

Embassy of India

Tokyo

Ambassador of India to Japan Mr. Sibi George's Interaction with the students of Gunma Prefectural Women's University - June 27, 2023

Good afternoon,

Distinguished faculty members and dear students of the Gunma Prefectural Women's University

2. It is with great pleasure that I address the brilliant young minds of GPWU, one of Japan's most renowned institutions of higher learning. Today, I have the honor of sharing my perspectives on key socio-economic developments in India and the central principles of India's Foreign Policy against the backdrop of the current global landscape. I hope to ignite your curiosity to understand India and the significance of the India-Japan Partnership.

3. In the present international scenario, we witness a significant deterioration in the global landscape. The world is grappling with the challenges of post-pandemic economic recovery, along with the precarious debt situation in developing nations. Furthermore, the rising costs and scarcity of fuel, food, and fertilizers, coupled with trade disruptions and diversions, are among the many consequences arising from the Ukraine conflict. The Indo-Pacific region is also facing new concerns regarding its stability and security, while climate events have added an additional layer of anxieties.

4. In these challenging times, India has been at the forefront, not only defending its own territory but also advocating for global peace and security to uphold the liberal world order. We firmly believe that

expanding the United Nations Security Council and implementing reforms in vital multilateral organizations like the World Trade Organization are crucial steps toward democratizing the existing world order.

5. India has emerged as the world's most populous country, surpassing China just this year. With one-sixth of the world's population, India stands as the largest and one of the most stable democracies, with the Constitution of India as the foundation of our unity in diversity. Over the past 75 years of independence, India has achieved remarkable milestones in socio-economic growth and development. It has swiftly become the fifth-largest economy globally and is recognized as the IT hub of the world. We are on track to becoming a \$5 trillion economy, supported by a substantial consumer base.

6. India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic involved building capacities from scratch. The financial, digital, and communication transformations that India has undergone have made it possible to implement direct benefit transfers and facilitate large-scale advancements in housing, electrification, water supply, and access to cooking gas. As the 21st century gathers momentum, India is increasingly recognized as a key strategic player on the global stage, contributing significantly to the efforts of the international community in peace, security, human rights, the rule of law, and sustainable development.

7. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan, meaning "Self-Reliant India," has been launched to establish India as a trustworthy global supply chain hub. Ambitious structural reforms have been introduced to gradually deregulate and improve governance in various economic sectors, including the Production Linked Incentive scheme. Private sector participation has been greatly encouraged in critical areas such

as coal, minerals, defense production, civil aviation, space, and atomic energy. The manufacturing sector has further opened up to financial and technological flows, while massive public investments are being made to enhance infrastructure and connectivity. Our National Education Policy provides a framework for leveraging our demographic dividend and promoting further progress.

8. In recent times, India has witnessed the emergence of Healthcare, Information Technology, and Innovation as major drivers of our economy. These sectors have played a crucial role in our battle against the pandemic, demonstrating a remarkable interplay between them. Despite the challenges we faced, our nation swiftly and efficiently carried out a vaccination drive, coupled with extensive public health awareness campaigns, innovative technological solutions, and the unwavering dedication of our healthcare and frontline workers. Through these collective efforts, we have satisfactorily confronted the pandemic on the domestic front. Moreover, India, as a responsible member of the global community, has diligently fulfilled its commitments by exporting vaccines and essential pharmaceutical products for the benefit of all.

9. It is widely recognized that India possesses exceptional strengths in the field of Information Technology, boasting one of the fastest-growing startup ecosystems worldwide. By end of 2022, around 110 Indian startups had achieved unicorn status, demonstrating our country's potential and dynamism. India's e-commerce marketplace holds immense promise, our online content market is known for its innovation, and our social media landscape is vibrant and commercially prosperous. In the era where data is considered the new currency, India stands as the largest global repository.

10. However, we acknowledge that as India's economic activities continue to flourish, the demand for energy will inevitably rise. India's

strategic location and its significance in both the energy market and the energy transition present substantial economic opportunities for our nation. Our commitment to combat climate change was resolutely voiced during COP26, where we pledged to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2070. India staunchly advocates for climate mitigation and climate justice, and we have spearheaded various international initiatives. Notably, the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) have gained significant momentum on the global stage.

