



Northeastern India and Japan: study with reference to the Indo-Pacific Connect

James Kaipeng

B.Ed. Trainee

I.A.S.E Kunjaban, Agartala, India

Abstract : Under the auspices of the Act East Policy, India has tried to revitalise its relationship with Asia and the Pacific during the last ten years. Infrastructure development, increased connectivity, and improved economic and security cooperation have all been goals of the approach. Sagarmala, Project Mausam, Cotton Routes, and Security and Growth for All in the Region are excellent efforts. This diplomatic campaign is being done to re-establish India's connections with its long-time trading partners, but one of its justifications is China's growing might. These activities are becoming more strategically relevant in the COVID-19 globe because of the major worry about an over-reliance on Chinese supply chain networks. Thus, this thesis emphasises how India's foreign policy toward China changed as the epidemic spread. It focuses on India's Indo-Pacific connectivity ambitions and its interactions with "like-minded" nations.

IndexTerms - Act East Policy, Belt and Road Initiative, Indian foreign policy, Indo-Pacific, Middle Power

1. Introduction

Under the auspices of the Act East Policy, India has worked arduously over the last ten years to revive its engagement with nations in East, South, and Southeast Asia as well as with the Pacific Island states . In order to grow India specifically, the strategy has sought to increase economic and security cooperation, connectivity outreach, and infrastructure development throughout the Indo-Pacific nations. However, China's growing power in the area, particularly via its centerpiece Belt and Road Drive, has increasingly become a supplementary justification for this diplomatic initiative. India wants to expand its own influence and counteract Chinese influence. In order to re-establish relations with its long-lost trading partners in the Indian Ocean Region, India has established a number of projects, including Sagarmala (literally, "ocean necklace"); Project Mausam ; Cotton Routes; and Security and Growth for All in the Region . These activities are increasingly important in the COVID-19 world as geostrategic instruments with more focused objectives, such as to swiftly decrease dependence on Chinese supply chain networks. However, up until recently, India's outreach programmes to the Indo-Pacific nations did not clearly identify the growing China threat. Instead, it has consistently emphasised India's long-standing "China Connect" economic cooperation programme. However, the present administration's

foreign policy has a nationalist tinge to emphasise India's developing power status and promote "parity of power" with China[1]. After the Doklam conflict in 2017, India's reaction accomplished this. The recent conflict along the Line of Actual Control in the Galwan Valley, Ladakh, dealt a severe blow to the China Connect structure [2]. The idea of "peaceful ascent" is also obsolete, as seen by China's responses to the crises in Hong Kong and Taiwan, its continuing military posturing in the Indo-Pacific, and its rising aggression toward the United States of America (US)[3]. All things considered, India has come to the conclusion that its appeasement of China is no longer appropriate. As a result, there has been a noticeable change in India's China policy in the COVID-19, post-Galwan period, which has taken into account the rising anti-China rhetoric both at home and abroad [4]. India is thus poised to demonstrate new kinds of statecraft outside the middle power behavioural approaches assumptions of how middle powers should act, depending on one's definition of a great or medium power [5]. Thus, in the newly developing situation, this study emphasises the changing Indian foreign policy orientation toward China. It focuses on the Indo-Pacific region's connectivity patterns and India's interactions with "like-minded" countries. In the article, the significance of India's AEP is examined in the context of the present, as well as the country's connectivity efforts in the area. It also examines the importance of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), India's growing alignment with the US-led Indo-Pacific efforts like the Blue Dot Network (BDN), and the developing story of the Quad Plus. These programmes are headed by the US, Japan, and Australia [6].

