

Speech

May 28, 2013

Tokyo, Japan

Prime Minister's address to Japan-India Association, Japan-India Parliamentary Friendship League and International Friendship Exchange Council

Your Excellency Mr. Yoshiro Mori, Chairman, Japan-India Association,

Your Excellency Mr. Nobutaka Machimura, President, Japan-India Parliamentary Friendship League,

Mr. Chihiro Kanagawa, Chairman, International Friendship Exchange Council,
Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here in this room full of friends of India. I am particularly gratified, and honoured, by the presence here of Mori-san.

Mori-san is not only a good personal friend. He is also a great friend of India. As Prime Minister of Japan, Mori-san laid the foundation of a new phase in the ancient relationship between our two countries and our two peoples. That is why we in India were privileged to confer on him our national honour of Padma Bhushan.

Friends,

Asia's resurgence began over a century ago on this island of the Rising Sun. Ever since, Japan has shown us the way forward. India and Japan have a shared vision of a rising Asia. Over the past decade, therefore, our two countries have established a new relationship based on shared values and shared interests. Japan's rise as a modern, knowledge-based industrial power was a source of inspiration to India's great national leaders. The philosopher Swami Vivekananda, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, the engineer M Vishweshwarayya, the patriot Subhas Chandra Bose and the nation builder Jawaharlal Nehru, and many more – were all inspired by Japan's great achievements in the 19th and 20th centuries.

More recently, India's gradual but sustained economic rise has created new opportunities for both our countries to cooperate and work together. India needs Japanese technology and investment. In turn, India offers increasing opportunities for the growth and globalization of Japanese companies for the overall prosperity and growth of Japan.

Friends,

I was most deeply honoured by the invitation that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe extended to me to be his first guest in Tokyo this year. Unfortunately, I was unable to travel at the time due to my parliamentary commitments.

While I missed the opportunity to visit during the Cherry Blossom season, I am delighted to be here in the season of Spring, which, I am confident, signifies a great future for our relationship. I am also convinced that friendship between our peoples, partnership between our businesses and cooperation between our defence and strategic communities will blossom further under the leadership of Prime Minister Abe.

On this occasion, I am reminded of Prime Minister Abe's inspiring and visionary address to the Indian Parliament in August 2007, when he spoke of "the confluence of the two seas" – the Pacific and the Indian Oceans – which has defined the new framework for our bilateral relationship. Prime Minister Abe and I will work together to strengthen our strategic partnership, impart new momentum to our economic cooperation and deepen our dialogue on shared regional and global interests.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Indo-Pacific region is witnessing profound social and economic changes on a scale and at a speed rarely seen in human history. It has experienced an unprecedented rise in freedom, opportunity and prosperity over the last half century.

At the same time, this region faces multiple challenges, unresolved issues and unsettled questions. Historical differences persist despite our growing inter-dependence; prosperity has not fully eliminated disparities within and between states; and there are continuing threats to stability and security.

It is in this moment of flux and change that we also have the greatest opportunity to chart a new course for Asia in this century. With the weight of the global economy and its drivers of growth shifting to this region, its future will also shape the contours of the world in this century.

India and Japan are among the major actors in this region. Our shared religious, cultural and spiritual heritage embodies the principles of peace, co-existence and pluralism. It is our responsibility to foster a climate of peace, stability and cooperation

and to lay an enduring foundation for security and prosperity. I would like to suggest three areas of cooperation in this regard.

First, we should strengthen regional mechanisms and forums that will help develop habits of consultation and cooperation, enable us to evolve commonly accepted principles for managing differences, reinforce congruence in the region and allow us to address common challenges.

Second, we should promote wider and deeper regional economic integration and enhance regional connectivity. This will promote more balanced and broad-based economic development across the region and also contribute to a more balanced regional architecture.

Third, maritime security across the linked regions of the Indian and Pacific Oceans is essential for regional and global prosperity. We should therefore uphold the principles of freedom of navigation and unimpeded lawful commerce in accordance with international law, resolve maritime issues peacefully and work together more purposefully to harness the potential of the seas and address common sea-based challenges such as piracy.

Friends,

India's own deepening engagement in the region is informed by this vision. Our Look East engagement began with a strong economic emphasis, but it has become increasingly strategic in its content. Our political relations have intensified with all countries and groupings like ASEAN. We have developed a web of trade and economic agreements.

We are emphasizing connectivity and participating actively in regional anchors of cooperation and security like the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Our relationship with Japan has been at the heart of our Look East Policy. Japan inspired Asia's surge to prosperity and it remains integral to Asia's future. The world has a huge stake in Japan's success in restoring the momentum of its growth. Your continued leadership in enterprise, technology and innovation and your ability to remain the locomotive of Asian renaissance are crucial.

India's relations with Japan are important not only for our economic development, but

also because we see Japan as a natural and indispensable partner in our quest for stability and peace in the vast region in Asia that is washed by the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Our relations draw their strength from our spiritual, cultural and civilizational affinities and a shared commitment to the ideals of democracy, peace and freedom. We have increasingly convergent world views and growing stakes in each other's prosperity. We have shared interests in maritime security and we face similar challenges to our energy security. There are strong synergies between our economies, which need an open, rule-based international trading system to prosper. Together, we seek a new architecture for the United Nations Security Council.

In recent years, our political and security cooperation has gained in salience. Japan is the only partner with whom we have a 2-plus-2 Dialogue between the Foreign and Defence Ministries. We have also begun bilateral exercises with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force.

Japan has long been part of important milestones in India's economic development efforts.

The Maruti-Suzuki collaboration sparked off a wave of industrial development in India. The Delhi Metro is inspiring a similar revolution in public transportation. Our two flagship infrastructure projects – the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor and the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor – are unmatched both in their size and scale. We are also exploring new projects such as an industrial corridor between Chennai and Bengaluru. Our Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement was launched in 2011 and last year we signed an agreement for cooperation in the field of rare earths.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All this would suggest that ours is already a rich relationship. However, we have set for ourselves higher ambitions consistent with the vision that we have for this partnership. Going forward, therefore, we should intensify our political dialogue and expand our strategic consultations on regions and issues of mutual interest. Our defence and security dialogue, military exercises and defence technology collaboration should grow. We should consult and coordinate more closely in global and regional forums.

Our relationship should also be anchored in expanded trade and investment relations.

As I told business leaders at the Keidanren function earlier today, there should be no doubt about our commitment and confidence that we will soon restore our growth to the 8%-plus levels that we experienced over the past decade.

This confidence stems from the strength of our economic fundamentals, the thriving spirit of enterprise in our country and the steps that we have taken recently to reform policies and accelerate implementation of mega projects.

Greater investment by Japanese companies in India's large market will be in our economic as well as strategic interest. This consideration should also guide closer engagement in high technology commerce, clean energy, energy security and skill development.

Prime Minister Abe and I have a rich agenda for discussion before us. Together, we had started the institution of annual summits and many initiatives that have given our relationship such extraordinary depth and diversity. We will seek not only to sustain the rising momentum of our relationship, but add new content and meaning to it, in the interest of our two countries, our region and our world.

Friends,

Let me conclude by confessing that Japan has been close to my heart ever since I first visited this beautiful country in 1971. It has been my dream to see our relationship grow and prosper, and this is an objective towards which I have worked in the last nine years of my tenure as Prime Minister of India. Today, I am heartened to witness the transformation of India-Japan relations into a durable partnership. I have no doubt your efforts and initiatives will continue to be a source of great strength for the relationship.

Thank you.