

**Speech by Ambassador Nagma M. Mallick at the Lunch meeting hosted by
the Mayor of Sano City
14 March 2026**

Hon'ble Mayor of Sano City Mr. Yutaka Kaneko,
Mr. Hitoshi Miyoshi, Chairman of Sano Chamber of Commerce and Industry and
other representatives from the Chamber,
Mr. Senthil Kumar, CEO of State Bank of India in Japan,
Esteemed leaders of the business community,
Representatives of Tochigi Prefecture and Sano City Assembly,
Friends from the banking sector, industry, and the Japan Cricket Association,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to join you here today in Sano City, and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mayor Kaneko and the city administration for hosting this luncheon.

I am particularly delighted to see such a distinguished gathering of representatives from the Sano Chamber of Commerce and Industry, local enterprises, financial institutions, and Tochigi Prefecture. Engagements such as today's meeting play an important role in deepening the economic and people-to-people foundations of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Our bilateral relationship has gained renewed momentum following the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Japan in August 2025, during which our leaders articulated a Joint Vision for the Next Decade to further strengthen economic cooperation, technology partnerships, and human resource exchanges.

A major highlight of this engagement has been Japan's commitment to mobilize ¥10 trillion in private investment in India over the coming decade, expanding cooperation in emerging sectors such as semiconductors, clean energy, artificial intelligence, battery ecosystems, and shipbuilding, as well as enhancing collaboration in people-to-people exchanges.

Friends,

India's economic story today is one of scale, stability, and opportunity. India continues to be among the fastest-growing major economies in the world,

Check Against Delivery

supported by strong domestic demand, policy continuity, and a young and dynamic workforce.

Japanese companies have played a vital role in India's industrial development. Today nearly 1,500 Japanese companies operate in India, across sectors ranging from automobiles and electronics to infrastructure and consumer products.

However, with bilateral trade currently around USD 25 billion, we believe there remains tremendous untapped potential, particularly through stronger engagement between Japanese SMEs and Indian enterprises. Tochigi Prefecture is widely recognized for its strong "Monozukuri" manufacturing culture, and it is home to a vibrant ecosystem of innovative small and medium-sized enterprises.

Friends,

We understand that Tochigi prefecture has developed notable strengths in various sectors including automotive & transportation equipment manufacturing, precision machinery & industrial materials, optical & electronic technologies, pharmaceutical & medical device manufacturing and agriculture & food processing. These capabilities create natural complementarities with India.

India today is emerging as a major hub for global manufacturing and supply chains, supported by a rapidly expanding market and a large pool of skilled talent. There are promising opportunities for collaboration between Tochigi companies and Indian partners in areas such as automotive and EV supply chains, precision engineering and advanced materials, medical technology and pharmaceuticals, electronics and digital technologies.

I am also pleased to note the presence here today of representatives from Sano Agricultural Cooperative and the food and beverage sector. Agriculture and food processing is another area where Japan's expertise in quality, technology, and value-added production can combine very effectively with India's large agricultural base and growing consumer market.

I am also very pleased to see representatives from the financial sector, including Sano Shinkin Bank and Tochigi Bank. Financial institutions play a vital role in supporting the international expansion of local enterprises, and I hope that banks in this region will actively support companies exploring opportunities in India.

Check Against Delivery

Let me also acknowledge the presence of representatives from the Parliamentary League for the Promotion of Cricket and the Japan Cricket Association.

Cricket has recently become a fascinating new bridge between our countries. In fact, as I mentioned a while ago, during the recent visit of Japan's Foreign Minister to India earlier this year, cricket even found its way into the conversation between our foreign ministers. It is encouraging to see cricket gaining popularity in Japan, particularly here in Tochigi Prefecture, which has become one of the centres of the sport in Japan. Sports exchanges such as these add a unique dimension to our broader relationship.

Friends,

Let me conclude by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Mayor of Sano, the Sano Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the business community of Tochigi Prefecture, and all our partners here today for their continued support in strengthening India-Japan relations.

I hope today's discussions will help create new partnerships, new investments, and new friendships between India and Sano City.

Thank you very much.

Arigatou gozaimasu.
