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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Diplomacy From the States Up: India, Japan and a Bihar Opening

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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THE LIFT LINE

Diplomacy no longer flows only from capital to capital; when a state learns to court a partner on its own account, a landlocked province can borrow the sea.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

The strengthening India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership, and the sub-national opening it creates for a state such as Bihar, is a fresh way into a familiar GS2 theme: foreign relations and the growing role of India's states in them. It also touches **federalism** (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/federalism/>), because paradiplomacy sits at the seam between the Union's foreign-affairs power and a state's development ambitions.

GS Paper 2: **bilateral** (<https://ujjyari.com/vocab/bilateral/>), regional and global groupings and agreements involving India; India and its neighbourhood; issues relating to the federal structure.

For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: JICA (the Japan International Cooperation Agency) as India's largest bilateral development-finance partner, the **Act East Policy** (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/act-east-policy/>), and the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership. For **Mains**, argue that **cooperative federalism** (<https://ujjyari.com/terms/cooperative-federalism/>) can extend to diplomacy, with states as active economic partners under the Union's overall foreign-policy umbrella.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

India and Japan upgraded their relationship to a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership" in 2014, and it has since become one of India's most consequential ties, spanning high-speed rail, infrastructure finance, semiconductors, clean energy and Indo-Pacific security. Japan, through JICA, has been the single largest

source of bilateral **official development assistance** (<https://ujiyari.com/terms/official-development-assistance/>) to India, funding metros, dedicated freight corridors and industrial corridors.

Much of this cooperation lands not in New Delhi but in the states, where projects are built and jobs are created. That is the sub-national opening. Bihar, one of India's most populous and least industrialised states, landlocked and long dependent on remittances, is precisely the kind of place that stands to gain if it can attract a share of Japanese finance and expertise. The question the editorial poses is whether Bihar can move from being a passive recipient of centrally routed projects to an active courtier of investment on its own account.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

Paradiplomacy is already here

Indian states already practise a quiet paradiplomacy: they run investment summits, court foreign firms, and sign memoranda within the Union's foreign-policy frame. The Constitution vests foreign affairs and treaty-making with the Union, but nothing stops a state from marketing itself, easing land and clearances, and building the governance credibility that foreign partners require. The states that have grown fastest are often those that learned this early.

Why Bihar, and why Japan

Bihar's advantages are **demographic** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/demographic/>) and geographic: a young, large workforce and a location on the eastern corridor toward Southeast Asia that the Act East Policy prizes. Its handicaps are a thin manufacturing base, connectivity gaps and an investment-climate reputation it must repair. Japanese partners, patient, quality-focused and infrastructure-led, are a plausible match for exactly the connectivity, food-processing and skilling projects Bihar needs.

LEVER	WHAT IT OFFERS BIHAR	THE CONDITION FOR SUCCESS
JICA finance	Long-tenor, low-cost infrastructure loans	Bankable projects, land, clearances
Act East connectivity	Link to Southeast Asian value chains	Roads, rail, river ports on the corridor
Japanese industry	Manufacturing, food processing, skilling	Stable policy, skilled labour supply
Paradiplomacy	State-led courtship of investors	Governance credibility and follow-through

The gap to close

The opening will not convert itself. Sub-national diplomacy rewards states that offer ready land, quick clearances, reliable power and a workforce trained to partner needs. Bihar's task is institutional: a capable investment-promotion agency, project pipelines that are actually bankable, and the political continuity that patient capital demands.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

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Think of Indian federalism as having a widening external face. Classical federalism keeps foreign affairs entirely with the Union; cooperative and competitive federalism let states compete for the economic content of foreign relations while the Union sets the strategic frame. Paradiplomacy is the state-level activity that fills this space. The transferable rule: in a globalised federation, a state's prosperity increasingly depends not only on Union transfers but on its own capacity to court, absorb and deliver foreign investment.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

India-Japan Special Strategic Partnership -> JICA finance + Act East connectivity -> sub-national opening for states -> Bihar (young workforce + eastern-corridor location) -> if it builds bankable projects + clearances + governance credibility -> Japanese investment in connectivity, processing, skilling -> landlocked state plugs into value chains

WAY FORWARD

- ① **Build a credible investment-promotion machine.** Bihar needs a professional single-window agency that can prepare bankable projects and shepherd them through land and clearances.
- ② **Prioritise corridor connectivity.** Focus JICA-type finance on the roads, rail and river infrastructure that link Bihar to the eastern and Act East corridors.
- ③ **Match skilling to investor needs.** Align industrial training institutes and skilling missions with the specific manufacturing and food-processing sectors partners want.
- ④ **Practise disciplined paradiplomacy.** Court investors actively, but within the Union's foreign-policy frame, with policy stability that reassures patient capital.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has asked about the role of Indian states in foreign policy, about India-Japan relations, and about cooperative federalism. This editorial connects those themes to a concrete sub-national opportunity in Bihar.

Practice question: “In a globalising federation, the prosperity of a state depends as much on its own paradiplomacy as on Union transfers.” Examine with reference to India-Japan cooperation and the opportunity for a state like Bihar. (250 words, 15 marks)

Sources: The Indian Express (<https://indianexpress.com/section/opinion/>)

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