

# India-Japan Leadership in Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia

India and Japan individually and jointly offer a wide range of capabilities to protect Asia from disaster risks. The ongoing visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan to Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India for the Indo-Japan Summit offers an opportunity to enhance this leadership.

In India-Japan Joint Statement<sup>1</sup> during the visit of Prime Minister of India to Japan in November 11, 2016 the two Prime Ministers shared their intention to expand dialogue and cooperation in the defence sector, to cover exchange of observers in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) exercises, and exchange and train personnel in key fields of mutual interest.

The statement acknowledged the importance of the World Tsunami Awareness Day to raise awareness, promote better understanding of tsunami risks and develop tools to address tsunami at least in Asia if not beyond. An MoU<sup>2</sup> was also

signed between the Government of Gujarat in India and Hyogo Prefectural Government in Japan to promote mutual cooperation between the two in the fields of academics, business, cultural cooperation, disaster management and environmental protection.

## Opportunities for Leadership in Asia:

1. India is fast emerging as a key humanitarian donor in Asia. **Joint humanitarian response and aid operations** with Japan can be even more effective and better targeted in Asia to address the Humanitarian Action with both, immediate response as well as long term resilience building. Key areas for action are cash transfer and area based approach in urban settings from response to recovery phases.
2. **Fulfilling the commitments of Grand Bargain:** UNHCR and Japan are co-conveners of Grand

Bargain work stream on "Reducing Management Cost". The idea of the work stream is how to spend less on each US \$ that goes to the disaster action. India can join the work stream and contribute to make international humanitarian actions more effective, efficient, and coherent based on India's experience within and outside India as a humanitarian actor. Financial inclusion is one such area. Local procurement is another.

3. **Strengthening sub-regional organizations** such as ASEAN, SAARC, (Economic Cooperation Organization) ECO, and The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) in Asia is urgent. It is urgent because of the rapid spread of risk as well as exposure of economic development to risk in the region. India and Japan can jointly orient the actions of these three regional cooperation mechanisms to risk pooling and risk transfer. In addition India and Japan can help Asian countries for example with mountain railway safety enhancement assistance. This will benefit India, Japan, and all the participating countries of Asia.

4. **Strengthening (Indo-Pacific) trilateral cooperation between India, Japan and Australia** is important for Asia. These countries have collaborated in



Photo: AIDVI.

1 <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=153534>

2 <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/27597/>

List\_of\_AgreementsMOUs\_exchanged\_during\_the\_visit\_of\_Prime\_Minister\_to\_Japan

the Tsunami response during 2004. Time has come to build on this success. The first Japan-India-Australia Trilateral Dialogue was held in Delhi, on June 2015. This triologue laid out a way ahead. Time has come for India and Japanese scientists to accelerate the pace and redefine the agenda for this cooperation not only in tsunami but also cyclone and sea level rise risks.

5. Joint work programme on **addressing climate risks in Asia** can help achieve goals of Paris Agreement to which Japan and India both are committed. Climate induced extreme events are on a rise. Joint action can help Asia reduce disaster risks coming out of extreme events such as heatwaves, floods, or cyclones. Ongoing research by IDS, UK, Kyoto University, Japan, and Norway University clearly indicate need for more joint work on how India and Japan can inform transformation of Asia to green economy.

For example, Japan and India can invest more to fill in infrastructure gap in Asia; finance and share technology with fast growing cities to launch innovative bus rapid transit system; make river basins – Ganga and Mekong to start with – climate resilient; and invest in sustainable agriculture productivity improvement through cooperatives in Vietnam and Cambodia.

6. Joint **implementation of Asia Regional Plan (ARP) for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**. In many ways the ARP is a creation of India and Japan in order to take more concrete measures to reduce risks faced in Asia. At



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Asian Ministerial Conference, 2016 in Delhi. ARP was launched and accepted by all. Several important implementations steps are taken in various countries beyond India and Japan. This includes Bangladesh, Thailand, and Indonesia, to name a few. India and Japan lead ARP and more systematic and system-wide approach will help Asia lead Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) implementation with greater innovations and better knowledge. Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN), for example, is one such network that may be of use.

7. **Peace, security and conflict management** in Asia is not easy. Though per se this is not a disaster risk reduction item, often disasters strike in the hotbeds of ongoing conflict areas or fragile social context. India and Japan share long Buddhist tradition and values for building and keeping peace. More work on articulating peace building and conflict mitigation will not only help in responding to floods or cyclones in Asia, but also turn disaster recovery in to peace building effort in Asian communities facing conflict.

8. **Strategic use for space-based technologies for averting natural disasters and their management.** ESCAP's Regional Space Applications Programme for Sustainable Development or RESAP is a unique regional cooperation model of the United Nations. India and Japan both have supported RESAP to grow. Through RESAP, space-faring countries such as China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam offer satellite images, information and capacity development to other countries of Asia on the use of satellite technology for disaster risk reduction. Time has come for India and Japan to take a lead and accelerate cutting edge space technology cooperation with UN ESCAP on and around the SAARC satellite that India has recently launched for the SAARC countries.

India and Japan are on their way to transformation, both, within and beyond. This Second Summit in Ahmedabad offers a special opportunity to accelerate the pace and further target the results of their joint leadership in Asia. ■

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