

Address by Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki
“Japan-India relationship in the new era”
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Honorable Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,

[Introduction]

Good morning. Since I assumed office as the Ambassador of Japan to India just a month ago, first I would like to say Namaskar to you all. It is an honor to represent my country in India, especially at a time when both countries are aiming to elevate the already strong bilateral relations to an even higher level. India is an important, special, and indispensable strategic partner for Japan. I am determined to make every effort to enhance the increasingly firm and friendly ties between our two countries.

It is indeed a great privilege for me to meet distinguished Members of Parliament today and address you all on this occasion organized by FICCI India – Japan Forum of Parliamentarians. I would like to express my gratitude to all Members of Parliament who have joined this meeting despite your busy schedule during the on-going session of the Parliament. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to FICCI's leadership and secretariat for their earnest efforts in organizing this occasion.

It was 3 years ago when the FICCI India-Japan Forum of Parliamentarians was revitalized and re-launched with the effort of FICCI. I look forward to our endeavor ahead, and hope that all the guests here today will play a centric role in promoting Parliamentarians exchanges between Japan and India.

Embassy of Japan and FICCI have co-organized various events. For instance, we established a joint programme, '**Dialogue with States**' last year and held the dialogue in three states, namely Bihar, Meghalaya, and Rajasthan. This dialogue series with Indian States highlights various aspects of cooperation between Indian States and Japan. This mechanism facilitates smooth

communication between Indian States and Japanese Government, thereby ensures our cooperation projects meet each state's diverse and unique demands. I very much look forward to taking part in the next Dialogue with States, hopefully, we are going to co-organize the 4th Dialogue with States with FICCI at the beginning of 2020.

[2+2 Meeting in Delhi]

In the year of 2019 or the first year of a new Japanese era, Reiwa, Japan hosted so many important diplomatic events, such as the G20 Osaka Summit in June, TICAD VII (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) in August, the Enthronement Ceremony of His Majesty the new Emperor in October, and the various G20 Ministerial Meetings throughout the year. Bilaterally, the first-ever Japan-India 2+2 Ministerial Meeting was held in Delhi last weekend. And later this month, within the framework of annual visits of Prime Minister, Prime Minister Abe will visit India; the fourth time in his current administration.

Let me briefly touch upon the recent 2+2 Meeting. Foreign

Minister MOTEGI and Defense Minister KONO had a meaningful meeting with their Indian counterparts, External Affairs Minister Dr. Subramanian Jaishankar and Defence Minister Mr. Rajnath Singh.

At the meeting, they discussed strategic and regional issues, and agreed to enhance security and defense cooperation towards a shared vision of a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region. Concrete achievements announced on this occasion include the goal of early conclusion of a military logistic pact, which we call ACSA, Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, commencement of maritime information exchanges between the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force and the Indian Navy, the first joint fighter aircraft exercise next year in Japan, and Quad ministerial meeting.

With the increasingly robust security and defence cooperation, I believe Japan and India can better contribute to peace and stability of the region and beyond. I hope two Prime Ministers will further discuss ways ahead in this area at the upcoming Summit Meeting in this month.

[Japan-India relationship ahead]

As Prime Minister Abe often says, it is our strong belief that “strong India is in Japan’s interest; strong Japan is in India’s interest”. To contribute to Make in India initiative, the Government of Japan has been assisting Japanese private companies in their effort to invest in India. The number of companies in India has reached more than 1400: increased three times over the past ten years. Their activities in India and collaboration with FICCI have been supporting the strong Japan-India economic ties. I also understand that with close collaboration with the Government of India, our Official Development Aid has been utilized for the growth of Indian economy.

One thing I would like to highlight in our bilateral development cooperation is that Japan is deeply engaged in the development of India’s North Eastern region of India. The relationship between Japan and the North Eastern region has enhanced through the dialogue at the Act East Forum, which I will be co-chairing with Foreign Secretary later this week. Improving the connectivity in the North East is one of the important pillars of our Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision. In the North East, we

have also initiated a youth exchange program, called the IRIS program. I would also like to enhance the intellectual exchanges with this region.

Japan and India's cooperation is not limited to our boundaries, but we are working together in third countries as well. For instance, in Sri Lanka, the two countries are jointly working on South Colombo Port project. In Bangladesh, Japan is building bridges and India is constructing roads, so as to enhance the connectivity in the country. As Japan and India are working together for the prosperity of the Indo-Pacific, I believe our cooperation in the North East as well as in third countries will be another focus of the discussion between the two leaders this month.

[People to people exchange]

Japan-India ties are now stronger than ever. However, there is still more to be done. One area I would like to highlight in this context is people-to-people exchange. Needless to say, Exchanges of Parliamentarians is one of the pillars. Also, Strengthening of people-to-people ties, especially among younger generations, provides crucial basis for the future of our partnership.

Also, tourism sector has a great potential in energizing people-to-people exchange between Japan and India. Last January, the representatives of the tourism industry from both countries exchanged views actively at the Japan-India Tourism Summit. In addition, a direct flight has started to operate from Narita to Chennai this October, and will also begin flying to Bengaluru starting March next year. I believe these new flights will provide momentum for encouraging the people-to-people exchange, especially between Japan and South India.

Given its importance as foundation of bilateral relationship, again, I hope two Prime Ministers will give us guidance to further promote people to people exchange.

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

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

Finally, I would like to close my remarks by emphasizing my strong desire to elevate our Special Strategic and Global 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. We have deep historical and spiritual ties, which bind our people close together.

Excellencies, I am truly grateful if each one of you here will continue to join in our endeavor to further strengthen our Special Partnership.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.