

# Dhaka, Tokyo decide to enhance cooperation in defense, economy

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**The Daily Morning Voice Online Desk :** Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Japanese counterpart Kishida Fumio have welcomed the commencement of negotiations on agreement concerning the transfer of defense equipment and technology, recognising the future potential.

The two premiers decided to elevate the bilateral relationship to a “Strategic Partnership” as a guiding principle to lead the two countries’ journey into the next 50 years and beyond, according to a joint statement issued in Tokyo on Thursday, reports BSS. Both leaders shared the determination to enhance cooperation, specifically cooperation for peace and stability in the region and beyond, deepening economic cooperation for mutual benefits and regional prosperity, and expansion of cultural cooperation and people to people exchanges.

At the invitation of the Japanese prime minister, Sheikh Hasina is currently on an official visit and had a summit meeting with her Japanese counterpart on April 26. The two premiers welcomed recent frequent port calls at Chattogram by vessels of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) and the high-level mutual visits of the Japan Self-Defense Forces and Bangladesh Armed Forces. In light of the Memorandum of Cooperation and Exchanges formulated between the defense authorities from the two sides, they concurred to continue to promote security cooperation such as mutual visits by vessels and aircraft, unit-to-unit exchange, training programmes and goodwill exercises. In addition, both the Prime Ministers have decided to consider opening Defense Wing in Tokyo and National Security Wing in Dhaka in their respective embassies in the near future. Furthermore, they concurred to enhance dialogue among the respective diplomatic and defense authorities in order to identify possible ways to strengthen the security cooperation. Prime Minister Kishida explained Japan’s efforts for fundamentally reinforcing its defense capabilities and strengthening diplomatic efforts, as illustrated in the new National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Defense Buildup Program.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina shared Bangladesh’s plan and initiative for further modernizing its armed forces under the Forces Goal 2030. Both Prime Ministers acknowledged the efforts by both countries to contribute to their respective regional security. Sheikh Hasina acknowledged the establishment of the Official Security Assistance by Japan, a new cooperation framework for the benefit of armed forces and other related organizations of like-minded countries for the purpose of deepening security cooperation, and looked forward to future cooperation under this framework. The two prime ministers confirmed that, guided by the traditional and time-tested friendship since the independence of Bangladesh, the two countries have achieved significant progress in bilateral relations based on the “Comprehensive Partnership” established in 2014. They noted that the two countries celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2022, as a manifestation of commitment and determination to contribute to enhancing the bilateral relationship based on common values and mutual interests. Guided by the fundamental values and principles shared by the two countries, the two Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to realising a free and open Indo-Pacific based on the rule of law, where the rights, freedoms and sovereignty of all countries, regardless of size or power, are protected by international law, rules and norms. In particular, they affirmed that maritime order based on common values such as freedom of navigation is a cornerstone for stability and prosperity of the international community and that the use of the sea as global commons will contribute to the development of blue economy. Prime Minister Kishida explained that Japan, as the G7 Presidency, would like to demonstrate the G7’s determination to uphold the free and open international order based on the rule of law and to enhance relations with partners in the international community beyond the G7.

Sheikh Hasina felicitated Japan on its G7 presidency. Prime Minister Kishida also outlined a newly released plan for a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)”, which will strengthen Japan’s efforts to further promote the FOIP vision, with the four pillars of cooperation: “Principles for Peace and Rules for Prosperity,” “Addressing Challenges in an Indo-Pacific Way,” “Multi-layered Connectivity,” and “Extending Efforts for

Security and Safe Use of the “Sea” to the “Air”. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina appreciated Japan’s sustained efforts to contribute to securing regional and international peace, stability, and prosperity. She reiterated Bangladesh’s principled position on a free, open, inclusive, peaceful and secure Indo-Pacific based on international law and shared prosperity for all. Recognising the importance of Bangladesh, which holds great economic potential and can be a bridge between huge economic markets, namely South Asia and Southeast Asia, the two Prime Ministers shared the recognition that developing quality infrastructure will enhance regional connectivity and contribute to the development of Bangladesh and the region. In this context, they stressed the importance of transparent and fair development finance to achieve sustainable development and highlighted the importance of adhering to international rules and standards, such as debt sustainability and transparency. They also shared the recognition on the importance of economic security, including strengthening resilience of supply chain, and the rules-based international economic order to counter challenges such as economic coercion.