DELHI AND TOKYO REWRITE THEIR STRATEGIC COMPACT

The optics were carefully choreographed — a ceremonial reception at Rashtrapati Bhavan, a santoor session recalling Takaichi's days as a college drummer, and Modi's warm invocation of her as "meri chhoti behen." But beneath the pageantry lay a substantive recalibration. The two prime ministers stressed the strategic salience of the India-Japan partnership in an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment and agreed to advance cooperation in three priority areas: economic security, energy resilience and technology.

That framing is telling. This is no longer a relationship built primarily on Japanese aid and infrastructure financing, the template of the past two decades. Both governments are now working to reduce vulnerabilities in global supply chains, particularly in semiconductors, critical minerals and advanced manufacturing, and — perhaps most significantly — they signed an agreement on their first joint defence co-development project, the naval radio antenna effort dubbed "Unicorn." For two countries that have historically kept defence cooperation at arm's length compared to their economic ties, this is a genuine step-change, one Modi framed as opening a new chapter in defence technology partnership. The China factor hovers over all of it, even if never named outright in the joint statements. Modi and Takaichi discussed the situation in the Indo-Pacific, a region that has witnessed growing Chinese military muscle-flexing, and the drive toward resilient supply chains is explicitly aimed at reducing dependence on China for critical minerals and active pharmaceutical ingredients. Add to this the disruption from West Asia's conflict — which has exposed vulnerabilities in the movement of critical goods and energy — and the summit reads less like a ceremony and more like risk management between two trading nations trying to insulate themselves from a world of choke points. On technology, the two sides leaned into complementarity rather than competition. Modi's formulation — that the convergence of Japan's precision technology and India's software capabilities would impart new momentum to global AI development — captures the pitch both governments are making to investors: Japan brings hardware and industrial discipline, India brings scale and digital talent.

The Japan-India Economic Forum pulled in over 150 Japanese companies and produced 120 fresh business agreements, alongside pacts spanning clean energy, healthcare and biotechnology. Three takeaways stand out. First, defence cooperation has crossed a symbolic threshold, with Tokyo's review of its arms-transfer principles opening the door to deeper co-development beyond token gestures. Second, "economic security" has replaced "connectivity" as the organising vocabulary of the relationship — a shift that mirrors how both nations now think about China and West Asia simultaneously. Third, the personal rapport between Modi and Takaichi, still new to her role, suggests continuity of India-Japan warmth across a change of Japanese leadership. The biggest takeaway, however, is that Delhi and Tokyo intend to be each other's hedge against an unpredictable world — this maiden visit has done its job.

The 11 year legacy of digital India

S Krishnan

Just over a decade ago, a farmer in a remote village in Uttar Pradesh had to navigate a maze of paperwork to receive subsidies or seek advisories to improve his yield. It was an era when waiting in line was the norm. Today, the same farmer can access support for his crops, and subsidies are deposited directly into his bank account without middlemen.

Walk down any street and you will witness another quiet revolution, one that has fundamentally redefined the ease of living. A local fruit seller or an autorickshaw driver who once relied entirely on the physical exchange of cash now proudly points to a QR code hanging from his cart/autorickshaw.

India today stands empowered by a staggering 102.86 Crore connected citizens, supported by a massive broadband subscriber base of 99.56 Crore. With the cost of mobile data at an ultra-affordable Rs 8 to Rs 10 per GB, individual monthly data usage has scaled to an extraordinary 24.01 GB. This digital foundation has completely reimagined the relationship between the citizen and the state, anchoring it in trust, transparency, and digital autonomy.

Under the leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, Digital India has proven that technology must act as a democratic equalizer for citizens, bringing them ease of living and ease of doing business.

Bridging the Divide

The first step in this revolution was democratizing access and building a robust, indigenous digital identity framework that guarantees technological self-reliance. The BharatNet initiative was deployed at scale, successfully connecting nearly 2.2 Lakh Gram Panchayats with high-speed broadband, ensuring that geography is no longer a barrier to economic opportunity.

This infrastructural leap, coupled with the generation of 144+ Crore Aadhaar identities, powered the Jan Dhan, Aadhaar, and Mobile (JAM) Trinity. By utilizing this sovereign digital identity framework, the government has successfully transferred Rs 51.5 Lakh Crore directly to citizens through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). This system has effectively eliminated leakage, removed middlemen, and dramatically improved the ease of living for millions of households by putting financial autonomy directly into their hands.

