

Address by Ambassador SUZUKI Satoshi
at the Opening Session of
“Japan and India: 70 Years of Cooperation and the Way
Forward”
(February 24, 2022)

Mr. N.K. Singh, Chairman, 15th Finance Commission,
Government of India and Trustee, Ananta Aspen Centre,
Mr. HONDA Taro, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign
Affairs,
Mr. Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Foreign Secretary, Ministry of
External Affairs,
Professor Sugata Bose, Gardiner Professor, Oceanic History &
Affairs, Harvard University,
Ms. MATSUKAWA Rui, Member, House of Councillors and former
Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Defense,
Ambassador Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan,
Distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namaskar and Konnichiwa.

It is my pleasure to join the Opening Session with the presence of distinguished political, economic, and academic leaders of the two countries. The Japanese Embassy is honored to co-host this seminar together with Ananta Centre supported by the Ministry of External Affairs of India.

This year 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-India diplomatic relations. We will celebrate this significant occasion through a series of commemorative events. I am thrilled to see today's seminar taking place, the purpose of which is to revisit the bilateral relationship between Japan and India, to highlight the success stories of our partnership over the past seven decades, and to chart the future course of our bilateral relationship.

Let me take this opportunity to reflect upon the history of Japan-

India relations and to envision the future trajectory of our cooperative partnership.

Filtered through Buddhism, Indian culture has had a significant influence on Japanese culture. Even today, when you visit Japanese temples in Kyoto or Nara, you come across characters from the Devanagari script being used for performing rituals by the Buddhist monks. This is just one example of the age-old ties between our two countries. In modern times, the close interaction between our two people was characterized by intellectual exchanges between the first-ever Asian Nobel Prize winner, Rabindra Nath Tagore and Japanese philosopher and artist, OKAKURA Tenshin.

After World War II, the return to the international community as a sovereign country was the top priority for Japan and India consistently supported Japan's aspiration. As the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru respected Japan's freedom and honor, India chose to sign a peace treaty with Japan bilaterally instead of signing the multilateral San Francisco Peace Treaty. We established our diplomatic relations in April 1952.

Reciprocating India's generosity, at the "Indian Economic Crisis" of 1991, Japan offered a substantial bridge loan to bail India out of the balance of payment crisis, even when most of the developed countries were reluctant to offer finance to India. After this crisis, India has gone through a series of major economic reforms, and actively and successfully invited foreign investments, especially in the manufacturing sector. Maruti Suzuki achieved a steady growth in India during the 1990's, thanks to India's positive automotive policies. These days, Maruti Suzuki has a significant market share and also contributes to "Make in India" initiative to transform India into a global manufacturing hub.

With this long history of having each other's back, today, Japan and India are indispensable to each other on any fronts. Japan has been the largest bilateral ODA donor to India and one of the

largest investors in the Indian economy. Metro rail projects, especially Delhi Metro, are a testament to successful stories in this field. And Mumbai Ahmedabad High Speed Rail, which is India's ever biggest infrastructure project, shall be that of the next generation.

I would also like to emphasize how Japan and India complement each other as partners for growth. Japan prides itself on high-end technology and workforce with discipline. However, we are faced with challenges such as declining population and aging society. Thus, we are in need for business opportunities overseas as well as young professionals coming to Japan. India, on the other hand, has a great pool of young talent and skilled workers. Further, India still has development needs. I believe this economic complementarity ties us even closer.

Particularly in the last decade, our political relations have also flourished. When Honorable Prime Minister Modi visited Japan in 2014, he and the then Prime Minister Abe agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship to the "Special Strategic and Global Partnership." With strong support from our leaders, the scope of Japan-India cooperation is now unparalleled. We see our collaboration widening and deepening day by day.

Importantly, our ties are no longer limited to bilateral terms but it now focuses on bringing positive development to the Indo Pacific region. Based on shared economic and security interests as well as common values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law, Japan and India see each other as a natural partner to promote a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific. After India announced IPOI (Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative) in 2019, Japan decided to become the lead country for the connectivity pillar of this Initiative to boost this joint effort.

The Quad is another key framework, through which Japan and India, together with other partners, have been working in tandem to facilitate positive agenda in the region. Through efforts such as

vaccine partnership along with cooperation on infrastructure, climate, education, technologies, cyber and space, we strive to extend a practical hand to the entire Indo-Pacific region. As Prime Minister Modi rightly put it during the first in-person Quad Summit Meeting last September, the Quad is “a force for global good,” and Japan and India are accelerating our effort with this spirit.

As I look back at the last 70 years, Japan and India have come a long way to become what we are today, natural and indispensable partners. Over the past two years, the pandemic has limited our physical interactions. However, our work in the bilateral cooperation has seen steady progress. As high-level bilateral exchanges are crucial for further enhancing our relationship, I do hope that we can arrange our Prime Minister’s visit to India at the earliest possible opportunity. We also look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Modi to Japan on the occasion of the Quad Summit Meeting in Tokyo expected by the end of June this year.

I am confident that today’s seminar will provide a new impetus to the relationship between Japan and India. I very much look forward to candid and vibrant discussions.

Thank you so much.