

Coordination with India now even more vital given its outstanding leadership: Japan's Foreign minister

Updated: Mar 3 2023 12:53PM



New Delhi, Mar 3 (PTI): Following is the text of PTI's exclusive interview with Japan's Foreign minister Yoshimasa Hayashi:

PTI: How do you see the overall trajectory of India-Japan strategic and economic cooperation and what is the significance of your visit to New Delhi?

What are the major achievements of bilateral relations between India and Japan in their 70th anniversary of ties and what are Japan's expectations from India?

Foreign Minister Hayashi :

India is the world's biggest democracy, and the Special Strategic Global Partner with whom Japan shares basic principles and strategic interests. Further, this year is crucial as Japan chairs G7 and India chairs G20. Japan wishes to cooperate closely with India and contribute to the international community.

Last year was a milestone year for Japan-India bilateral ties as it marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship. Throughout the year, many high level interactions took place including Prime Minister Kishida's visit to India, two visits by Prime Minister Modi to Japan and the second Japan-India 2+2 Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting. Especially, our cooperation flourished in the area of security and defense, an example of which is the first ever Japan-India Bilateral Fighter Jet Exercise that took place in Japan in January this year.

Turning to economic relations, Prime Minister Kishida announced the goal of 5 trillion yen public and private investment and financing from Japan to India in the next five years in his visit March last year. In order to achieve this goal, Japan is deepening economic bonds and encouraging Japanese companies to boost their investment in India. Looking ahead, we will work with India on pressing issues such as clean energy and economic security by building on our existing economic ties.

Further, both our countries organized many events throughout 2022 to celebrate the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. The celebrations concluded with a grand finale, constituting joint performance of Yabusame horseback archery and tent pegging, which was a huge success. We look forward to further promoting such cultural exchanges.

PTI: What would be the key priorities for Japan in its ties with India in the backdrop of the fast changing geopolitical turmoil triggered largely by the Ukraine conflict which has created food and energy security concerns?

Foreign Minister Hayashi:

The Russian invasion of Ukraine put a great strain on the international economy and livelihoods of people all around the world in various aspects, including energy and food. Given these circumstances, Japan is keen to discuss with India ways to respond to key issues such as food and energy security, with the cooperation of the international community.

In addition, leveraging existing economic ties, Japan will work with India bilaterally to respond to such challenges and consider ways of effective cooperation with middle to long-term perspectives.

For instance, Japan wishes to utilize the Japan-India Clean Energy Partnership, launched during Prime Minister Kishida's visit to India in March 2022, in order to realize carbon neutral and safe and stable supply of energy. New energy sources such as hydrogen and ammonia are also promising areas of cooperation.

PTI: How do you see concerns relating to China's aggressive military muscle-flexing in the East China Sea, South China Sea, Taiwan Strait, Indo-Pacific and along its border with India? What are the ways to deal with China's belligerence in these regions?

Foreign Minister Hayashi:

As Japan is finding itself in the midst of the most severe and complex security environment since the end of WW II, maintaining and strengthening the free and open international order based on the rule of law has never been more important. Against this backdrop, Japan has issued a new National Security Strategy.

Vis- -vis China, there are a number of challenges and concerns along with various opportunities, such as China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force in the East and South China Seas, including in the waters surrounding the Senkaku Islands. This also includes a series of military activities by China around

Taiwan, in particular the launch of ballistic missiles into the seas adjacent to Japan which also includes its Exclusive Economic Zones.

The National Security Strategy revised late last year views China's current external stance and military activities as an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and stability of Japan and the international community, as well as strengthening the international order based on the rule of law. It states that Japan should respond with comprehensive national power and in cooperation with its ally and like-minded countries.

At the same time, Japan and China have great responsibility towards the peace and prosperity of the region and the world. Keeping up the positive momentum set at the Japan-China leaders' meeting in last November, Japan will firmly maintain and assert our position and strongly requests responsible actions from China. At the same time, both sides will make effort to build a constructive and stable relationship by continuing dialogues, including at the leaders' level, and working together on common challenges.

PTI: Do you think the energy of Quad will further charge up the India-Japan ties and encourage it to work towards ensuring Asian diversity amid China's attempt to expand its overall influence?

Foreign Minister Hayashi:

The Indo-Pacific hosts a wide variety of countries in terms of politics, economics, culture and religion. Therefore, to maintain peace and stability of this region, it is necessary to build a free and open international order that is inclusive and based on the rule of law in accordance with the vision of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)"

The Quad is a framework of four countries which share this vision of FOIP in order to achieve effective cooperation to materialize this vision. The Quad is not an initiative to counter something nor for military cooperation; rather, to borrow Prime Minister Modi's words, it is a "force for good." The four nations have been working on a wide range of practical cooperation including in health, infrastructure, climate change, maritime domain awareness and disaster response.

I strongly believe that candid discussions among the four countries, which share a common vision for the future, including at leaders and foreign ministers' level, will contribute to the deepening of Japan-India relations as well.

PTI: What are your expectations from India's G-20 presidency as it has taken the leadership when the world is witnessing several pressing challenges?

Foreign Minister Hayashi:

2023 is a crucial year as Japan chairs G7 and India chairs G20. As the premier forum for international economic cooperation, G20 is of paramount importance for responding effectively to issues facing the

international community, such as food security and development. As the G7 President, Japan wishes to coordinate closely with the G20 President, India.

Because of the adverse effect of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, establishing access to affordable, safe and nutritious food as well as ensuring resilient food security has become an urgent priority. Moreover, transparent and fair developmental finance has become essential for sustainable development of developing countries. There is ample room for cooperation between G7 and G20, especially in these areas.

Nevertheless, given that Russia continues its aggression in Ukraine and is a member of the G20, we can no longer sustain cooperation in the same ways as before the invasion. We will explore how we can collaborate with such limitations in consultation with India.

Furthermore, under its G7 Presidency, Japan strives to cooperate extensively with partners in the international community. Given India's outstanding leadership, including its hosting Voice of Global South Summit in January, coordination with India is now even more vital. Japan looks forward to working hand in hand with India to lead responses to global challenges.