The DPI Phenomenon

Once the foundation was laid, India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) changed the everyday lives of citizens by creating solutions to solve real-world problems. Platforms like DigiLocker have radically streamlined processes for citizens and businesses alike. Boasting 70+ Crore registered users holding over 900+ Crore documents, it has eliminated the friction of physical paperwork, making KYC processes and document verification instantaneous. For enterprises, this has translated into a tangible reduction in the cost and time of onboarding banks, telecom operators, and fintechs now verify a customer in seconds rather than days.

Through the Government e-Marketplace (GeM), the government has conducted over Rs 19.51 Lakh Crore worth of procurement. For a small manufacturer or a first-time vendor, this has translated into a business opportunity to win government contracts without having to navigate layers of intermediaries.

For accessing public services remotely, the UMANG application has brought central and state government services directly to the citizens' palms. It now serves 11.6+ Crore registered users, offering access to 2,572 government services and facilitating 797.84 crore transactions to date.

The crown jewel of this ecosystem is the Unified Payments Interface (UPI). What empowers that street-side fruit seller's QR code is a sovereign payment rail that now processes a staggering 75 Crore transactions daily. Today, India accounts for nearly half of all real-time digital payments on the planet, with the IMF recognising UPI as the world's largest real-time payment system.

It has become an anchor of indispensability for the 24 Nations with which India has formally signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for the replication and adoption of its digital governance platforms. Furthermore, UPI is now LIVE in 9 Countries, including the UAE, Singapore, and France.

This philosophy of treating technology as a public good extends directly to health equity, facilitating ease of living. Through the eSanjeevani platform, India has delivered over 48+ Crore free tele-consultations, allowing patients in remote, underserved areas to consult specialists. Similarly, the world's largest vaccination drive was powered by an indigenous platform. Over 220 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered and tracked transparently through CoWIN, establishing a robust digital backbone that healthcare systems across the globe studied.

Looking at the Horizon

As Digital India completes its 11th year, the mission is firmly pivoting toward frontier technologies, ensuring they are harnessed as public goods to solve challenges for India and the Global South.

For years, the massive cost of computing power kept brilliant young innovators in smaller towns away from advanced technology. Under the IndiaAI Mission, India is systematically dismantling this barrier to boost the ease of doing business for startups. The government has established a massive, shared compute facility to democratize access. By offering world-class computing capacity to homegrown startups and students at just Rs 65 per hour, the aim is to spark grassroots innovation. The goal is to make India the AI Applications capital of the world with our talented workforce transforming service delivery and boosting productivity in enterprises in all sectors at home and abroad.

Simultaneously, India is securing its hardware future. Under the Semicon India Programme, 12 Semiconductor manufacturing and packaging projects with an investment of Rs 1.65 Lakh Crore have now been approved across the country. Building on this momentum, the Union Budget 2026-27 announced the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0.

This new phase goes beyond manufacturing by focusing on semiconductor equipment and materials, designing full-stack Indian Intellectual Property (IP), and fortifying global supply chains. With 24 semiconductor design startups approved under the scheme, India is rapidly translating its capacity creation into deep technological depth, nurturing a vibrant domestic fabless ecosystem that designs the very chips powering the modern world.

The true legacy of this initiative is in the mindset of a nation that now expects innovation, seamless business operations, and governance to be at its fingertips. By ensuring that technology acts as a tool for inclusion, accessibility, and sovereign strength, Digital India is quietly architecting the Viksit Bharat we envision for 2047.

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The writer is Secretary of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY); Views presented are personal.

EARTHQUAKE IN VENEZUELA: SOME GEO SEISMIC ANALYSIS

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On June 24, 2026, two powerful earthquakes struck in North_Central Venezuela, in South America, devastating structures and lives.

Described as a seismic doublet, the earthquake can be understood only by knowing continental drift and seismography.

As per the doctrine of plate tectonics which emerged after the continental drift of Alfred Wagner (A German Geomorphologies) in 1912. The concept of plate tectonics was a combined contribution made by German seismologists in Heidelberg in 1956.

