

Remarks by Ambassador SUZUKI Satoshi at the  
Handover Ceremony for Cold Chain Equipment in Bihar  
(27 September, 2021)

Mr. Mangal Pandey, Hon'ble Health Minister,  
Government of Bihar,  
Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque, Representative, UNICEF India,  
Mr. Sanjay Kumar Singh, Executive Director,  
State Health Society, Government of Bihar,  
Other Dignitaries from the Government of Bihar,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

(Introduction)

It is my great pleasure to join you in this handover ceremony in Bihar.

First of all, I would like to thank UNICEF and the Government of Bihar for organizing this event, with the participation of the people of Bihar, the beneficiaries of this project named "Support for Cold Chain System Building in response to COVID-19 pandemic in India".

(Project outlook and other relative activities)

This project, a joint project between Japan and UNICEF, aims at building an urgently needed Cold Chain System, a critical measure in enhancing the Indian Government's capacity in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes emergency procurement of cold chain equipment (CCE) such as freeze-free vaccine carriers and walk-in

coolers, as well as institutional capacity building such as operational and maintenance training to manage the cold chain equipment for smooth introduction of COVID-19 vaccines. We attach high importance to training as a key component of this project because no system can be properly operated and maintained without training of those who actually handle it.

As you know, UNICEF has played a significant role for the development of a cold chain needs assessment tool that aims at helping estimate the cold chain requirement for COVID-19 vaccine introduction across the country. Through such an experience, UNICEF has developed expertise and knowledge for establishing a cold chain system. UNICEF therefore is the best partner for Japan to work with for this much needed project.

In the wake of the second wave of Covid-19 earlier this year, Japan immediately started offering emergency assistance to India. A total of 1,800 ventilators and 2,800 oxygen concentrators were donated to the people of India. These life-saving items have assisted many patients to fight for their lives against Corona virus in various hospitals across the country.

Moreover, Japan is also supporting the capacity enhancement of healthcare providers in AIIMS by offering short-term training in Japan under our ODA scheme.

Japan continues to stand with India, our close friend and important partner, in the fight against COVID-19.

(Japan-Bihar Relationship)

As we all know, Japan-India relations have been excellent, built upon common historical and cultural bonds, such as Buddhist heritage and admiration of nature.

The State of Bihar is not only the ‘Heart of India’, but also represents the spiritual and religious ties in the long, deep and wide-ranging relationship between Japan and India.

Our two cultures were first connected through Buddhism, which can be said to have originated in Bihar. According to our historic documents, we can trace it back to as early as the 8th century, when an Indian high-ranked priest was invited to Japan for the Consecrating Ceremony of the Great Buddha of Nara at the Todai-ji Temple as Master of Ceremony.

Through years, we have deepened our partnership, based on our common values such as democracy, freedom, the rule of law and mutual respect.

It has been a while since our relations entered an era of “Special Strategic and Global Partnership”. The ties between Japan and India are much closer and stronger than ever, and the scope of our cooperation is expanding

to encompass political, economic, and cultural spheres. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been no let up in the momentum of our cooperation.

(Closing)

In closing, let me express my sincere hope that our joint efforts in the healthcare sector will help overcome the devastating impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and will serve to elevate our relationship to even greater heights.

Thank you.