

**Embassy of India**

**Tokyo**

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**Inaugural Address by Ambassador of India to Japan H.E. Mr. Sibi George at the Seminar on “India-Japan Partnership : Okinawa”, Embassy of India, Tokyo, 20 September 2024**

**His Excellency Mr Denny Tamaki, Hon’ble Governor of Okinawa Prefecture**

**His Excellency Mr Kyoki Nakagawa, Chairperson of the Assembly of Okinawa Prefecture**

**His Excellency Mr Masahisa Miyazaki, State Minister, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan**

**His Excellency Mr Konosuke Kokuba, State Minister, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism of Japan**

**His Excellency Mr Tatsumi Takara, Hon’ble Member of House of Councillors of Japan**

**Mr Ryuko Hira, Founder of Okinawa India Friendship Association**

**Mr Moritake Tomikawa, Chairman of Okinawa India Friendship Association**

**Distinguished guests**

Good afternoon!

I would like to start by welcoming His Excellency Mr. Denny Tamaki, Governor of Okinawa Prefecture, and the entire delegation from Okinawa. I fondly recall my visit to Okinawa last year when I had

the honor of meeting the Governor and discussing the possibility of this event.

2. I'm delighted that we have made this event a reality today, which marks the start of a new chapter in our engagement with Okinawa and Japan. Your presence, Governor Tamaki, along with the official and business delegation, shows the importance you place on strengthening ties between India and Japan. I also warmly welcome our Indian representatives joining us virtually, as well as the Indian community physically present here today.

3. India and Japan share a deep-rooted history of spiritual and cultural connections. Over the past decade, our relationship has transformed into a strong economic and strategic partnership. Today, we share a Special Strategic and Global Partnership, built on mutual respect, shared values, and a vision for peace and prosperity. We now work together in areas such as trade, investment, digital initiatives, clean energy, health, space, and defense and security. We also share the objective of ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, including through initiatives like the QUAD.

4. Economic cooperation is a key part of our partnership. Japan is one of the largest investors in India, and we have set a target of 5 trillion yen in public and private investment from Japan by 2027. We are already making good progress on this target. Our business collaboration covers sectors like infrastructure, manufacturing, technology, and innovation.

5. With a population of over 1.4 billion people and the world's largest and youngest workforce, India is the fastest-growing large economy. Our government has focused on making India an attractive investment destination by improving policies, simplifying regulations, and enhancing infrastructure.

**Friends,**

6. Over the last two years, I have traveled across Japan, visiting all 47 prefectures and major cities. Everywhere I have gone, I have seen growing interest in India as a promising investment destination and a preferred business partner. I am confident that, with your support, we can turn this interest into real business opportunities in the coming months.

7. Currently, around 1,500 Japanese companies operate in India, but our goal is to grow this to 15,000 through a bold leap, and not incremental steps. Japan is the only country with dedicated industrial townships in India, offering infrastructure, simplified regulations, and a skilled workforce. These 11 townships, across 8 states, host major companies like Suzuki, Daikin, and Panasonic. To support this growth, we have established an SME Facilitation Cell at the Embassy to assist Japanese small and medium enterprises in exploring opportunities in India's market.

### **Friends,**

8. Okinawa, with its natural beauty, vibrant culture and rich history has long been a destination of global interest. It can become one of the focal points for deeper collaboration between India and Japan, particularly in areas such as tourism, education, and information technology, which are also the focus areas for today's presentations.

9. The tourism sector in Okinawa, known for its pristine beaches and rich cultural experiences, offers immense potential for Indian tourists, who are increasingly seeking unique travel destinations. Similarly, India's rich cultural and historical heritage is an attractive prospect for tourists from Okinawa. By working together to enhance connectivity and promote our shared cultural experiences, we can create a strong tourism bridge between our countries.

10. Another area with significant promise is education. The presence of premier institutions like IIT Hyderabad and the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology (OIST) at this event highlights the importance

of academic collaboration. There is great potential for research partnerships, student exchanges, and joint programs between our countries.

11. The IT sector is also a key area for collaboration. India's position as a global leader in IT services and software development aligns with Okinawa's efforts to support digital transformation and technology-driven industries.

12. I would also like to take a moment to recall the large delegation from Okinawa that visited India earlier this year, organized by The Okinawa Times. This visit was a clear expression of the strong desire for deeper engagement, and we must build upon these exchanges to further strengthen our business, cultural, and academic ties.

**Friends,**

13. I would like to conclude by expressing my gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Denny Tamaki, Hon'ble Governor of Okinawa Prefecture, and the esteemed delegation for their presence today. I also extend my sincere thanks to the Hon'ble Chairman of the Okinawa Assembly, the Hon'ble Ministers, and Hon'ble Diet members joining us. A special word of appreciation goes to the Okinawa India Friendship Association for its active role in strengthening our ties. I am confident that today's discussions will come out with valuable insights and pave the way for productive collaborations in tourism, education, IT, and beyond.

Thank you.

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