

## India and Japan commit to Indo-Pacific strategy

Strengthening ties: External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj with her Japanese counterpart Taro Kono in Tokyo. AP

India is Japan's "most important" partner in its "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy," said Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, as both countries agreed to step up cooperation in their "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" during annual consultations and exchanged yen loan agreements for \$1.4 billion.

"Our Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and India's Act East Policy should be further merged," said Mr. Kono, in remarks that appeared to target China's actions in the South China Sea.

"Our growing convergence on economic and strategic issues is important for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region," said External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj.

Ms. Swaraj and Mr. Kono discussed a wide range of bilateral issues during the 9th India-Japan Strategic dialogue in Tokyo, while setting the agenda for the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Japan for the annual summit with PM Shinzo Abe.

They also witnessed the exchange of documents for loans from Japan to India for projects including the Mumbai metro line from Cuffe Parade, a sea water desalinisation plant and a intelligent transport system to reduce traffic congestion in Chennai, tree-planting schemes in Himachal Pradesh as well as loans for the North East connectivity project.

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