



Revisiting India-Japan Relations

For Prelims: [Indo-Pacific region](#), [ASEAN](#), [United Nations Charter](#), [Veer Guardian](#), [Dharma Guardian](#), [JIMEX](#), [Buddhism](#)

For Mains: India-Japan Relations, Strategic Partnerships and Regional Security, Key Challenges and Way Forward in India-Japan Relations

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan reinforced the [India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership](#), resulting in **13 key agreements** and a pledge of **10 trillion yen (USD 68 billion) investment** in private investment from Japan over the next decade.

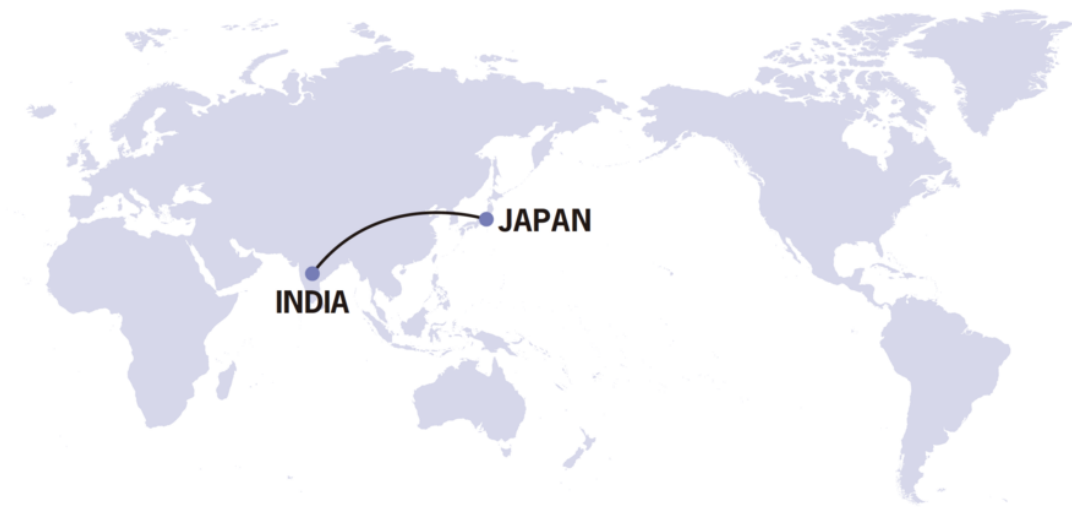
How is the India-Japan Strategic Partnership Evolving in Key Sectors?

The key announcements and developments made during the Prime Minister's visit are as follows:

- **Joint Vision Roadmap:** Announcement of the **India-Japan Joint Vision for the Next Decade**, outlining **8 priority areas**- economic partnership, security, mobility, ecological sustainability, technology and innovation, health, people-to-people ties, and state-prefecture engagement.
- **Defence & Security Cooperation:** India and Japan signed a **Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation**, marking a substantial update and expansion of their 2008 agreement.
 - Institutionalised **NSA-level dialogue** and expanded tri-service exercises (Dharma Guardian, Veer Guardian, Milan).
 - **DRDO-ATLA collaboration** on missile defence and maritime surveillance; movement towards **co-production** of defence equipment.
- **Technology & Space Collaboration:** Launched **Digital Partnership 2.0** and **India-Japan AI Initiative for Large Language Models (LLMs)** and R&D.
 - Signed ISRO-JAXA pact for **Chandrayaan-5 joint lunar polar mission**.
 - Cooperation in **robotics, semiconductors, shipbuilding, space awareness**, and nuclear energy.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Progress on **Bullet Train project** with next-gen Shinkansen (**360 kmph**) in both countries by **2030**, suited for **seismic zones**.
 - Launched **Next-Gen Mobility Partnership** across transport sectors.
 - Japan's continued support through projects like **Delhi Metro** (USD 2.6 Billion investment) and vision for 7,000-km high-speed rail by 2047.
- **Green Energy & Climate Cooperation:** Operationalised **Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)** under Paris Agreement.
 - Signed declarations on **Clean Hydrogen & Ammonia**; launched **Sustainable Fuel**

Initiative.

- **People-to-People Cooperation: Action Plan on Human Resource Exchange** to enable mobility of 5 lakh people, including 50,000 Indian workers.
 - Launched **Next-Gen State Prefecture Partnership**, cultural MoUs, and diplomacy training programs.



How Have India-Japan Deepened Their Bilateral Relationship?