1.1 India's Indo-Pacific connectivity outreach

The global economic system that has been characterized by China's supremacy in manufacturing and supply chain networks and the world's excessive dependence on them has been put to the test by the COVID-19 epidemic. The significance of resilient and varied infrastructure connection networks has been reemphasized by this. According to a 2017 assessment by the Asian Development Bank, "developing Asia would need to spend US\$26 trillion from 2016 to 2030, or US\$1.7 trillion per year, in order to retain its development momentum, eliminate poverty, and address climate change." 6 Infrastructure demands are projected to increase dramatically as a result of the epidemic, which will make financing and building infrastructure even more difficult. In order to promote inclusive regional development, enhance its reputation as a rising global leader, and restrain rising Chinese aggression, India must consequently support infrastructure investments in the area. India's strategic location, which places it in close proximity to key areas including the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and China, as well as in the middle of the Indian Ocean, makes it a potentially effective weapon for regaining dominance in the Indo-Pacific[7]. Its post-Galwan and post-COVID-19 connectivity outreach must be mapped using its historical ties to the states in these areas. India played significant roles in Korea, Japan, and China shortly after independence, it must be highlighted in this context. 8 However, India's influence started to decline in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a result of the second five-year plan-induced economic slowdown, India's isolation from the West, and the India-China War of 1962. India was not a part of any significant Asian events between 1962 and 1992 and was not a member of the ASEAN or the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, two important regional economic and security organisations. However, the change in foreign policy during the Cold War allowed India to somewhat reclaim its former prominence.

2. India-Japan Bilateral Relations

1. Beginning with the arrival of the Indian monk Bodhisena in 752 AD, the relationship between India and Japan has a long history steeped in spiritual affinities as well as solid cultural and civilizational links. Swami Vivekananda, Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, businessman JRD Tata, liberation warrior NetajiSubhash Chandra Bose, and judgeRadhaBinod Pal were notable Indians affiliated with Japan in modern times. When India's sovereignty was completely restored after the Second World War, it opted to sign a separate peace treaty with Japan, marking a turning point in the bilateral ties and setting the tone for the future. India did not join the San Francisco Conference after the war. Judge RadhaBinod Pal's lone dissenting opinion in the War Crimes Tribunal touched a deep nerve among the Japanese populace and is still felt today[8].

2. On April 28, 1952, India and Japan established diplomatic ties. Several high-level exchanges took occurred in the first ten years after diplomatic relations were established, notably the visit of Japanese Prime Minister NobusukeKishi to India in 1957, Prime Minister Nehru's subsequent trip to Tokyo in the same year, and President Rajendra Prasad's trip in 1958. In 1958, Japan began lending yen to India. The relationship reached a new level when Their Highnesses, the then-Japanese Crown Prince Akihito and Crown Princess Michiko, visited in 1960. When Japan was one of the few nations to help India out of its balance of payment problem in 1991, it put their friendship to the test [9].

3. The formation of the "Global Partnership" between the two countries as a result of the Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's visit to India in 2000 marked a substantial and qualitative change in India-Japan ties. The decision to have annual summits between the prime ministers beginning in 2006, when both sides created a "Strategic and Global Partnership," gave the change of our relations with Japan more impetus. The Japanese business sector has been interested in India's fast expanding economy and the new economic possibilities it has generated, which is the driving factor behind deeper bilateral cooperation.

4. The first visit to India by the then-emperor Akihito and the then-empress Michiko (30 November–6 December 2013) made 2013 a historic year. PM Abe conducted an official visit to India in January 2014, only a few months after the historic visit of the Imperial Couple, and served as the Chief Guest at the Republic Day festivities (first ever Japanese PM to be honoured so). In August–September 2014, Prime Minister NarendraModi paid his first official visit outside of India's immediate neighbourhood to Japan for the Annual Summit, elevating bilateral ties to a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership." Regular annual summits between India and Japan are conducted [10].

5. Building on the momentum created by his travels to Japan in 2014 and 2016 as well as PM Abe's visits to India in 2015 and 2017, Prime Minister Shri NarendraModi's visit to Japan for the 13th Annual Summit on October 28-29, 2018 gave bilateral relations greater fuel. Both Prime Ministers presented their common vision for India-Japan ties at the summit. As an unique gesture, PM Abe invited our PM to a private supper at his ancestral home in Yamanashi. This was the first time a foreign leader had ever received such a welcome. The announcement by Japan that it will join the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Exchange of Notes regarding the provision of seven yen loans, including the Project for the Construction of MAHSR (total loan provision of up to 316.458 billion yen), the Currency Swap Agreement of US\$75 billion, the India-Japan Digital Partnership, the Implementing Arrangement for Deeper Cooperation between the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force and

Indian Navy, the MOC on Healthcare, Food Processing Sector, and others have During the visit, 15 Indian firms declared plans to invest in Japan, while 57 Japanese companies revealed plans to spend US\$2.5 billion in India[11].

