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Japan's Revival and the Japan-India Global Strategic Partnership

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Mr. Sidharth Birla, Senior Vice President of FICCI, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

Thank you for having me today.

1)

Now, let me begin by saying that you are the biggest democracy in the world. We are the oldest democracy in Asia.

That means that both in India and Japan, we have noisy beehives in the name of parliament.

That also means that you love your press on one day, and the next day, you hate them.

India's newspapers really bite.

And I know I have been bitten many times myself by the newspapers in Japan.

Monsoon spread your people, commerce, and culture. Monsoon also gave a lot to the eastern-most part of Asia, namely Japan.

Your navy is an ascending navy. It is feeling more and more responsible for the IOR, or the Indian Ocean Region and beyond into the Pacific.

Our navy is what I feel proud of. And it is feeling more and more responsible for the IOR as well, because since 2001, some of our naval ships are always in operation, somewhere in the IOR.

And the IOR's value needs no exaggeration. It is the area where 80% of world energy passes.

You are a deeply religious people. We are as well, for the Japanese are among the few who believe in the philosophy of transmigration.

Take any Buddhist temple in Japan, and see Fuujin, Wind-god, or Rai-jin, Thunder-god. They are all Hindu gods. Without realising, the Japanese have worshiped your gods century after century.

One difference would be that you play cricket and we play baseball, but that does not matter.

The biggest difference, perhaps, is that you speak English and we normally don't, and when we do, we do it poorly like me.

But even that makes us good partners to one another. When working together, your verbal talent should serve us well.

What does all that tell us?

It tells us just one thing.

We are natural-born partners, bound by common philosophy, religious views, interests and values.

That's why Shinzo Abe spoke of "Confluence of the Two Seas" at the Indian Parliament, your own beehive.

That's why I spoke of Arc of Freedom and Prosperity as Foreign Minister.

In the arc, India stood out as among the highest summits.

I know my colleagues at the Ministry of Finance are now anxious.

"What is our Minister talking about? He is saying very little about our economic policies, financial policies, or our debt-management policies," many of them should be wondering that way.

But I must go on because with the Indians I feel somehow easier to speak of big picture issues.

Rest assured, as I shall touch on our usual agendas like Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor

and so on.

We are natural-born partners and we have much to celebrate this year.

Your Prime Minister is expected to visit Tokyo soon.

In return, it is likely that from Japan Prime Minister Abe will visit Delhi in due course.

Much more importantly, nothing makes me feel prouder than this: Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan are looking forward to visiting India.

There are two kinds of allies. Allies as in treaty allies, and allies in the sense we think the same way on so many things.

India and Japan are not treaty allies. We will unlikely be. But we are already heart-to-heart, philosophy binding, value-driven allies, and are we not?

In the remainder, I shall speak on three points.

Firstly, I shall say a few words on what is now called Abenomics.

Secondly, I shall say also a few words on our industrial ties.

And thirdly before conclusion, I shall revisit the importance of our strategic relations.

2)

Now on Abenomics, that is about three arrows.

Shinzo Abe was an archery player when he was young.

I was not. I was a clay pigeon shooter and represented Japan for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal.

So when Mr Abe speaks about arrows, I call them bazookas.

Anyhow, Abenomics shoots three arrows, or bazookas.

Bold monetary policy, that is the first.

Flexible fiscal policy, that is the second.

And effective growth policies that could invite more and more private investment activities, which is the third arrow, or bazooka.

Come visit us in Tokyo.

Come and see how dramatically it has changed.

You get the tallest tower in the world.

Some of the oldest business districts are now filled with shoppers.

Its skyline has also changed.

Come and witness that the people in Japan look, somehow, more upbeat.

Next month, it is the bonus month in Japan.

Many people will get bonus, and they will spend more.

No other administration in my own memory has succeeded this much in turning the people's perceptions, from dark and grey to bright and cheerful.

Sometimes, you had better be out of office. We, the Liberal Democratic Party, were out of office for three years. Then, we thought it hard.

We asked ourselves what had gone wrong. Why we could not get rid of deflation.

And we realised.

We must do a lot of things in one fell swoop.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is what we are doing now.

3)

There is much more to come.

And here, I am turning to my second point, which is about our industrial ties.

Next month, we are going to publish our growth policy package.

Prime Minister Abe has already indicated that the three words of "challenge," "openness," and "innovation" should drive the package.

Agro-industry should be turned an export industry.

Medical innovation, like stem-cell technology, is among the most promising.

Female labour participation should be encouraged much, much more.

And India, ladies and gentlemen, should play a key role for our growth policies.

India is a land of promises for Japan and its industries.

I cannot forget what I saw as Foreign Minister, in your Delhi Metro project.

The collaboration between the Japanese engineers and the Indian worked tremendously well.

Now, think about this. A Czech writer, named Karel Capek first used the word "robot," back in 1920.

The word "robot" came from a Czech word "robota." What do you think "robota" means? It means, simply, slave labour. So in its original sense, robot meant slave.

But in a nation where people do not hate but love to work, robots became their friends.

That's why in Japan, ladies and gentlemen, robots are not super human but friends to children.

That's why in Japan Doraemon, a lovely animation character, was born, and is still loved.

I am so glad to see, Indian children in love with Doraemon, too.

More seriously, the Japanese are a work-loving bunch.

I am of a view that an idea that to work hard is to live better can transcend national boundaries.

