

**Ambassador's Remarks at the International Conference on Bay of
Bengal and India Japan Economic Relations
(March 11, 2024)**

Good morning to all participants in India, Good afternoon to all in Japan.

Chair of my session and DG RIS Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Hon'ble Former Foreign Secretary Ambassador Krishnan Srinivas, Professor Takenori Horimoto, Shri Ambarish Dasgupta, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Congratulations to RIS and its partners in organizing this major event on India Japan relations.

My topic today is India - Japan Relationship in the Changing Global Order. India and Japan have crossed several major milestones in the history of what has now evolved to become India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. This partnership, **that is based on shared values of democracy, freedom and rule of law**, has not only made significant strides in bilateral context, but it has also contributed to the evolving global order. In the face of emerging global challenges, the value of our relationship has become more evident than ever. We need to jointly address contemporary challenges, from navigating critical and emerging technologies to ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific **that is Based on rules based order.**

I am happy to report that the year 2023 has been an excellent year in India - Japan relationship. We have had multiple meetings at all levels including at the level of Hon'ble Prime Ministers, Cabinet Ministers and Official levels. Every week we had delegations from India visiting Japan and India for official, Track 1.5 or Track 2 dialogues. Our G 20 and G 7 Presidencies provided a further momentum to our relationship. I am happy to note that this year we are building upon the momentum. Last week we had the visit of Hon'ble External Affairs Minister to hold the Strategic Dialogue which has set a new roadmap for our engagement as we mark the 10th anniversary of establishment of our Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Let me focus on a key priorities of our partnership, as the world grapples with disruptive changes around us. Deepening strategic aspects of the partnership has acquired increased salience. India and Japan have been steadfast in their commitment to maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Our defence and security cooperation has grown significantly, marked by regular joint exercises, high-level dialogues, and exchanges. We are also making progress in defence technology and equipment cooperation, although this is an area where greater push is needed. In the area of emerging security challenges, including maritime security, cyber threats, and terrorism, India and Japan must continue to strengthen defense and security cooperation.

Japan has always played an important role in India's economic growth story. If Maruti-Suzuki cars transformed Indian lifestyle four decades ago, the introduction of metros starting with Delhi metro

added to that at the turn of the century. Today, the High-Speed Rail project from Ahmedabad to Mumbai holds a landmark significance, similar to that as Suzuki and Delhi metro had. Japan continues to be actively involved in various national campaigns and flagship initiatives of India. Particularly noteworthy are the infrastructure development, ICT and digitization, energy, space, food-processing, science and technology, healthcare, and R&D cooperation. We are working on our shared commitment to realize the 5 trillion-yen goal of investment (approx USD 42 billion) over 2022-2027.

As economies that are complementary, there lies immense potential in furthering trade and investment flows, technology collaboration and easier movement of skilled workers. In each of these areas, as pointed out by survey responses of Japanese industry itself, India remains a top potential choice as a partner. However, the current level of engagement, marked by USD 22 billion in trade and presence of 1400 Japanese companies in India, barely scratches the surface of what we can achieve together. I have set a new ambitious target of 15000 Japanese companies in India focusing on SMEs. India and Japan have set up 11 Japan Industrial Townships in which 124 Japanese companies have established their operations. The potential of JITs needs to be tapped.

Our cooperation in strategic technologies, semiconductors and critical minerals is also essential. Collaboration in these areas is not just about technological advancement; it is also about securing our future in an increasingly digital world. I am happy to note that we now have a framework for semiconductor manufacturing and R&D, human

resource development and supply chain resilience with Japan. We also see the immense potential of digital technologies to empower our societies. Our cooperation in areas such as artificial intelligence, 5G/Open RAN, etc. has been given a strong impetus by the India-Japan Digital Partnership.

The challenges posed by climate change and the transition to a green economy are areas where India and Japan partnership will play a key and significant role. Leveraging Japan's technological prowess and India's vast market and renewable energy potential, our partnership can lead the way in developing eco-friendly technologies and sustainable practices. Through our Clean Energy Partnership, we are cooperating on clean and sustainable energy solutions, collaborating on energy efficiency, conservation, renewable energy, and clean technologies. We have made good progress, especially in the field of hydrogen where I understand our private sectors have already entered into supply arrangements (from India to Japan). We need to also continue our focus on creating resilient supply chains with trusted partners and building capacities to deal with future challenges. All this we have also to accomplish in accordance with what our Prime Minister has envisioned, as Mission LiFe, Lifestyle for Environment, for a circular economy and sustainable world .

A free and open Indo-Pacific is at the core of our Special Strategic and Global Partnership. We see convergence between India's Act-East Policy, our Indo-Pacific vision, and our SAGAR Outlook and Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision. Our endeavour to create an inclusive structure of maritime security in the region is exemplified by the Indo-

Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI). Its seven pillars address different aspects of challenges that the international community confronts. We are keen to deepen cooperation on Maritime Trade, Transport and Connectivity pillar of IPOI that Japan has agreed to co-lead. As two major powers of Asia, we are also committed to reformed multilateralism, including UNSC reforms. India and Japan, as members of Quad are collaborating in areas ranging from maritime security and connectivity, space, supply chains, critical and emerging technologies, to disaster response and economic cooperation.

In this context, we are happy to see active participation of Japan in improving infrastructure and connectivity in North East India and its neighborhood in Bay of Bengal. HE Prime Minister Kishida, in his speech on Japan's New Plan for a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' delivered in India last year, talked about promoting a 'Bay of Bengal - Northeast India industrial value chain' concept in cooperation with India and Bangladesh. We fully support this endeavor and are happy to see the progress being made in this commitment. Today's conference on Bay of Bengal and India Japan Relations is timely and significant in this context.

I once again thank RIS for organizing this major event today.

Thank you.

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