of the Ganga, but the sacred river needs to be rescued from grave pollution. Rivers in Japan used to be filthy due to lack of awareness in environmental protection and illegal effluent drainage. However, as a result of time-consuming yet down-to-earth sewerage development, the 1990s witnessed dramatic improvement in the water quality of rivers. While the path to Clean Ganga seems daunting, the only steady solution is to start sewerage development now. Japan has been assisting the development of sewerage across India with loan projects, and the coverage has reached 9 cities, namely, Varanasi, Delhi, Amritsar, Pune, Goa, Bengaluru, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and Guwahati.

In the future, we expect even more advanced applications of Japanese technologies to help improve the living environment for the Indian people. As the people who share the appreciation for the blessings of nature, I believe Bihar and Japan can pursue cooperation in this field as well.

### **[3. Disaster Risk Management]**

The third area of cooperation is disaster risk management. Last September, upon Prime Minister's visit to India, Japan's Cabinet Agency and India's Ministry of Home Affairs signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction, thereby opening doors for exchanging expertise and attaining better preparedness together. In March this year, Japan and India jointly held the first Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction to discuss scientific risk assessment, disaster risk management framework development, early warning and resilient infrastructure development, and so forth. Representatives of the State of Bihar too attended this workshop.

Japan, situated in the Pacific Ring of Fire, is prone to natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, tsunami, and landslides, and thus acquired the hard way better disaster management. Meanwhile, every now and then, Bihar faces floods, droughts, and earthquakes due to its proximity to the Himalayas. Its topography and geography calls for better disaster preparedness. We hope that the overarching bilateral framework for cooperation in disaster risk management would benefit the local people in Bihar in the near future.

On this occasion I would like to make reference to the large-scale emergency drill that is held on 1 September every year in Japan. Since the Great Kanto Earthquake happened on 1st September, 1923, and caused massive destruction to Tokyo and its surroundings, the Japanese government commemorates this day every year as Disaster Prevention Day by conducting the largest-scale drill in Japan, while local governments also host such drills. This year the drill will be held in Kawasaki, Japan, and I would like to encourage many Bihari people to participate in the drill to get the taste of disaster risk reduction efforts.

### **[4. People-to-people exchanges]**

Tourism serves to enhance mutual understanding. We'd like to see more tourist exchanges between Japan and India, in particular Bihar, by capitalizing on our spiritual and cultural bonds.

Japan helped develop Bihar's tourism infrastructure as far back as in 1988, improving hundreds of kilometres of National & State Highways as well as water supply & electricity distribution facilities for tourism promotion. Drawing on our common heritage, this kind of investment contributes to increase the exchanges between the two peoples.

Following the pledge between the two Prime Ministers of Japan and India, we are promoting the Japanese language education nationwide as a tool to facilitate mutual understanding and create job opportunities for Indian workers at Japanese companies based here. We would like to do this in Bihar too.

**[Closing]**

Today I have only focused on four areas, but we have many other up-and-coming avenues of our cooperation, such as start-ups, food processing, smart cities, science and technology, intellectual exchanges and sports exchanges. I am hoping that we can identify some promising areas of cooperation between Japan and Bihar through our discussions today.

It is my firm conviction that Japan-India relationship is an element of certainty in an increasingly uncertain and volatile world. I hope that all of you in this room and many more will join in our common endeavor to further strengthen our Special Partnership.

Thank you very much.

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