



**INSTITUTE OF  
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: [www.issi.org.pk](http://www.issi.org.pk)  
phone: +92-920-4423, 24  
fax: +92-920-4658

# *Report – In-House Meeting* **“Japan Media Delegation”**

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*Compiled by: Majid Mahmood*

*Edited by: Najam Rafique*

## Pictures of the Event



The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held an In-House meeting with a 5-member Media Delegation from Japan on December 5, 2017. The members of the Japanese delegation included : Ms. Chiyoko Nakamoto Toyoda, Senior Director, International News Div, Fuji TV, Mr. Go Yamada, Senior Staff Writer, Nikkei News Review & Principle Economist, International & Asian Research Dept, Japan Centre for Economic Research (JCER), Mr. Masato Toriya, Research Fellow, Sasakawa Peace Foundation & Visiting Fellow, Institute of Asian, African & Middle Eastern Studies, Sophia University Tokyo, Mr. Hiroshi Mori, Bureau Chief, Senkai Shimbun Newspaper and Mr. Ken Iwasaki, Deputy Editor, International News Dept., Nippon TV.

The Chairman ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, welcomed the delegation and said that Pakistanis have always thought of Japan as a friend. Ambassador Khalid briefly talked about the origins of bilateral relationship between Japan and Pakistan and said that Japan was the first country to establish trade office in Karachi even before the independence of Pakistan. Ambassador Mahmood informed the delegation that the people in Pakistan consider Japanese as people who work hard and generate quality output. He recalled that Pakistan's main export to Japan in the early days was cotton while machinery items were main features of Japanese exports to Pakistan. He noted that in the realm of politics, Pakistan and Japan shared similar positions on international issues as both the countries were on the same block during the Cold War era.

Ambassador Mahmood highlighted that despite differences on certain issues, Pakistan appreciates Japan's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation. Explaining Pakistani position on nuclear matters, he said that Pakistan has always supported the establishment of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zones (NWFZ) in South Asia and that nuclear weapons were not the weapons of choice for the country. Ambassador Mahmood told the delegation that India and Bhutan rejected Pakistani offers of NWFZ, and Pakistan now supports another initiative in the region to cool down strategic tensions and that is the establishment of a nuclear restraint regime in the region. This initiative has also been dismissed by India.

Ambassador Mahmood also raised a query on the recent dilution of historically strong attitude of Japan towards nuclear issues and in that, he mentioned Japan's growing nuclear trade with India despite the latter not being member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and its

expanding nuclear arsenal. He pointed out the negative implications of India joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), as India's own domestic reserves will be freed to increase its nuclear warhead numbers. Ambassador Mahmood also expressed his disappointment regarding Japanese Premier Abe remarks during his recent visit to India questioning Pakistan's commitment to fight terrorism. The remarks, he noted, were not only unwarranted but also lacked the appreciation of ground reality as to how vigorously Pakistan is fighting the war on terror, and thus contributing to international security.

Ambassador Mahmood hoped that economic and trade relationship between Japan and Pakistan will grow further, including the frequency of high level delegation visits between the two countries. He also underscored the importance of developmental assistance Japan is providing to Pakistan.

The Japanese delegation thanked Ambassador Khalid Mahmood and the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad for hosting them.

Dr. Ahmed Rashid Malik, Director China-Pakistan Study Centre of ISSI briefed the delegation on the importance of CPEC and its impact on Pakistan. He informed the delegation that CPEC is an integral part and one of the 6 corridors being built under China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. On CPEC, he specifically said that this project will connect China's developing western region with Pakistani ports and economy. He stressed that CPEC is not just a road project, but it involves construction of railway links, energy projects, economic zones and much more. Adding on, Dr. Malik stated that Pakistan's electric load shedding problem has been considerably reduced due to power projects in CPEC, and it is projected that by the end of 2017, Pakistan will have a net surplus electricity in the national grid.

Dr. Malik recalled that CPEC is, in a sense, the second phase of the earlier China-Pakistan connectivity through the Karakoram Highway which was started in 1959 and the project was completed in 1976. Explaining the origins of CPEC, he said that China's One Belt One Road vision was unveiled by President Xi Jinping in a lecture at a university in Kazakhstan in 2013. He continued by saying that the initial investment amount in CPEC was \$46 billion, which has now increased to \$63 billion. Dr. Malik apprised the delegation about the joint decision making

model governing the execution of CPEC which is the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC). He said that in total, seven meetings of JCC have been held so far to monitor the progress of CPEC.

