

Sushma Swaraj's three-day Japan visit begins on Wednesday

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India and Japan are expected to discuss the progress in establishing the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC), being seen as a counter to China's Belt Road Initiative (BRI), when External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj visits Tokyo on a three-day visit beginning Wednesday.

Swaraj will co-chair the ninth India-Japan Strategic Dialogue with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono, it was announced on Tuesday.

According to the External Affairs Ministry, India and Japan will review all aspects of bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and international issues of common interest during the 29 March strategic dialogue.

India-Japan ties have been on the upswing after the bilateral relationship was elevated to a Special Strategic and Global Partnership during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Japan in 2014.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India in September last year for the annual bilateral summit gave fresh impetus to the ties. During that visit, the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project, to be built with Japanese aid, was also held.

PM Modi is scheduled to visit Japan towards the end of the year for the annual India-Japan summit.

"Japan is today one of the largest investors in India, with a growing presence in infrastructure projects, manufacturing, financial markets and capacity-building, among others," the External Affairs Ministry said.

India-Japan trade stood at \$13.61 billion in fiscal 2016-17, showing a decrease of 6.21 per cent over fiscal 2015-16, when the total trade was \$14.51 billion. The bilateral trade during April-August 2017 was \$6.183 billion. The two countries are also part of the recently revived quad that includes the US and Australia.