

Major Outcomes of the 16th India–Japan Annual Summit (2026): Implications for the India–Japan Strategic Partnership

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Abstract

The partnership between India and Japan has evolved from economic ties to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership on the basis of similar democratic principles, trust, and common interest in promoting an open, free, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific. In the last two decades, collaboration between India and Japan has taken place in diverse fields like defence and security, economic resilience, infrastructural development, connectivity, supply chain resilience, clean energy, and people-to-people interactions between India and Japan. The 16th India-Japan Annual Summit in New Delhi in July 2026 is yet another important landmark towards enhancing the partnership. The main aim of this study is to examine the key achievements of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit 2026 and their future implications for India-Japan strategic relations. This paper examines the key achievements of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit in fields such as defence and security cooperation, economic security, artificial intelligence, investments, supply chain resilience, and Indo-Pacific cooperation.

Keywords: India-Japan Relations, Strategic Partnership, Indo-Pacific, 16th India-Japan Annual Summit

1. Introduction

Japan, the "Land of the Rising Sun," is an East Asian nation bordered by the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Sea of Japan to the west, the East China Sea to the southwest, and the Sea of Okhotsk to the north [1]. This extensive coastline provides Japan with a vast **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**. Japan's strategic location and reliance on major sea lanes of communication boost its geopolitical importance in the Indo-Pacific. Its geographical position in East Asia and global economic standing make it an indispensable partner for India. Despite limited natural resources, Japan has achieved remarkable economic growth. These strengths complement India's growing market, demographic dividend, and development aspirations. India and Japan share a long-standing civilizational relationship rooted in historical, cultural, and Buddhist traditions.

Today, India and Japan share a comprehensive partnership that evolved from bilateral relations to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership in 2014, established during the summit between Indian PM Narendra Modi and former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe [2]. This partnership aims to foster peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific Region. The shift from primarily economic to strategic interests was driven by evolving security dynamics in the region. Key pillars of their bilateral engagement include the annual India–Japan Summit, the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue involving the Foreign and Defence Ministers, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), defence and maritime cooperation, infrastructure and

connectivity projects, collaboration in emerging technologies, semiconductor and digital partnerships, clean energy and green transition initiatives, resilient supply chains, and coordination in regional and multilateral forums such as the Quad, the G20, and the United Nations.

The 16th India–Japan Annual Summit (2026) further strengthened this broad-based partnership by introducing new areas of cooperation and reaffirming both countries' shared commitment to a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

Although India–Japan relations have been widely studied, limited scholarly attention has been paid to the outcomes of the 16th India–Japan Annual Summit (2026). This study seeks to fill this gap by discussing the major outcomes of the 16th India-Japan summit and evaluating their strategic significance for India–Japan relations and the Indo-Pacific region.

2. Objectives of the study

- To examine major outcomes of the India-Japan Annual Summit (2026).
- To analyse their implications for the India-Japan Strategic Partnership.

3. Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative research methodology grounded in a descriptive and analytical approach. It mostly relied on secondary sources such as the official joint statement of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit, government documents, and news articles, and books .

4. Major Outcomes and Analysis of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit

The 16th India–Japan Annual Summit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Sanae Takaichi has been marked by significant announcements and discussions on a wide range of areas of cooperation in response to evolving regional and global challenges. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi paid an official visit to India from 1 to 3 July 2026. It was her first official visit to India as Japan's Prime Minister. The summit provided an opportunity for both leaders to review the progress achieved since the previous summit and to identify new areas of cooperation. The summit reflected the shared commitment of India and Japan to further enhance their strategic, economic, and technological partnership

4.1 Defence and Security Cooperation

Cooperation on defence and security issues emerged as one of the major outcomes of the 16th Japan-India Annual Summit (2026), taking into account the changing security landscape in the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard, the countries pledged to enhance cooperation in matters related to defence and maritime security and affirmed their intentions to cooperate in the framework of the **Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation**. The leaders instructed their ministers to conduct the 4th Japan-India 2+2 Ministerial Meeting, appreciated the successful conduct of the JAIMEX-25 naval exercises and Japan's participation in the 2026 International Fleet Review, and agreed to cooperate in the fields of maritime surveillance, defence technologies, naval maintenance, and defence manufacturing. Moreover, they appreciated the progress made in implementing the Unified Complex Radio Antenna project (UNICORN) and agreed to consider other possibilities for defence technology cooperation. They also signed an agreement on the India-Japan Co-development project.

It can be seen from these initiatives that cooperation between India and Japan in the area of defence moves forward from just talks to real actions. Strengthening of interoperability, maritime domain awareness, and

joint defence production will inevitably result in greater deterrence of regional aggression and improved maritime security.

4.2 Cooperation in the field of AI

Both countries agree to increase cooperation in the field of AI due to its prospects as an instrument of future economic growth. In particular, the joint statement called for developing national AI capabilities and cooperation in the field of trusted and resilient digital infrastructure. The two leaders also welcomed the launch of the India-Japan AI Strategic Dialogue and adopted the Joint Statement on AI Cooperation for future cooperation in line with the Hiroshima AI Process and the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact. These initiatives show how combining Japan's technological experience and the skills of the Indian labour force may lead to improved digital resilience.

