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PM Kishida's Maiden Visit to India

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India and Japan have been strengthening their 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' which started under the leadership of former Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe and Indian PM Narendra Modi.¹ Japan's incumbent PM Fumio Kishida, visited India on March 19, 2022, and his visit was quite significant as the two countries marked the 70th anniversary of their diplomatic relations². His visit to India is the first bilateral visit ever since he became PM in October 2021, which shows the importance of the relationship between India and Japan.

Kishida's visit to India is the 14th annual summit meeting between the two leaders, wherein, a wide range of issues were discussed, such as the Indo-Pacific concern, the Ukraine crisis, economic cooperation, and others.

Indo-Pacific

One of the fundamental outcomes of the summit was focusing on the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' region (FOIP). Japan's vision of FOIP was established under Shinzo Abe, and Kishida too aims to further strengthen this vision. At this summit, Kishida and Modi highlighted their commitment to work towards a peaceful and stable rules-based order and also reaffirmed their common stance towards the vision of FOIP. The two countries have also discussed the potential of partnering with other like-minded countries of the Quad for a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific. Kishida has expressed his keen desire to work towards the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative and support ASEAN's centrality in the Indo-Pacific. India and Japan also focus on continuing bilateral as well as multilateral exercises of 'Dharma Guardian' and 'Malabar'³. Both countries focus on maintaining the security of the maritime domain and the freedom of navigation. They also reaffirmed their desire to prioritise the role of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to cooperate against the rules-based maritime order in the South China Sea and the East China Sea⁴.

Economic Cooperation

Regarding the economic ties between India and Japan, the two nations have successfully achieved the target of 3.5 trillion yen in public and private funding investments in India⁵. There are around 1455 Japanese companies in India. Japan is known to be the 5th largest source of FDI and the largest supplier of Official Development Assistance (ODA)⁶. Several Indian infrastructure projects are also underway with the help of Japanese assistance, for instance, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and metro projects. Furthermore, India and Japan have also collaborated on startups, and Tokyo has also invested in technology startups in India. Kishida aimed to invest 5 trillion Yen in a span of over five years, which implies that Japanese companies view India as a profitable investment destination. Kishida also believes that his plans for \$42 billion in investments would prove to be beneficial for industries in India, especially

in the development of urban infrastructure and green energy. Moreover, the investments would also boost Japanese investments, build resilient supply chains, and skill Indian labour.

The two leaders expressed their serious concern over the Ukraine crisis. Kishida strongly condemned the Russian attack, while India focused on resolving the issue through peace and dialogue. Japan feels that the Russian attack was a violation of international law and the attempt to change the status quo unilaterally is condemnable. Both Modi and Kishida feel that due to this situation, it is crucial to make efforts towards maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.

The two nations also discussed China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific and its encroachment on India's borders, the most recent one being the Ladakh standoff. Regarding the peace in the international community, both India and Japan condemned Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks and also reaffirmed their commitment to work towards ensuring peace in Afghanistan.

Kishida and Modi discussed the signing of an energy cooperation document that includes carbon reduction and also recognised the importance of tackling climate change. Both nations aim at achieving global net-zero emissions and have also embraced the launch of the India-Japan clean energy partnership for sustainable economic growth.

The next Quad summit meeting is likely to be held in Japan in the coming months, which will further shape the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region. Kishida's visit has marked the reaffirmation of the economic and strategic ties between the two nations and also displayed the prospects of further cooperation between the two.

NOTES

¹ "Japan-India Relations", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, November 18, 2021, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/india/data.html>, Accessed on March 23, 2022

² Shubhajit Roy, "Explained: 5 reasons why Japanese PM Fumio Kishida's India visit is important", *Indian Express*, March 20, 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-japan-pm-fumio-kishidas-india-visit-narendra-modi-7826828/>, Accessed on March 23, 2022

³ "Exercise Dharma Guardian-2022 Culminates at Belgaum (Karnataka)", *Ministry of Defence*, March 10, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=180480>, Accessed on March 24, 2022

⁴ "United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea", *UN Official Website*, https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf, Accessed on March 25, 2022.

⁵ "Japan announces investment target of Rs 3.2 trn in India in next five years", *Business Standard*, March 19, 2022, https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/japan-announces-investment-target-of-rs-3-2-trn-in-india-in-next-five-years-122031900758_1.html, Accessed on March 25, 2022,

⁶ "India-Japan Summit Joint Statement Partnership for a Peaceful, Stable and Prosperous Post-COVID World", *Ministry of External Affairs*, March 19, 2022, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/34991/IndiaJapanSummitJointStatementPartnershipforaPeacefulStableandProsperousPostCOVIDWorld>, Accessed on March 25, 2022.