Central tenets of India's Foreign Policy

11. Central to India's foreign policy are several fundamental principles. We prioritize our neighborhood through the "Neighborhood First" policy and actively engage with the East through the "Act East Policy." As a nation with a maritime heritage, we attach paramount importance to the maritime domain. By pursuing a policy of "strategic autonomy," we have forged strategic partnerships with a wide range of countries and groups. In addition to country-specific and regional concerns, we recognize cross-cutting issues such as supply chain resilience, critical minerals, emerging technologies, climate change, counter-terrorism, and economic security as crucial factors shaping our present and future. India remains steadfast in its commitment to non-proliferation, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), multilateralism, and the reform of the United Nations. As the current President of the G20 for the term 2022-23, we are actively contributing to international issues.

India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership

12. The bond between India and Japan is rooted in history and tradition, representing a Special Strategic and Global Partnership. Recognizing our shared objectives and common values, such as

democracy, freedom, and respect for the rule of law, this partnership holds immense potential in shaping a peaceful, secure, and sustainable world. In 2022, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two nations, marking a significant milestone in our journey together. As we gaze into the future, we envision numerous avenues for enhanced cooperation between India and Japan, particularly during Japan's G7 presidency and India's G20 chairmanship.

13. The India-Japan partnership is underpinned by a wide array of institutional mechanisms, including annual summits, strategic dialogues between Foreign Ministers, defense ministerial dialogues, and 2+2 Ministerial Dialogues, among others. During the most recent bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio Kishida, both leaders pledged to elevate and reinforce our strategic partnership across various domains. They also reaffirmed their commitment to working

Indo-Pacific and Quad

14. When discussing the partnership between India and Japan, it is imperative to emphasize the significance of the Free, Open, and Inclusive Indo-Pacific approach. Our vision of the Indo-Pacific region encompasses the vast stretch from the western coast of the Americas to the eastern shores of Africa, with Southeast Asia at its heart and the ASEAN architecture assuming a prominent role. Prime Minister Narendra Modi eloquently expressed our understanding of this region during his address at the Shangri La Dialogue in 2018.

15. India firmly stands for an open, balanced, rules-based, and stable international trade regime in the Indo-Pacific. This principle resonates strongly in our maritime doctrine known as SAGAR, which symbolizes "Ocean" and represents Security and Growth for all in the Region. To

implement the SAGAR doctrine, we launched the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) in 2019, placing ASEAN at its core. Given India's central location in the region, we have assumed the role of a net provider of security, a first responder, and a trusted development partner.

16. In our engagement with the Indo-Pacific, we proudly participate in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, also known as the QUAD. For us, the Quad represents a partnership for global good. Prime Minister Modi's recent visit to Japan for the G7 Summit and the Quad Leaders' Summit showcased our shared commitment to addressing critical issues such as climate change, COVID-19 vaccine development and distribution, critical and emerging technologies, space exploration, cyber-security, connectivity, infrastructure development, counterterrorism, and maritime security. Last year, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, the four nations signed the Guidelines for the 'Quad Partnership on Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in the Indo-Pacific.' This significant milestone in Quad cooperation traces its roots back to the 2004 ad hoc Tsunami Core Group, which catalyzed international response efforts following the devastating tsunami that struck several countries in the region.

17. There is clear synergy between India's and Japan's vision for the Indo-Pacific region. We witness alignment between India's Act-East Policy, our Indo-Pacific vision based on the principle of SAGAR, and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), along with Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision. Japan's agreement to lead cooperation on the Trade, Connectivity, and Maritime Transport pillar of India's IPOI has further strengthened our Indo-Pacific partnership. Moreover, India and Japan are jointly exploring opportunities for collaboration in third countries of South Asia and Africa, leveraging our complementarity.

