

India-Japan Partnership: Key Outcomes of the 16th Annual Summit

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India-Japan Partnership Latest News

- Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is on her maiden visit to India for the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit.
- The two countries are set to strengthen bilateral cooperation and review progress across their Special Strategic and Global Partnership. The visit follows PM Modi's trip to Tokyo in August 2025 for the 15th summit.

The Summit and Its Agenda

- The India-Japan Annual Summit is a mechanism established in 2006, under which the two prime ministers meet every year, alternating as host.
- During her three-day visit, PM Takaichi is accompanied by a large business delegation, and both leaders will attend business events.

- The summit will let both sides review the full spectrum of bilateral cooperation and exchange views on regional and global issues.
- Japan's foreign ministry framed the visit as focused on trade, investment, and strategic cooperation.

The Economic Relationship

- The economic ties are substantial and growing:
 - Around 1,400 Japanese companies operate in India, nearly half in manufacturing.
 - Bilateral trade reached **\$27.5 billion** in 2025-26.
 - Japanese investment in India rose to \$3.2 billion between April and December 2025.
 - Japan is among India's largest investors, backing major projects like the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high-speed rail corridor.
 - Recent deals include a \$1.6 billion investment for a 20% stake in Yes Bank.

The Strategic Logic: A Counterweight to China

- At its core, the partnership provides a strategic and economic counterweight to China's growing dominance in the region.
- The two countries will discuss:
 - Security cooperation and advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific.
 - Their shared membership of the Quad (with the US and Australia), within which they have steadily expanded defence and strategic collaboration.
- Modi and Takaichi had also met earlier at the 52nd G7 Summit in France to discuss economic cooperation.

A Unique Feature: Regional and State-Prefecture Ties

- The relationship rests on **eight key pillars**: economy, economic security, mobility, environment, technology and innovation, healthcare, people-to-people exchanges, and state-prefecture engagement.
- The **state-prefecture cooperation** is a distinctive strength:
 - In 2025-26, the Chief Ministers of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh visited Japan; several Japanese prefecture governors visited India.
 - This led to the launch of the **India-Japan Governors Network** in February 2026.
- **The North-East focus**: Japan is the only country with which India has a dedicated institutional mechanism for developing the North-East — the **India-Japan Act East Forum**. The two partner on infrastructure, urban renewal, energy, agriculture, tourism, and skills across the region.
- The strategic idea, as articulated by Japan, is that the North-East is where India's **"Act East" policy** and Japan's "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" vision meet — a bridge connecting South Asia with Southeast Asia.
- Recent engagements include prefecture delegations visiting Manipur, and an MoU with Meghalaya to skill and employ 5,000 youth.

The Evolution of the Partnership

- India-Japan friendship is rooted in centuries of cultural and civilisational exchange, but has gained sharp focus over the last decade. Its formal evolution:
 - **2000** – Global Partnership;
 - **2006** – Strategic and Global Partnership
 - **2014** – Special Strategic and Global Partnership (Modi-Abe Summit)
- The two countries approach the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations in 2027. The bilateral framework now includes over 70 dialogue mechanisms, with regular high-level engagement at the level of Foreign Minister, Defence Minister, NSA, and others.
- Key mechanisms include the 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministers' Meeting, the Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, the Economic Security Dialogue, and the Act East Forum.

Critical Areas of Collaboration

- Economic security and technology have emerged as central pillars. At the **1st Economic Security Dialogue** (Tokyo, November 2024), the two sides identified five priority sectors: semiconductors, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, clean energy, and ICT.
- Key recent agreements:
 - MoC on Mineral Resources (August 2025); first joint working group held virtually in 2026.
 - MoC on Semiconductor Supply Chains (July 2023).
 - Japan-India AI Cooperation Initiative (2025), with the 1st Strategic AI Dialogue held this year.
- Defence cooperation is robust:
 - Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation signed at the August 2025 summit.
 - Bilateral exercises: JAIMEX, Dharma Guardian, Veer Guardian, and Coast Guard drills.
 - Multilateral exercises: MALABAR and MILAN.
 - Defence technology transfer, including the UNICORN Mast (Memorandum of Implementation, November 2024).

Conclusion

- The 16th Annual Summit reflects a partnership that has matured well beyond trade into a broad strategic alignment.
- Its distinctive strengths — the North-East development focus, state-prefecture diplomacy, and cooperation on economic-security frontiers like semiconductors, critical minerals, and AI — set it apart from India's other bilateral ties.
- Underpinning it all is a shared strategic purpose: a stable, multipolar Indo-Pacific that balances China's rise. As the two nations near 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2027, the relationship stands as one of India's most reliable and forward-looking partnerships.

Source: IE

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