The plate tectonics describes faults and fractures in upper crust of earth's litho phere. These fractures are caused by heat convections in lower lithosphere

The Venezuelan earthquakes have been seismological caused by stress caused between the Caribbean plate and the South American plates. The seismological evidences and epicenter in central Venezuela reveal that the carrihean plate moved southward towards the South American plate which became lighter due to large scale oil drilling in north Venezuela.

As per the plate movements of South America and carrivean, the friction creates steam and convection in hollow and lighter areas

The seismological records reveal the rate of movement of the two plates is approximately 2 cms/ per year.

The movement brings friction and slide in rocks along with movement of plates.

When the accumulated stress and strain in faults exceeds the gravity vertically and horizontally, the quake in plates starts.

The activity occurred within the complex bocono-san sebestian-elpilar fault system. geologists believe the initial 7.2 magnitude foreshock occurred along the segment of the central range fault, which subsequently triggered a second more powerful 7.5 magnitude main shock on the san Sebastian fault system.

Experts have identified several factors that contributed to the high casualty count and structural failure. It is essential to understand the seismic doublet. The two events occurred only 39 seconds apart. The first earthquake weakened buildings and infract structure, leaving them critically unstable. The second larger shock occurred before any recovery could begin, the already compromised structures to collapse completely.

Earthquake activity is not random; it is highly concentrated along the boundaries of the earth's tectonic plates. Scientists categorize these high-risk areas into specific seismic belts.

1. The circum-pacific belt (the "ring of fire")

This is the world's most seismically and volcanically active zone. It is a 40,000-km horseshoe-shaped region that follows the edges of the Pacific Ocean.

Why it's active: it is characterized by seduction zones where the pacific plate is forced beneath smaller surrounding plates.

Key regions: the western coast of south and North America (Chile, Peru, calIfornia, Alaska), the Aleutian islands, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and New Zealand.

Statistics: approximately 81% of the world's largest earthquakes occur along this belt.

2. The Alpide belt

Extending from the southern part of Europe through Asia, this belt is responsible for about 17% of the world's largest earthquakes.

Why it's active: it is formed primarily by the collision of the African and Indian tectonic plates with the Eurasian plate.

Key regions: the Mediterranean (Italy, Greece, turkey), the Middle East (Iran), and the Himalayan mountain range (Nepal, Northern India, Pakistan).

3. The mid-Atlantic ridge

This is a divergent plate boundary where two tectonic plates are spreading apart, creating new seafloor.

Why it's active: tensional forces caused by the spreading of the ocean floor result in frequent seismic activity.

Key Regions: Most of this activity occurs deep underwater and far from human populations, but it is the primary reason for seismic activity in Iceland

Besides Venezuela, an earthquake was also felt in the rugged hindukush of Afghanistan on 1 July 2026 with a magnitude of 5.5, China, Japan, Indonesia, Turkey, Philippines and Iran were also affected by strong earthquake waves with a magnitude of above 5 on Richter scale.

The Silent Sentinels of India's Information Frontier: 75 Years of the Public Relations Unit, Jammu

Lt Col Suneel Bartwal
PRO & Spokesperson, Jammu Region

In the age of hybrid warfare, where narratives can influence national security as profoundly as military operations, information has emerged as a strategic asset. On India's sensitive northern frontiers, where every development is closely watched both within the country and beyond its borders, the responsibility of communicating the truth demands professionalism, credibility and unwavering commitment.

For the past seventy-five years, the Public Relations Unit (PRU), Jammu has quietly fulfilled this responsibility. While soldiers have defended the nation's borders, PRU Jammu has safeguarded the information domain - ensuring that the stories of courage, sacrifice, humanitarian service and national commitment reach citizens accurately, responsibly and without compromising operational security. As the Unit celebrates its Platinum Jubilee on 1 July 2026, it stands not merely as a media organisation but as one of India's oldest and most respected institutions of strategic communication.

Raised on 1st July 1950 under the leadership of Major D.C. Kapur (First Defence PRO of Jammu), the Unit came into existence at a defining moment in independent India's history. Barely three years after Independence and in the aftermath of the first conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, the Government recognised the importance of establishing an authentic bridge between the Defence Forces, the media and the people. Since then, twenty-two Defence Public Relations Officers have led the Unit, each contributing to an enduring legacy built on credibility, professionalism and public service.