6. From June 27 to June 29, 2019, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi was in Japan to attend the G20 Summit in Osaka. He met privately with Prime Minister Abe on the sidelines to discuss a wide variety of issues of shared concern, including infrastructure projects undertaken by Japanese corporations in the North East and Japan's support for India in the alliance for disaster resilience. Additionally, PM Abe and PM Modi got together at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok and the G7 Summit in Biarritz (both in August 2019). (5 September 2019). On November 4, 2019, PM Modi and PM Abe also got together in Bangkok when they were there to attend ASEAN-related summit discussions. They discussed ways to improve Japan-India ties, including military cooperation, bilateral cooperation with other nations, and joint efforts to promote investment.

7. In addition to the yearly summits, various platforms for bilateral interaction, including as the Defense Ministers Meeting, NSA-level Dialogue, Ministerial level 2+2 and FOC Consultations, enable frequent high level and effective exchanges. The first India-Japan 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Meeting took place on November 30 in New Delhi, and it was attended by the Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr. Motegi Toshimitsu, and the Japanese Defense Minister, Mr. Kono Taro. EAM met the Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister on his visit to Japan for the G20 Foreign Minister's Meeting in Nagoya on November 22–23, 2019. Prior to it, a defence ministerial meeting was conducted in Tokyo on September 2-3, 2019, while a bilateral strategic dialogue, coordinated by the foreign ministers, took place on June 29, 2019, concurrent with the G20 Summit in Osaka. A meeting of the foreign ministers of India and Japan took place on September 26, 2019, concurrent with the 74th session of the UN General Assembly. In November 2019, Mr. Shigeru Kitamura, Secretary General of Japan's National Security Secretariat (NSS), paid a visit to India, met with PM Modi, and spoke with the NSA and EAM. On the margins of IORA in Abu Dhabi on November 7, 2019, MoS for External Affairs Shri V Muraleedharan met Nakatania Shinichi, Parliamentary Vice Minister for External Affairs of Japan. Om Birla, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, participated at the 6th G20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit in Tokyo [12].

8. Other MEA-led bilateral discussions: The Act East Forum, launched in 2017, intends to serve as a forum for cooperation between Japan and India under the auspices of Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Vision" and India's "Act East Policy." Both parties decided to concentrate on developing the Japanese language in the North East, training caregivers under the TITP, creating capacity in the field of developing the bamboo value chain, and disaster management during the second Act East forum meeting on October 8, 2018. On March 8, 2019, the first India-Japan Space Dialogue was conducted in Delhi with the goal of improving bilateral space collaboration and information sharing about the two countries' respective space programmes. In March and September of 2018, both parties had talks about nuclear cooperation for civil purposes. Minister for Science, Technology, and Earth Sciences Dr. Harsh Vardhan visited Tokyo on October 17–18 for bilateral meetings before travelling to Okayama from October 19–20 to attend the G-20 Health Ministers Meeting. On October 17, he met privately with Japan's MEXT Minister Koichi Hagiuda to address a number of bilateral concerns in the S&T and health sectors.

9. From October 21–23, 2019, the Honourable President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, travelled to Japan to witness the enthronement of His Majesty Naruhito as Emperor of Japan. The Honorable President participated in a number of enthronement events during his visit, as well as a dinner that Prime Minister Abe hosted [13].

3. Japan Interested in Northeast India

A number of factors have fueled Tokyo's interest in Northeast India, and during the visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to India last September, the two nations "welcomed the India-Japan cooperation on development of India's North Eastern Region as a concrete symbol of developing synergies between India's 'Act-East Policy' and Japan's Free and Open Indo Pacific Strategy." First, under Abe, Japan has launched the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' strategy, which builds on his historic speech titled 'Confluence of the Two Seas' before the Indian Parliament in August 2007 (during his earlier term in office) where he noted that 'the Pacific and the Indian Oceans are now bringing about a dynamic coupling as seas of freedom and of prosperity.' Second, Japan is attempting, in its own way, to strengthen its presence in the infrastructure sector in Asia and throughout the globe via programmes like the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure," in response to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), previously known as the One Belt One Road. Tokyo has long maintained a strong commercial connection with Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) members like Myanmar, which also acts as India's land connection to the ASEAN area. Given the Northeast's geographical closeness to ASEAN, interest in Japan, which already has strong links with ASEAN, has naturally been sparked. The third-largest commercial partner of ASEAN is Japan. Third, although Japan has previously participated in a number of high-profile infrastructure projects in the rest of India, this apparently wasn't the case in the Northeastern area of India until recently due to hesitation on both India and Japan's parts. But things now seem to be shifting. Fourth, it represents the increasing levels of trust between India and Japan. New Delhi has been reluctant to accept outside investors in India's Northeast because of its strategic position. Third, although Japan has previously participated in a number of high-profile infrastructure projects in the rest of India, this apparently wasn't the case in the Northeastern area of India until recently due to hesitation on both India and Japan's parts. But things now seem to be shifting. Fourth, it represents the increasing levels of trust between India and Japan. New Delhi has been reluctant to accept foreign investors in India's Northeast because of its strategic position [14].

