

**Ambassador Hiramatsu's Address
on the occasion of
Conferral of the Imperial Decoration
upon Mr. Tarun Das on 15 June 2018
at Ambassador's Residence
Embassy of Japan in India**

Mr. Tarun Das, Chairperson of Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation,

Hon. Manmohan Singh, Former PM and Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha,

Hon. Suresh Prabhu, Minister of Commerce & Industry and Aviation,

Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for joining me this evening to celebrate the distinguished service of Mr. Tarun Das. The Imperial decision in April to decorate Mr. Das with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, acknowledges his contribution to strengthening Japan-India relations and promoting mutual understanding. It gives me immense pleasure and honour to convey the Imperial honour to Mr. Das today.

Steering CII as Top Staffer

Mr. Tarun Das, a Padma Bhushan recipient, is most notably known for his dedication to developing Confederation of Indian Industry, whose precursor he joined in 1967. During his tenure as Director-General and Chief

Executive for 37 years, Mr. Das nurtured the budding group of Indian engineering industries and literally transformed it into one of the largest, most effective business federations in India.

As Chief Mentor of CII, Mr. Das further led strategic thinking and effectively presented attractions and economic opportunities of India to the world in a way that befits the prowess of the Indian economy. Thanks to Mr. Das, CII successfully conducted the dialogue between the then Prime Minister Koizumi and Indian leading economic organizations in 2005. Since 2007, CII has teamed up with Japan's Keidanren to convene the Japan-India Business Leaders' Forum on the sidelines of annual Summit Meetings.

Conducting Parliamentary Visitation Programme

For a strategic thinker like Mr. Das, the economy is merely one means of achieving numerous endeavours and ambitions; rather, he believed in broad-based relationship-building to realize bilateral relations between Japan and India at multiple levels. Thus, Mr. Das spearheaded a *programme to have Indian parliamentarians visit Japan* in partnership with The Sasakawa Peace Foundation in 2004. The programme was carefully designed to involve the future leaders from across the country and the political spectrum. The visitors on the programme included the incumbent Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation, *Hon. Suresh Prabhu* (2006), who is kindly

joining us tonight, and seven other cabinet ministers & state ministers. The programme lasted for 12 years, and brought 51 MPs to visit Japan. Such effective modes of dialogues not only helped expand the network bases of Japan-India relations but provided for much more harmonious working environment. Last year the visitation programme was transferred to Ananta Aspen Centre, where Mr. Das serves as Founding Trustee. The first visit led by Ananta took 5 parliamentarians to Japan this February, and I am certain that Mr. Das will appropriately guide the programme in the future and revitalize interactions between Japanese and Indian parliamentarians.

Fighting against stigma toward Leprosy

In 2006, at the invitation of Dr. Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination and Japanese Government Goodwill Ambassador for the Human Rights of Persons Affected by Leprosy, Mr. Das founded Sasakawa-India Leprosy Foundation. Thanks to Mr. Das' tenacious efforts on mobilization and outreach, involving like-minded parliamentarians and organizing annual *Global Appeal to End Stigma and Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy* on World Leprosy Day, the fight to eradicate leprosy and banish stigma is spreading across the nation steadily. Dr. Sasakawa has sent Mr. Das a personal note of congratulations. Let me quote parts of the letter here: "In view of your many years of dedicated service to the promotion of Japan-India relations, no one else is more deserving of this

prestigious decoration. [Y]ou are helping people affected by leprosy regain their dignity and live normal lives, as well as creating opportunities for their children, through the foundation's support for social reintegration. [...] I look forward with anticipation to your further contributions.”

Leading Strategic Dialogue across the Indo-Pacific

Mr. Das' ingenuity never ceases. He envisaged multi-layered Japan-India relations and, in recognition of shared values across the Indo-Pacific, he started in 2006 the *Trilateral Strategic Dialogue* among Japan, India, and the U.S.A. that still continues today. The participants have always engaged in heated debates on how the three Indo-Pacific countries could encompass cooperation on major regional and global challenges, such as international security, infrastructure development, energy security, and climate change.

Steadily Progressing Japan-India Relations

Over the last decade, we have only witnessed the exponential growth of Japan India bilateral relations. It was upgraded into Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014. Such dramatic developments are largely attributable to the agreement between the former Prime Ministers, Mr. *Junichiro Koizumi* and *Hon. Manmohan Singh*, to hold reciprocal visits between Japanese and Indian Prime Ministers every year. I would like to take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt gratitude to *Hon. Manmohan Singh* for his

momentous contribution. Currently, the agenda for strengthening Japan-India relations enjoys consensus beyond politics in both countries, thereby enabling various cooperation in a truly wide variety of areas by both public and private sectors. Japan-India relations are now at its best, but this would not have been possible without figures like Mr. Das who passionately and continuously devoted his time to the development of Japan-India relations. In order to continue this legacy, I endeavour with people in India to explore further dimensions of Japan-India relations that Prime Minister Abe describes as the regional and global common good.

The profiles of the guests here this evening reflect the amount of faith that people hold in Mr. Das. It brings me profound happiness that the achievements of Mr. Das are recognized and praised by *Hon. Manmohan Singh, Hon. Suresh Prabhu, Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Dr. S. Jaishankar*, and all the dignitaries present who lead public and private sectors of India. I sincerely hope that the reception serves to bolster friendship and gathers steam for further prosperity of Japan-India relations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to advancing bilateral relations, kindly join me in giving a big round of applause to Mr. Tarun Das. Congratulations.