- **Historical Ties:** India and Japan share civilizational links through **Buddhism**.
 - [Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru](#) donated an elephant to Japan (1949), symbolizing the beginning of a renewed relationship after [World War II](#).
 - India established diplomatic relations with Japan in 1952 with the signing of a peace treaty.
- **Strategic Partnership:** The relationship was elevated over time with the signing of **Global Partnership (2000)**, **Strategic & Global Partnership (2006)**, and **Special Strategic & Global Partnership (2014)**.
 - 'India-Japan Vision 2025' was announced in 2015 outlining a framework for cooperation.
- **Defence & Security:** India-Japan defence ties have strengthened since 2015 with agreements on **Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation and Security of Classified Military Information**.
 - Key milestones include **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue (2019)**, and [Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement \(ACSA\) \(2020\)](#).
 - Regular **Joint Working Group on Defence Equipment and Technology Cooperation (JWG-DETC)** meetings.
 - Amendments to the **Three Principles for Transfer of Equipment and Technology (2023)**, and the first **Joint Services Staff Talks (2023)** have enhanced **tri-service interoperability**.
 - Exercises include **Malabar, Milan, JIMEX, Dharma Guardian**, and **Coast Guard cooperation**, with focus on **technology transfer**.
- **Indo-Pacific & Regional Cooperation:** India's **Act East Policy** and **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** align with Japan's **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)** vision.
 - The [Act East Forum \(2017\)](#) and joint statements emphasising a "**Free and Open Indo-Pacific**" guide strategic cooperation.
 - Japan is India's **largest Official Development Assistance (ODA)** donor, and both cooperate in **Quad, ISA, CDRI, and SCRI**.
- **Trade & Investment:** As part of the **China+1 strategy**, Japan views India as a key **manufacturing base and market**.
 - The review of [CEPA](#) and promotion of **GIFT City** aim to boost trade and financial ties, while **Japan's USD 68 billion investment pledge by 2035** reflects strong confidence in India's growth.

- The Joint Action Plan on Economic Security further reinforces supply chain resilience, marking a transformative phase in bilateral economic relations.

What Are the Key Challenges in India-Japan Relations?

- **Trade Imbalance:** Despite the CEPA, bilateral trade remains skewed in Japan's favour.
 - In FY24, Japan exported goods worth USD 17.69 billion to India, while India's exports stood at only USD 5.15 billion.
 - **Non-tariff barriers, stringent import standards** (especially on agriculture and textiles), and slow progress in CEPA reform are the **major contributing factors**.
- **Divergent Strategic Outlooks:** India's strategic autonomy contrasts with Japan's formal alliance with the U.S., leading to differences in response to issues like Russia sanctions.
 - This divergence affects coordination in multilateral forums and weakens strategic alignment.
- **Regional Priorities:** India focuses on **South Asia, and the Indian Ocean**, while Japan is preoccupied with **East Asian security, North Korea, and US alliance obligations**, limiting full engagement.
- **Delays in Development:** The **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail (MAHSR) project** faces significant delays due to land acquisition hurdles and regulatory issues, pushing completion from 2022 to 2028.
 - The US-2 amphibious aircraft deal remains stalled over unresolved concerns on technology transfer and pricing.

What Steps Are Needed to Advance India-Japan Strategic Partnership?

- **Economic Transformation:** Reform **CEPA** to unlock trade potential, anchor **Japanese FDI** in **semiconductors, critical minerals, and manufacturing**, and expand the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** as a credible alternative to Chinese dominance.
- **Defence & Security:** Enhance defence collaboration focusing on **shared security, joint exercises, technology transfer, and co-development projects**.
- **Indo-Pacific & Regional Strategy:** Ensure **coherence in approach** at platforms such as **QUAD**, promoting **freedom of navigation** and the **rules-based order**, and engage diplomatically to **promote regional peace**, despite differences on global issues like Ukraine.
- **Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Accelerate **Bullet Train, industrial corridors, and connectivity projects**, including in **India's Northeast** and **ports linking India, Japan, and Indo-Pacific partners**, enhancing **multilateral infrastructure cooperation**.
- **People-to-People Exchanges:** Promote **academic exchanges, language programs, tourism, diaspora engagement, and business forums**, including **skilled worker mobility** and **digitalisation support by Indian IT professionals**, to strengthen **soft power and business-to-business collaboration**.

Conclusion

The **India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership** encompasses **defence, technology, trade, infrastructure, and people-to-people exchanges**. Despite challenges such as **trade deficits** and **regional strategic differences**, both nations are deepening **bilateral cooperation**. Leveraging their strengths in **technology, investment, and human capital**, the partnership can serve as a **resilient and mutually beneficial model** in the **Indo-Pacific**.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the strategic, economic, and technological dimensions of India-Japan cooperation. What are the key challenges, and how can both countries enhance their partnership?

Q1. In which one of the following groups are all four countries members of G20? (2020)

- (a) Argentina, Mexico, South Africa and Turkey
- (b) Australia, Canada, Malaysia and New Zealand
- (c) Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam
- (d) Indonesia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea

Ans: (a)

Q. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is transforming itself into a trade bloc from a military alliance, in present times Discuss. (2020).

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