Over the decades, PRU Jammu has evolved into the principal communication interface of the Ministry of Defence in the Jammu region. The Unit represents the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force, Project Sampark of the Border Roads Organisation, the National Cadet Corps and several other Ministry of Defence establishments. It coordinates media engagement, manages strategic communication during military operations, facilitates national and international media, counters misinformation, projects nation-building initiatives and ensures that the voice of the Defence Forces reaches the public with clarity and authenticity.

The Unit's journey mirrors India's own security history. It has supported communication during the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971, the Kargil conflict, decades of counter-insurgency operations, anti-terror campaigns, anti-infiltration operations, ceasefire violations and numerous security contingencies in Jammu and Kashmir. During every major operation, PRU Jammu has balanced two equally critical responsibilities - keeping the nation informed while protecting operational confidentiality. This balance has been central to preserving public confidence and ensuring that facts prevail over speculation.

Equally significant has been the Unit's role in highlighting the humanitarian face of the Defence Forces. For decades, PRU Jammu has documented rescue operations during floods, earthquakes, avalanches and landslides, projecting soldiers not merely as defenders of territorial integrity but as first responders in times of human distress. During the devastating floods of 2014 and later natural disasters across the region, the Unit effectively communicated the scale of humanitarian assistance undertaken by the Defence Forces, bringing national attention to thousands of lives saved through extraordinary courage and selfless service.

the COVID-19 pandemic, PRU Jammu once again played a vital role in showcasing the Defence Forces' contribution to national resilience. From establishing quarantine facilities and supporting vaccination drives to providing oxygen support, medical logistics and humanitarian assistance, the Unit ensured that citizens remained informed about the military's unwavering commitment to the nation during one of the most challenging public health emergencies in modern history.

Beyond crisis communication, PRU Jammu has consistently highlighted the Defence Forces' enduring contribution to nation-building. Through extensive coverage of educational initiatives, medical camps, women empowerment programmes, youth engagement, sports competitions, environmental campaigns, skill development projects and civic action programmes, particularly under Operation Sadbhavana, the Unit has reinforced the image of the Indian soldier as a partner in development and a catalyst for social transformation. These stories have strengthened public trust and deepened the bond between the soldier and the citizen across the region.

One of the Unit's unique strengths has been its ability to bring national recognition to organisations whose contributions often remain outside public attention. Through sustained media outreach, PRU Jammu has highlighted the remarkable achievements of Project Sampark of the Border Roads Organisation in constructing strategic roads, bridges and tunnels, restoring connectivity after disasters and enabling socio-economic development in remote border areas. It has similarly showcased the operational excellence of the Indian Air Force, humanitarian air operations, recruitment initiatives and the inspiring activities of the National Cadet Corps, encouraging generations of young Indians to embrace discipline, leadership and national service.

Among the Unit's most significant yet lesser-known contributions has been the conduct of the Army Leg of Defence Correspondents Course, a pioneering professional familiarisation programme of Ministry of Defence for journalists from across the country. Conducted in close coordination with operational formations, the course provides media professionals with first-hand exposure to military life, border deployments, operational procedures, humanitarian assistance and the complexities of reporting from conflict-sensitive regions. By enabling journalists to interact directly with commanders and soldiers while witnessing the realities of military operations, the programme has nurtured informed, balanced and security-conscious defence reporting. At a time when misinformation can spread rapidly across digital platforms, the course continues to strengthen mutual trust between the Defence Forces and the media, producing generations of defence correspondents who appreciate both the public's right to know and the imperatives of national security.

As communication technologies evolved from typewriters and telegrams to satellite television, digital media and social networking platforms, PRU Jammu transformed itself into a modern strategic communication organisation. Today, the Unit leverages multimedia content, digital storytelling and real-time dissemination of verified information to reach millions of citizens while swiftly countering misinformation and malicious propaganda. In an era increasingly defined by information warfare, this capability has become indispensable to national security.

The importance of strategic communication was once again demonstrated during Operation SINDOOR, when PRU Jammu ensured timely dissemination of verified operational information while effectively projecting humanitarian assistance, civil preparedness and the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders. The experience reaffirmed a defining reality of modern conflict - that credibility remains one of a nation's strongest strategic assets.