Defence and security cooperation

18. Defense and security cooperation have emerged as pivotal pillars of the India-Japan partnership, playing a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in the region. We have witnessed an upsurge in defense exchanges across the spectrum, including reciprocal visits between Defense Ministers, the 2 plus 2 Dialogue, and Service-to-Service level staff talks. During the recent 2+2 Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo, the Foreign and Defense Ministers of both nations acknowledged the immense potential for expanding bilateral cooperation in defense equipment and technology.

19. The latest addition to our ever-growing defense cooperation is the first-ever bilateral fighter aircraft exercise between the Indian Air Force and the Japan Air Self Defense Force, known as "Exercise Veer Guardian 23," which took place at the Hyakuri Airbase in Ibaraki from 10 to 16 January 2023. Furthermore, the fourth edition of the bilateral exercise between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self Defense Force was conducted at Camp Imazu, Shiga from 17 February to 01 March 2023. Naval forces of both countries also hold annual joint naval exercises.

Economic cooperation

20. Japan continues to play a pivotal role in India's economic growth story. It actively participates in various national campaigns and flagship initiatives. Japan's longstanding foreign direct investment (FDI) presence in India is steadily expanding, with 1,439 companies as of 2022, with more than half of them engaged in manufacturing. New industrial collaborations are being forged, presenting opportunities for innovative and alternative partnership models.

21. Infrastructure development has been at the core of our partnership, with Japan's investment playing a crucial role. We engage in technical cooperation in areas such as urban waste management, water treatment, smart cities, port management, high-speed railways, and transit-oriented development. The landmark Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail project is making rapid progress. Additionally, cooperation in metro connectivity, airports, civil aviation, steel, logistics, ports, and mining holds great potential.

22. Pharmaceuticals, medical device manufacturing, and research and development offer promising avenues for collaboration between India and Japan. India, often referred to as the pharmacy of the world, coupled with Japanese R&D expertise, can provide affordable, safe, and quality medicines and diagnostic equipment in the healthcare sector. We are also exploring cooperation in areas such as Ayurveda, yoga, wellness, and the development of high-standard healthcare systems.

Digital and technology cooperation

23. The India-Japan Digital Partnership forms the cornerstone of our convergence in the digital realm, benefiting from the synergies between Japan's "Society 5.0" policy and India's "Digital India," "Startup India," and "Skill India" initiatives. This digital partnership has recently been renewed, further enhancing cooperation in startups, corporate ventures, electronics system design and manufacturing (ESDM), digital talent exchange, research and development, and security-related strategic collaboration.

24. Our cooperation in promoting science and technology spans a wide range of areas, including life sciences, material sciences, high-energy physics, biotechnology, robotics, alternative sources of energy, and earth sciences. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)

and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) pursue future collaborative activities in the peaceful use and exploration of outer space, disaster mitigation, and lunar missions. Collaboration in nuclear energy and exploration of critical minerals and emerging strategic technologies are also areas of exploration. Semiconductor fabrication units, 6G technology, and critical minerals mining and processing necessitate close collaboration.

People-to-people exchanges

25. People-to-people exchanges and human resource development remain essential facets of our partnership. More than 12,500 Indians reside in Japan, including highly skilled visa holders, among a total of over 40,000 Indians living there. India's vast pool of 1.5 million engineering graduates and 2.6 million STEM graduates can contribute significantly to Japan's aspirations in IT and fintech infrastructure development. We focus on capacity building through 22 Japanese Institutes of Manufacturing and 8 Japanese Endowment courses, which aim to impart Japanese work culture and processes. The Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) has been successful, and the signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation on Specified Skill Worker (SSW) will further facilitate skills matching. Efforts to overcome language barriers include the establishment of Japanese language schools in India. Over 600 linkages have been established between Indian and Japanese universities, facilitating student, teacher, and research and development exchanges. The strengthening of cultural exchanges has been an important pillar deepening and expanding our partnership.

26. In conclusion, the India-Japan partnership thrives on the continued support and engagement of not only the governments but also our people, institutions, and younger generations. It is through these collaborative efforts that we can construct a mutually beneficial

partnership, contributing to peace, progress, and harmony in the Indo-Pacific and the international order we inhabit.

Thank you very much.