And in India, I am of a belief that collaboration between the Japanese and the Indians should bring that idea more deeply into your collective mind-set.

Soon, Japan's aid organisation, JICA, is going to send experts in many fields to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is a rich country, materially and financially.

Notwithstanding their abundance of resources, they are still willing to invite the JICA experts.

We are honored that, this much, they want Japanese experts.

I think their idea is the same. They can get industrial know-how from the Japanese experts.

But they also know that by working together with the Japanese they can get something less physical and more psychological, something much to do with work ethics.

The true significance of our joint projects, such as Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, or our possible future collaboration on electric power technologies, including nuclear, is there.

By working together, the Indian work force will become as work-loving as their Japanese counterparts.

And for the Japanese, it will be a tremendous honour if they could grow by working together with the Indians.

That is at the core of Abe's message when he says openness should invite more growth.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are very much delighted to be part of your industrialization.

To be part of an unfolding drama of this magnitude is a once in a lifetime experience. Your energy should rekindle our gung-ho spirit that the Japanese have lost.

In India, we would like to sell not only cars. We would like to sell Japanese strawberries and melons, our advanced medical services and technologies.

With India, Japan can, should and must grow, too.

Again, when we say openness invites more growth, we are thinking very much about the limitless possibilities India can offer to us.

4)

Now it's time to look at our strategic ties, my third point.

Alliance, in the Indian context, drops some jaws, and I am aware of that.

We will not call you our ally in the sense we call America.

But almost, you are.

And already, you are our heart-to-heart, philosophy bound, and common value driven ally.

As two of the vibrant democracies in Asia, we share the same outlook in many respects.

Neither one of us is a revisionist. Far from that.

Both of us know that the international order functions only when based upon established rules and laws.

India and Japan are both maritime democracies.

What happens in the Western Pacific should affect your interests.

What happens in the IOR should affect the interests of my country.

Most importantly, we both know that we must be good stewards of freedom of movement.

In the seas, in the air space, in the outer space and in the cyber space, India and Japan both care about the freedom of movement.

That is the awareness India and Japan have developed to share in our recent past.

Already, we have come a long way.

The Japanese and the Americans have been learning a lot from your perspectives whenever they meet for the "track one" trilateral dialogue.

For Japan, few other countries are like India.

With India, of course we already have an EPA.

But because we are close partners sharing the same values and perspectives, we now have Two plus Two meetings between our Secretaries from defence and foreign ministries.

It is my hope that the Two plus Two dialogue will gain even more clout in the eyes of the Indians and the Japanese, as well as in the eyes of all the nations concerned.

To safeguard our commons in the cyber space, we now have a bilateral dialogue.

To free our world from terror, we also have a bilateral dialogue on terrorism.

On the broadest possible maritime issues, I am pleased to be saying that India and Japan now have an official dialogue. The inaugural meeting took place January this year.

In those meetings, the areas for future cooperation are being spelt out.

Your port facilities need further investment.

Your marine industries, in general, have much room to cooperate with the Japanese.

I would like to bring here an across-the-board support from my country, involving both government and private sectors.

And there is much, much more room, for intensified cooperation between our coast guards as well as between our two navies.

In that sense I was most delighted to see that for the first time we did a bilateral navy to navy exercise last year in Japan.

We should do it more on a regular basis.

The more the two coast guards and the two navies meet, the better the entire maritime areas will be served.

Why? Because both of us are well developed, seasoned democracies.

To fight against piracy, to fight against natural disasters, and to be a stabilizing force across the wide confluence of the two seas, our joint maritime capacities should go only upwards.

5)

But, the reality is, there is much to be done on my side.

Firstly, we must enlarge our mental map to fully embrace India's role and presence as a global player.

Andaman Nicobar is a case in point.

It is a shame that few of our young generation in Japan have heard anything about the islands.

The truth is, few other places bear more strategic importance than Andaman Nicobar.

Because of their presence India is an integral part of South East Asia.

More people in Japan, especially those in uniform, should know more about it.

The IOR will certainly gain strategic importance even more in the future.

The Japanese should catch up with the reality by widening their mental map. After all, my country has its first-ever overseas base in Djibouti.

Only then we could enhance our maritime security cooperation and inter-operability, and strengthen our links between the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force and the Indian Navy, from Yokosuka to Port Blair to Djibouti.

Secondly, some of the old habits die hard.

I am thinking of the self-imposed ban on the export of defence equipment and technologies.

Without it, India and Japan would have been able to develop and share much more advanced technologies in a far more cost-effective way.

I am also re-thinking of another ban we have imposed on ourselves. That is about the right of collective self-defence.

The right of collective self-defence is a right any nation has. However, my country has maintained that it has the right, and yet it cannot exercise it.

Without the ban on the right of collective self-defence, Japan could have done much more good in a far more meaningful way to the protection of peace and order in the international arena.

Those are some of the issues our government is coping with.

Those are important issues for both of us, India and Japan, to become net providers of regional security as Asia's two largest maritime democracies.

To conclude, let me invite you again to see why we are doing what we are doing in Abenomics.

It is because we believe a shrinking Japan could do harm to everyone, and only a growing Japan could do good to the nation, to the region and to the world.

I should end by repeating what Prime Minister Abe said in his parliamentary address in Delhi.

A strong India is in the best interest of Japan, and a strong Japan is in the best interest of India.

Thank you very much.