3.1 Japanese projects in Northeast India

In Northeast India, Tokyo has supported several infrastructure-development initiatives. First, it would grant a credit totaling S\$4.5 billion (or 2,239 crores) for the North East Road Network Connectivity Improvement Project (which comprises the National Highways 51 in Meghalaya and NH54 in Mizoram). This will promote the development of the Shillong-Dawki stretch in Meghalaya and the replacement of the current 90-year-old bridge at Dawki (on the border with Bangladesh).

Second, in honour of the roughly 70,000 Japanese troops who are thought to have perished in the Battles of Imphal and Kohima during the Second World War, Japanese organisations like the Nippon Foundation have donated money to help build the Imphal War Museum in Manipur.

Third, 23 young talent from Northeastern India visited Japan in October 2017 as part of the Japanese government's IRIS initiative. The initiative, which was launched by the Japanese ambassador to India, Kenji

Hiramatsu, during the celebration of the 73rd anniversary of the Battle of Imphal in May 2017, intends to strengthen ties between Japan and India's northeastern area [15].

Fourth, the India Ministry of External Affairs and the Japanese Embassy in India hosted the inaugural joint meeting of the Act East Forum in December 2017 in accordance with the agreement of cooperation that was signed during Abe's visit to India to create it. The former Indian Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar and Hiramatsu shared the leadership of this conference.

Representatives from the Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Northeastern states were also present at the meeting. JICA, the Japan External Trade Organization, the Japan Foundation, and the Japan National Tourism Organization all had representatives from the Japanese side.

Fifth, a variety of additional projects including water supply, sewage, forest management, agriculture, youth exchange, and biodiversity are also being carried out in Northeast India by Japan. These initiatives include the Sikkim Biodiversity Conservation and Forest Management Project, the Guwahati Water Supply Project, the Guwahati Sewerage Project, the Capacity Enhancement for Sustainable Agriculture and Irrigation Development Project in Mizoram, the Tripura Forest Environmental Improvement and Poverty Alleviation Project, the Capacity Development for Forest Management and Personnel Training Project in Assam, Mizoram, and Nagaland, the Capacity Development for Forest Management and Personnel Training Project in Management Project, the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths Program, the Japan-Asia Youth Exchange Program in Science, the DBT-AIST International Laboratory for Advanced Biomedicine at Sikkim University, and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)- Guwahati in Assam.

Another area where Japan has made a contribution is in the area of hydroelectricity, which is one of Northeast India's strengths. The Umiam Stage II Hydropower Station Renovation and Modernization Project in Meghalaya is one example of them. Sixth, Hiramatsu led a group of 38 Japanese firms to Imphal in May of last year in an effort to promote investment in the Northeast. The Northeastern states are now making every effort to accelerate industrialisation in this region of the nation. The inaugural Global Investors Summit was held in Assam in February of this year. Hiramatsu, who attended this event, said that Japan wanted to strengthen its connections with Assam and the Northeast. Manufacturing, smart city models, and exchanges in the fields of education, culture, and sports are some of the major industries that may see further collaborations in the future [16].

Seventh, Tokyo is also looking to expand the Technical Intern Training Programme in Japan to include more interns from the Northeast in fields like senior care, which is a key problem for Japan, particularly given its ageing population. In the northeastern region of India, Tokyo is also running capacity-building programmes for forest management and revenue diversification.

Last but not least, efforts are being made by Japan and India to perform joint counterterrorism training exercises at the Counter-Insurgency Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram. Tokyo and New Delhi are also considering working together in the sports sector, particularly because Tokyo will host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020. Northeastern athletes have achieved success on both the national and international levels, and Japan is considering partnering with the Manipur National Sports University.

