

**Speech by H.E. Ambassador Sibi George**  
**SPF Seminar**  
**Reflections on Peace from Imphal 80 years later**  
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- Dr. Yohei Sasakawa, Chairman Sasakawa Peace Foundation  
Dr. Atsushi Sunami, President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation  
Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, Namaste and Konnichiwa!
- It is my pleasure to address this seminar titled 'Reflections on Peace from Imphal 80 Years Later' organised by Sasakawa Peace Foundation.
- Ladies and gentlemen, the enduring bonds of the India and Japan Special Strategic & Global Partnership are built over centuries through many wonderful stories. These stories are rooted in our shared values of democracy, rule of law and mutual respect, our civilizational & spiritual connect, the aspirations of our people and are further guided by the vision of our leadership.
- One of these stories is that of the India- Japan historical connect in the North East of India. Our past connections particularly during the years of World War II have been captured in the Imphal Peace Museum, by the hard-work of Sasakawa Peace Foundation & Nippon Foundation. The museum has now become a testimony to the close relationship between India and Japan. Located at the foothills of the Red Hills of Manipur, the museum is a reminder of events that have shaped India's history. When Hon'ble External Affairs Minister H.E. Dr. S. Jaishankar visited the Imphal Peace Museum, he noted the calligraphy of Hon'ble former Prime Minister H.E. Late Mr. Shinzo Abe at the museum, which spells 'Heiwa' ("peace") in Japanese Kanji, reflecting the India-Japan vision to strengthen cooperation & peace in the world.

- This year India & Japan are celebrating the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Special Strategic and Global Partnership. The friendship between the two countries is much older and has a long history. The Shichifukujin or the seven lucky gods of Japan have their roots in Hindu traditions. The cultural connect has expanded over the years, with curry, naan and now dosa becoming a relished staple in Japan and Japanese cuisine growing in popularity in India.
- I am also happy to state that from day after tomorrow that is beginning of September we plan to celebrate "India Month" —a month-long celebration of the deep and enduring ties that bind our two nations with the theme "Connecting Himalayas with Mt Fuji". More than just a celebration of our culture, tourism, and business partnerships; it is a reflection of the shared values and mutual respect that have characterized the India-Japan partnership for decades.
- The North East region, comprising of eight states, is emerging as a new frontier of India's growth. With an international borders of 5,182 kilometres with 5 countries, North East is a strategic location and the Gateway to Southeast Asia for India. The region's geographical proximity to these dynamic markets, vast natural resources, young & dynamic work force, presents immense trade and investment opportunities, which Investors can leverage to establish strong trade networks, foster economic ties, and tap into the region's potential as a vibrant economic hub.
- Japan is a valuable partner for the economic development of the North East. We have set up the India-Japan Act East Forum, which takes up projects for economic modernization of the North East. The range of projects taken up is quite diverse and includes improvement of National Highways in Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura; hydropower in Meghalaya; biodiversity conservation and forest management in Sikkim, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya; and water supply and sanitation in Assam. Recently we did a seminar on tourism and

business opportunities in Arunachal Pradesh in the Embassy to a packed auditorium, inviting Japanese people & businesses to come & experience Arunachal.

- Be it the cluster-based approach for development of agro-industrial hubs, organic farming or development of the immense tourism potential through connectivity projects or the massive investments in building social and physical infrastructure in the region, sustained efforts are being made by the Government to increase the growth and development of the region. These efforts are also aimed at improving the ease of doing business through active investment promotion which will, in turn, revitalize the demand and supply chains to unlock newer business opportunities.
- The possibilities for collaboration between Japan and India in the North East are limitless, whether it be in the fields of information technology, infrastructure development, agribusiness, food processing, horticulture, energy, cultural exchanges, education, skill development or tourism, there are ample avenues waiting to be explored.
- I am confident that in coming months and years India - Japan collaboration in our North East will continue to flourish. I extend a warm invitation to Japanese companies to engage more actively in North East, contributing to its progress and prosperity. I also welcome more Japanese citizens to visit the Northeast, and experience its vibrancy first-hand. We look forward to more Japanese projects in the Northeast including in Arunachal Pradesh.
- I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the participants for their presence in today's seminar, and am hopeful that the connections forged during this Seminar will yield significant opportunities for driving economic growth, advancing sustainable development, and strengthening further relationship between India & Japan.

Thank you, Arigatou gozaimashita.

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