

India and Japan: A special partnership

In an increasingly uncertain world, both countries need to promote efforts toward the realisation of a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific'



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Today, I am visiting India, making my first bilateral visit since my appointment as Prime Minister. Linked by universal values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, which have been shared through a long history of exchange, Japan and India are "Special Strategic and Global Partners," which share strategic interests. In this milestone year, marking the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India, I am dearly looking forward to this visit, the first by a serving Prime Minister of Japan in four and a half years, and to be able to feel for myself the tremendous dynamism of India.

Since my appointment as Prime Minister in October last year, I have been concentrating on measures to overcome Covid-19, and working towards the realisation of a “new form of capitalism” that will revive the economy through a virtuous cycle of growth and distribution. As part of such measures, I am focusing on finding solutions to various social challenges, including digital, climate change and economic security in the growth strategy. India is certainly the best partner to have when seeking to realise a “new form of capitalism,” as showcased in India’s contribution in response to the global health crisis as a major manufacturing base, leadership in decarbonisation efforts, including through the International Solar Alliance, engagement in advanced digital society initiatives such as Aadhaar, and the promotion of economic security initiatives, including measures for supply chain resilience. These are why I was hoping to visit India as soon as possible after my appointment as Prime Minister.

Today, the international community faces a situation that is undermining the very foundation of the global order. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a clear violation of international law as well as an attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force, and it is totally unacceptable. Upholding the core principles of the international order is indispensable from the perspective of diplomacy and security in the Indo-Pacific, where the situation has been rapidly worsening. Japan will unite with the international community and take resolute actions. In the recent Japan-Australia-India-US (Quad) Leaders’ Video Conference, in which Prime Minister Modi and I participated, we concurred that any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo by force, such as this time, must not be tolerated in the Indo-Pacific region, and that it is precisely because of this situation that it is critical to further promote efforts toward the realisation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.

Against this backdrop, how can we protect the rules-based international order? Looking towards a post-Covid-19 world, how can we build resilient supply chains and reinvigorate the economy? How can we reform international organisations to match the realities of a rapidly changing world? How can we respond to new international challenges like cybersecurity and climate change? Both Japan and India are committed to taking bold measures to tackle such challenges. During this visit I am looking forward to engaging with Prime Minister Modi in a frank exchange of opinions on how

to crystallise the vision for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” based on the rule of law, while deepening discussions on the above-mentioned themes.

Seventy years after diplomatic relations were established, here in India today, a metro system built with the support of Japanese official development assistance (ODA) is in operation, cars built by Japanese companies run on the streets, and a high-speed rail will make its debut in the future. Although the Covid-19 situation remains challenging, people-to-people exchanges between our two countries are also being advanced.

Cooperation has also taken great strides in the area of security, including joint exercises between the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Indian Armed Forces. Cooperation is also rapidly developing between Japan, Australia, India and the United States, four countries that share fundamental values, and the next leaders’ summit is under coordination, in which Prime Minister Modi will also participate. As the name “Special Strategic and Global Partnership” suggests, Japan-India relations have evolved into an inclusive and multi-layered relationship based on cultural bonds, firm friendship, and common universal values. I sincerely hope that my visit to India will open a new chapter in bilateral relations that will deepen the “Japan-India Special Strategic, and Global Partnership” even further. I am looking forward to meeting the people of India.

The writer is the Prime Minister of Japan