4. Economic and commercial relations

One of India's most important allies in its economic development is Japan. In recent years, the connection between India and Japan has evolved into one of enormous depth and significance. A number of factors, including India's large and expanding market and its resources, particularly its human resources, are contributing to Japan's rising interest in India. In fiscal year 2018–19, Japan and India's bilateral trade reached a total of US\$17.63 billion. During this time, Japan exported \$12.77 billion to India while importing \$4.86 billion. For the fiscal year 2019–20 (April–December), the two countries' bilateral commerce amounted to US\$11.87 billion. India imported US\$ 7.93 billion worth of goods from Japan while exporting US\$ 3.94 billion worth of goods to Japan. Petroleum products, chemicals, elements, compounds, non-metallic mineral goods, fish and fish preparations, metalliferous ores and scrap, clothes and accessories, iron and steel products, textile yarn, textiles, and machinery are some of India's main exports to Japan. Machines, electrical equipment, iron and steel goods, plastics, non-ferrous metals, auto components, organic chemicals, metal fabrications, etc. are India's main imports from Japan.

Finance and ODA Since 2000 to September 2019, there have been around US\$ 32.058 billion in investments in India (Japan ranks third now among the major investors). FDI from Japan has mostly gone into the automotive, electrical equipment, telecommunications, chemical, financial (insurance), and pharmaceutical industries in India. Japanese FDI into India grew from US\$ 2.61 billion to US\$ 4.7 billion in FY 2015–16 and FY 2016–17, respectively. Japanese FDI was US\$2.96 billion in the fiscal year 2018–19. For the fiscal year 2019–20 (April–November), there has been \$3.99 billion in FDI. As of October 2018, there were 1,441 Japanese firms registered in India, up 5.0 percent from the previous year, according to the most recent joint study conducted by the Japan External Trade Organization and the Japanese Embassy in India (JETRO). Similar to this, there are more Indian businesses operating in Japan than ever before—the number is currently above 100. Japan is India's greatest bilateral contributor and has been providing loans and grants to the country since 1958. Japanese ODA supports India's initiatives for swifter economic growth, notably in key sectors including transportation, electricity, and environmental and human-needs-related projects. In the next ten years, India will undergo a profound transformation thanks to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail, the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC), the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor with its twelve industrial townships, and the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC). The sum of Japan's ODA commitment in FY 2018–19, JPY 522.405 billion, was the biggest amount in history. Nirmala Sitharaman, the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, spoke during the session on development finance and the global economy at the G20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors on June 7-8 in Fukuoka. She discussed the continued efforts of the Indian government to combat tax avoidance and evasion at the Ministerial Symposium on International Taxation on Globally Fair, Sustainable, and Modern International Taxation System[17].

Start-up Hub and the India-Japan Digital Partnership (IJDP): In order to further existing areas of cooperation as well as new initiatives within the scope of cooperation in S&T/ICT, focusing more on "Digital ICT Technologies," the "India-Japan Digital Partnership" (I-JDP) was launched during PM Modi's visit to Japan in October 2018. This was done in light of the synergies and complementarities between the two countries. Both parties signed the Joint Statement on Japan-India Startup Initiative, which established the first Startup Hub in

Bangalore by JETRO to identify chosen Indian start-ups for the Japanese market and for possible Japanese investors, during Minister Seko's visit to India in May 2018. In June 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on innovation partnership with a focus on SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) linking two start-up eco-systems was signed by Startup-India (under Invest India) and Japan Innovation Network (JIN). Both parties addressed cooperation in the areas of cyber security, 5G telecommunication infrastructure, and human resource development in the ICT sector in third countries during the 5th meeting of the JWG on ICT, which was held in India on August 7, 2018. A "Disaster Prevention ICT Workshop" was organised in addition to JWG. On the 8 and 9 of June 2019 in Tsukuba, Japan, Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Mr. Piyush Goyal took part in talks on boosting trade and cooperation to fully use the potential of the digital economy. He met separately with METI Minister Hiroshige Seko to discuss bilateral trade and investment between Japan and India. To invest in Indian technology businesses, India and Japan are forming a \$187 million (Rs 1,298 crore) fund-of-funds together. The desired corpus would be raised for US\$150 million from Japanese investors and for the remaining amount from Indian investors. The fund will be managed by Reliance Nippon Life Asset Management Ltd (RNAM). Four Japanese investors have already signed letters of intent: Mizuho Bank, Development Bank of Japan, Nippon Life, and Suzuki. The fund seeks to invest in more than 200 Indian businesses that are specialising in cutting-edge industries such business-to-business (B2B) software, robotics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. On January 20, 2020, MeitY Startup Hub and JETRO inked a collaboration agreement to support the tech startup ecosystems in India and Japan. MeitY Startup Hub intends to promote Japanese IT companies in India by offering free, six-month access to sector-specific incubation programmes. After the success of its start-up delegation in September 2019, NASSCOM has made the decision to send start-up delegations to Japan twice year to host Live Pitching Events at the Indian Embassy. The following event will take place in March 2020. 26 startups took part in the last event; three of them have already received significant investments, and many more are talking about forming commercial partnerships with Japanese investors or businesses [18].

