

# **Report on the Lecture about “Prime Minister Abe’s Contribution to the India-Japan Partnership and his Vision of the Indo-Pacific”**

## **Event Overview**

On September 20, 2024, the Pankaj Kumar Jha Centre for Security Studies (PKJCSS) at the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA) hosted a special lecture featuring Professor Kasai, a visiting associate professor from the University of Japan. The event began with an introduction by Gargi Mishra, Centre Coordinator and Head of Social Media at PKJCSS. She shared the centre’s history, highlighting its establishment in 2020 as JSIA’s first student-led research initiative and honouring the late Dr. Pankaj Kumar Jha, the centre’s founder, after whom it was renamed following his passing in May 2024. She acknowledged the current leadership of Professors Gitanjali Sinha Roy, Shashank Ranjan, and Pooja Bhatt, and their dedication to advancing Dr. Jha’s work on global security studies.

Vanshika Sirohi from JII introduced Professor Kasai, outlining his expertise in South Asian international relations and modern Japanese history, as well as his advisory roles in Japanese embassies in Beijing, New Delhi, and Islamabad.

## **Opening Remarks by Professor Gitanjali Sinha Roy**

Professor Gitanjali Sinha Roy paid tribute to former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose birth anniversary would fall the next day, on September 21. She reflected on Abe’s legacy, particularly his influence on Japan’s foreign policy and the Indo-Pacific region. She highlighted Abe’s 2007 address to the Indian Parliament, which emphasized the strategic convergence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, setting the foundation for Japan’s deepening relationship with India.

## **Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s Legacy and Japan-India Relations**

Professor Kasai began by reflecting on his personal experiences in India, having worked as a political researcher at the Japanese Embassy from 2008 to 2010, and his recent visit in August, where he discussed Japan's engagement in Northeast India. He expressed admiration for the strong interest Indian people have in Japan, particularly regarding Abe's role in enhancing bilateral ties.

He emphasized the significance of the date, coinciding with the anniversary of Abe's assassination, and reflected on Abe’s profound impact on both Japan and India. Professor Kasai

outlined Abe's vision, stressing the need for future leaders to carry forward his policies and ideas. He also highlighted the emotional weight of Abe's death for both nations, noting that while Abe is no longer physically present, his legacy continues to shape the future of Japan-India relations.

### Prime Minister Abe's First Term as Prime Minister

Professor Kasai characterized Abe's first term as Prime Minister as ambitious and driven by a wide range of policy ideas. He referenced Abe's historic visit to India in 2007, where he delivered a speech to the Indian Parliament that demonstrated his deep respect for Indian culture and commitment to strengthening Japan-India ties. Professor Kasai underscored how Abe's early vision for the Indo-Pacific region was ahead of its time, laying the groundwork for Japan's growing engagement with India.

### Prime Minister Abe's Return to Power and Foreign Policy Initiatives

After stepping down in 2007 due to health issues and electoral setbacks, Abe returned to power in 2012, marking a resurgence of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) amid national crises, including the devastating 2011 earthquake. Upon his return, Abe pursued a proactive foreign policy, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Professor Kasai highlighted Abe's speech in Indonesia in January 2013, which articulated Japan's commitment to peace and stability in the region. He emphasized the ongoing relevance of Abe's policies, particularly Japan's strategic role in maintaining open and peaceful seas governed by the rule of law. Professor Kasai urged attendees to study Abe's speeches to understand his vision for Japan's global role.

### Japan-India Relations under Prime Minister Abe

Recounting the evolution of Japan-India relations, Professor Kasai highlighted key moments, such as the 2014 summit between Abe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which elevated the bilateral relationship to a strategic and global partnership. He noted the regular exchanges between Japanese and Indian leaders, reflecting a growing partnership in areas such as security and economic development.

Professor Kasai also discussed Japan's involvement in infrastructure development projects in India, including the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, as a reflection of Japan's broader ambitions

in the Indo-Pacific region. Abe's policies aimed to position Japan and India as key partners in ensuring stability and prosperity in the region.

### Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Broader Vision for the Indo-Pacific

Professor Kasai highlighted five key themes from Abe's vision for Japan's role in the Indo-Pacific region:

1. Protecting freedom of expression.
2. Ensuring vital trade routes through open and peaceful seas governed by international law.
3. Promoting interconnected economies.
4. Fostering exchanges among younger generations to shape the future.
5. Enhancing cooperation among like-minded nations to address regional and global challenges.

These ideas, Professor Kasai noted, continue to resonate and guide Japan's foreign policy in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Japan's Diplomatic Relations in the Indo-Pacific

In addition to Japan's relationship with India, Professor Kasai explored Japan's broader diplomatic landscape, including its ties with the United States, Russia, China, and South Korea. He emphasized Japan's alliance with the United States as a cornerstone of its foreign policy, regardless of the party in power. He also discussed Japan's multilateral initiatives involving the U.S. and India, underlining the importance of these alliances for regional security and cooperation.

### Global Challenges and Future Outlook

Addressing the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Professor Kasai reflected on Japan's relatively effective response but noted the significant pressures it created. He argued that the pandemic has highlighted the need for strong international alliances and cooperative frameworks, particularly in addressing shared challenges such as public health and economic recovery.

Professor Kasai concluded by discussing the potential for Japan-India collaboration to continue expanding, particularly in strategic areas such as infrastructure and economic development. He expressed optimism about the future of the Japan-India relationship, particularly with ongoing initiatives like the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, and emphasized the importance of sustained cooperation in addressing regional security concerns.

## Q&A session

The speaker addressed questions related to India-Japan collaboration, evolving geopolitical dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, and Japan-South Korea relations.

In response to a question about future collaboration between India and Japan, the speaker emphasized the significant role of Japanese investment in India, particularly in the automobile and electronics sectors. They highlighted India's efforts to establish itself as a semiconductor hub and pointed out that collaboration in this industry could extend beyond just India and Japan, involving nations like Taiwan and the United States. Additionally, the speaker stressed the importance of strengthening human resource development, education, and people-to-people connections between the two nations.

On the topic of evolving geopolitical dynamics between India, China, and Japan, the speaker acknowledged India's growing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. They noted that India's increasing role in the region's stability presents both opportunities and challenges for Japan and China, but did not go into detailed analysis of tensions between the countries.

When asked about Japan's relations with South Korea, particularly in the context of the comfort women issue, the speaker explained that this historical dispute has strained Japan-South Korea relations. While Prime Minister Abe's stance on the issue left ties tense, Prime Minister Kishida has been working towards improving bilateral relations, though the issue remains a sensitive topic.