

Welcome Remarks

by

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

Fifteenth Sapru House Lecture

by

H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan

at

Sapru House, New Delhi

17 January 2015

H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida, Foreign Minister of Japan, Ambassador Shashank, Member of our Governing Council and former Foreign Secretary, H.E. Mr. Takeshi Yagi, Ambassador of Japan, Excellencies, Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), we extend a warm welcome to you all. A very special and friendly welcome is extended to our Chief Guest – the Foreign Minister. We are deeply grateful to him for having accepted our invitation to deliver the Fifteenth Sapru House Lecture today on the subject - “Special Partnership for the Era of the Indo-Pacific.”

2. The Sapru House Lecture series was started in August 2012. It has drawn a galaxy of foreign and Indian dignitaries, scholars and experts who have spoken to our Research Faculty and guests on a variety of themes. The lecture series celebrates and commemorates the sterling contribution made by the founders of ICWA which, in due course of time, came to be recognized as “an institution of national importance”, in the words of the Indian Parliament.

3. Our Chief Guest, Foreign Minister Kishida, is the product of Waseda University. In 1993, he was elected to the House of Representatives for the first time. Since 1999, he has had a rich and rewarding Ministerial career, having served in various positions such as Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Construction, and for Education and Culture. In 2005, he served as Chairman of the Committee on Health, Labour and Welfare of the House of Representatives. Subsequently, he served in other ministerial positions, including as the Minister of Consumer Affairs in 2008. He served as Chairman of the LDP’s Diet Affairs Committee. In December 2012, Mr. Kishida was appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a position he continued to hold after the Cabinet reshuffle in September 2014. He was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs again in December 2014. We greatly appreciate that he has chosen India for his first visit abroad after taking over the present assignment.

4. All of us await with keen interest the Foreign Minister’s speech. It will no doubt cover a whole range of issues that are of interest to not only our two countries but also our

wider Asian Region. It is gratifying to note that the India-Japan relationship has been taking a rapid strides since the last visit of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Japan. Our Chief Guest's reflections on the future directions of this relationship, the emerging economic and geopolitical situation in the region and several important issues of global interest that impinge directly on the national interests of India and Japan, would be of immense interest to this audience. We have before us a special assembly of academics and researchers, foreign diplomats, former Indian Ambassadors, representatives of business, civil society and media.

5. We are particularly fortunate in having with us Ambassador Shashank who chairs this very important event. He has had a distinguished career in the Indian Foreign Service, which climaxed in his serving as the country's foreign secretary. Following his retirement from the service, Ambassador Shashank has pro-actively contributed to the discourse and debate within the strategic community. He has also made immense contribution to dissemination of foreign policy awareness through television and press.

6. May I now request you all, dear friends, to put your hands together to warmly welcome our Chief Guest as well as the Chair.

7. The Chair is now requested to conduct the meeting.