4.3 Indo-Pacific and Regional Cooperation

In this partnership, the Indo-Pacific would always remain an important issue. China's aggression in the South China Sea and the surrounding islands with its nine-dash line claim has been a worry for India and Japan since major sea routes of trade go through this region. Japan depends upon this route, as over 90 per cent of its natural resources pass through it. Likewise, there are vital interests for India as 55 per cent of Indian trade passes through the South China Sea [1].

Both Prime Ministers, during their summit, expressed deep concern about the current situation in the East and South China Seas. Their opposition was clear regarding any unilateral action that threatens the safety and freedom of navigation, as well as attempts to alter the status quo by force or coercion. Both were concerned about the increasing militarisation. They reaffirmed that the maritime disputes should be peacefully resolved as per international law and as per UNCLOS. Both countries agreed on promoting a free, open, inclusive, and rule-based Indo-Pacific based on international law and supporting the centrality and unity of ASEAN [2]. Growing convergence of Japan's Free and Open Indo-Pacific and India's Indo-Pacific Ocean Initiatives, Mutual And Holistic Advancement for Security And Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR) was pointed out by the joint statement [3].

From these statements, it can be seen that India is considered a partner by Japan due to similar democratic values and adherence to international norms and laws. Furthermore, both countries share a similar strategic vision for the Indo-Pacific region. Through the alignment of FOIP and IPOI, both countries plan to achieve regional stability and maritime security, along with cooperation with other like-minded countries.

4.4 Economic Security and Supply Chain Resilience

The 16th India-Japan Annual Summit (2026) was a turning point in terms of focusing on economic security and resilient supply chains. In light of growing geopolitical risks and global disruptions in trade, India and Japan decided to increase cooperation in the areas of concern. The joint statement identified mutual concerns regarding economic coercion, unilateral export restrictions, and vulnerabilities in critical minerals and industries in the context of supply chains. In order to resolve these issues, the leaders agreed to adopt the India-Japan Joint Declaration on Economic Security Cooperation that aims at cooperation in semiconductor, critical minerals, ICT, clean energy, and pharmaceutical supply chains[3].

The above-mentioned summit was different from the agenda of previous summits, where there were discussions on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train, defence cooperation and even Quad diplomacy. The current focus on the issue of supply chain security reflects the vulnerabilities that became apparent in the last year, especially the reliance on China for essential inputs and on West Asia for energy.

These efforts show the willingness of India and Japan to improve their economic resilience and establish a secure Indo-Pacific economy through diversification of supply chains and reducing reliance on particular

countries for essential materials.

4.5 Clean Energy

Another achievement of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit was cooperation in the sphere of clean energy. In view of the pursuit of sustainable economic growth, energy security, and net-zero targets, this summit provided an expansion of India-Japan cooperation in clean energy and renewable energy technologies.

By signing the India-Japan Bio-gas Initiative and with the aim of creating 1,000 biogas and organic fertiliser factories in India, both nations realised the need to consider hydrogen and ammonia not just in terms of decarbonization but also energy security. They agreed on the promotion of the landmark clean ammonia project in Odisha with the support of both governments. At the same time, they recognised the significance of advancement in the projects in clean ammonia, green hydrogen, solar PV technologies, nuclear energy [3].

Combining the advanced technology of Japan with the emerging renewable energy market of India opens many possibilities in the sphere of clean energy. In addition, the clean ammonia project in Odisha can be beneficial in job creation and sustainable economic growth.

4.6 People-to-People Exchange

In order to mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between India and Japan, the two leaders decided to enhance their cultural, educational, and academic exchanges. They made plans to conduct about 1,000 joint research programs through the LOTUS initiative, conduct commemorative activities such as anime, exchange programs for youth and sports, and promote collaborations between local governments like the one between Yamanashi Prefecture and Uttar Pradesh [4]

This is a way of fostering good relationships and building long-lasting ties between the two countries. It means that India and Japan are enhancing their relationship not only through strategic and economic cooperation but through people-to-people cooperation.

4.7 Trade and investment

The issue of trade and investment was once again a key focus of the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit held in 2026. It was decided that both nations would increase cooperation in the field of investment and innovation by increasing the participation of Japanese firms in the Indian economy. It was appreciated that the goal of making a 10 trillion-yen investment has been achieved, and there is a need to expedite the review of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). In addition, support was also extended to SMEs and startups. [5]

The MoC has been signed, laying out an investment plan for US\$ 10 billion through the entry of Japanese financial institutions into the Indian banking industry. The area of cooperation will be extended under the “India-Japan Industrial Competitiveness Partnership” in various sectors, including logistics, agriculture, health, textiles, industry, payment systems, MSMEs, and startups through programs like “India-Japan SME Forum” and “JISSI”. [6]

5. Implications for the India–Japan Strategic Partnership

The summit helped boost the Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership by building confidence and trust in strategic issues. These were attained by cooperating in security issues that involve defence, maritime, and critical technologies. Economic security is also bolstered by cooperating in resilient supply chains, critical minerals, semiconductors, and infrastructure, thus reducing reliance on a single country. Cooperation in new technological areas is helping both countries become key players in such industries,

where they cooperate in artificial intelligence, quantum technology, digital innovations, and space research. In addition to that, the summit reiterated the two countries' commitment to a rules-based maritime order and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region. Finally, India and Japan are working together more in regional and global institutions as well as reforming global governance.

6. Conclusion

The summit helped build up mutual trust in strategic issues and the growing importance of India-Japan cooperation in addressing regional and global issues. The results of the summit set a good foundation for further development of relations between the two countries; yet, the success of these efforts depends on effective implementation of the initiatives and political commitment.

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