Disaster Risk Reduction: The Cabinet Office of Japan and the Ministry of Home Affairs of India jointly organised a series of workshops to exchange information on policy and measures on disaster risk reduction and to strengthen cooperation between Japan and India in the wake of the 2017 MoC in this area. The first workshop took place in New Delhi in March 2018; the second in Tokyo in October 2018; and the third on March 18, 2019, in New Delhi.

Training 30,000 shop floor leaders: As part of the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding, Japanese firms created 12 Japan India Institutes of Manufacturing (JIM) in India and 4 Japanese Endowed Courses (JEC) in Indian Engineering Colleges. In March 2018, NSDC completed the first round of accreditation for 23 Sending Organizations that are authorised by Japan to receive interns under the TITP, after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoC) on Technical Intern Training Programme (TITP). 31 TITP interns, including the first group of Indian nurses hired as aged care providers in Japan, have already arrived in Japan as of March 2019.

Indian Community in Japan: The makeup of the Indian community has changed recently due to the influx of many professionals, including IT specialists and engineers working for both Indian and Japanese companies as well as experts in management, finance, education, and S&T research. In Japan, there are 38,000 Indians [19].

Healthcare: In light of the parallels and synergies between the AYUSHMAN Bharat Programme of India and AHWIN of Japan, both parties have been collaborating to find initiatives to develop AHWIN's narrative for AYUSHMAN Bharat. Later, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was reached between the two parties to formally establish their cooperation under the general MoU in the healthcare sector. This MoU calls for the creation of a high-level consultative mechanism along the lines of HSR cooperation in order to create a strong partnership in the healthcare sector. The first Joint Committee Meeting between India and Japan under the MOC took place on October 18 under the co-chairmanship of Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Welfare, and Dr. IZUMI Hiroto, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister (Japan) (India). In order to advance Ayurveda, a MOC between the Kanagawa Prefecture and Ministry of AYUSH was inked during PM Modi's visit to Japan in October 2018. As a result, in the first week of December 2019, AYUSH Seminars with the focus "Healthy Aging with Ayurveda" were arranged in partnership with MoAYUSH, Kanagawa Prefecture, Kobe City, and Tokyo[20].

Conclusion

India wants to achieve strong infrastructure development and connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, which would also affect its geostrategic interests in the area. India's initiatives to promote equitable connectivity in the area would need a synergistic engagement with partner nations given the present global situation. Although the epidemic has caused unparalleled disruption to the world's economy, it has also opened new possibilities for connection and collaboration. As a result of Japan's increasing participation in Northeast India, the stakes for Northeast India's infrastructure development are anticipated to rise. Abe has said that this connection has the "highest potential of any bilateral relationship in the world."

India has to reorganise its foreign policy and fill in the gaps, especially with regard to its goals for regional infrastructure connections, given its increasingly precarious relationship with China, especially in light of its most recent conflicts in the border region of Ladakh. Additionally, it implies that India will have to reevaluate its relationships with organisations sponsored by China, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, of which India continues to be the largest borrower. However, India's expanding collaboration with Quad and Quad Plus partners is encouraging. Additionally, the alliances will support India's AEP and its Indo-Pacific projects like Sagarmala. India must capitalise on its long-standing ties and redouble its efforts in the area if it wants to play a more substantial, leadership role in the Indo-Pacific and improve the contours of its connectivity.

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