Dr. Malik said that CPEC is open for non-Chinese foreign investors and partners as well, and gave the example of Qatar in this regards. Dr. Malik highlighted that Japan can be an investor in projects of CPEC and that it offers a great opportunity for Japan.

In response to a question by the Japanese delegation about impact of China's economic slowdown on CPEC funding and debt concerns, Dr. Malik said that he did not agree with the western estimates about slowing down of Chinese economy in 2020. On the issue of debt concerns, Dr. Malik informed the delegation that Chinese loans will not be burden on Pakistani economy as its own economy is growing positively. He also said that loans on each projects vary from case to case basis and the interest rate is not more than 1.6 %. Also, he said that CPEC is more about Chinese investments rather than loans.

Replying to a question about whether or not Japan will join CPEC, the Japanese delegation said that it depends upon the conditions of engagement, and if there is no discrimination, then Japan might be interested in becoming a partner to CPEC.

In response to a question about whether or not Pakistan is concerned whether Chinese investments could create a Hambantota type debt trap scenario as in Sri Lanka, Dr. Malik said that Pakistan does not face such a situation because there is no friction between China and Pakistan and that size of Pakistan and its economy is much larger than Sri Lanka.

Ms. Amina Khan, Senior Research Fellow, ISSI briefed the Japanese delegation about the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan's policy towards that country. She said that the state of Afghan security and governance is in decline, while the Taliban insurgency is gaining more grounds in recent years. Ms. Khan also said that civilian casualties are on the rise in Afghanistan and there is much more corruption in the Afghan political set up. She explained that the only way to bring peace in Afghanistan is a negotiated settlement between the Taliban and Kabul regime, but the prospects of this are low. She continued that Kabul's Unity government is itself divided on peace talks with the Taliban and the latter is gaining more territory and influence in Afghanistan and therefore has little incentive to come at the table.

Ms Khan explained the reasons due to which relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan are deteriorating. These, she explained, included: border skirmishes, refugees and the lack of peace process. She said that Kabul needs to make constructive efforts with Pakistan instead of engaging in a blame game.

In response to a question about influence of ISIS or Daish in Afghanistan, Ms. Khan said that Daish is basically the breakaway faction of Taliban and both have different ideologies. Daish is global in its vision, while the Taliban are fighting a nationalist insurgency in Afghanistan. She was of the opinion that one of the major ways to limit and eradicate the presence of ISIS in Afghanistan is reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Afghan Taliban. Pakistan is pushing for a peace process involving the Afghan Taliban in order to help bring stability to Afghanistan and also deny ISIS any sort of influence in Afghanistan. She said that the Afghan government has also acknowledged that all terrorists that were present in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have been pushed into Afghanistan. This is because Pakistan has taken a number of initiatives on the Afghan border since 2015 which include fencing, mandatory legal travel documents, installing more gates and passes to check, and control the free movement of people.

In answering the question on future of relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ms. Khan said that Afghanistan is a sovereign country and Pakistan is helping it to end the conflict there. She said that Kabul regime's contradictory stance of fighting and talking at the same time with Taliban complicates Pakistan own position of trying to open dialogue for peace process. She clarified that Pakistan can only help and support in bringing Afghan conflict to an end, but it cannot bring peace in Afghanistan itself.

Ms. Mahwish Hafeez, Research Fellow, ISSI briefed the Japanese delegation about the state of India-Pakistan relations. She said that Pakistan never had a smooth relationship with India. Pakistan and India started their composite dialogue process, but it came to halt after Mumbai attacks. She explained that India-Pakistan relations have taken a nose dive since Modi came to power and India has converted his anti-Pakistan election rhetoric into policy. Ms. Hafeez explained that humanitarian situation in the Indian held Kashmir has deteriorated significantly

and the oppression by Indian security forces in that area has worsened. She said that India is shying away from dialogue with Pakistan.

Replying to a question about the possibility of resolution of the Kashmir dispute, Ms. Hafeez said that there are a number of United Nations resolutions on Kashmir and those need to be implemented for peace to be achieved. When asked about the Japanese position over the Kashmir dispute, the delegation answered that Japan is neutral on the Kashmir dispute and does not take sides on territorial disputes with other nations.

Japanese delegation said in answer to the question about China-Japan dispute over Islands in East China Sea that Japan will never go to war with China over the disputed Islands'. Moreover, they were of the view that Japan has maintained cordial economic and trade relations with Beijing even as its political relations are bad. In response to question about Japanese perceptions about US president Donald Trump's recent visit to the region, the delegation was of the view that business and trade was the main thrust of Trump's visit to Asia.

Concluding the meeting, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood thanked the Japanese delegation for the discussion and exchange of views on regional and international issues