Japan-India Bilateral Exercise “Veer Guardian 26”

On September 20, General MORITA Takehiro, Chief of Staff, Koku-Jieitai (JASDF) visited India and attended DV Day program of Japan-India bilateral exercise “Veer Guardian 26”at Air Force Station Jodhpur. During a meeting with Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, Chief of the Air Staff, Indian Air Force, General Morita highlighted the growing defense cooperation and exchanges between the Koku-Jieitai and the Indian Air Force, and shared a common commitment to peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Veer Guardian 26 is the second bilateral fighter exercise with the Indian Air Force and supports the realization of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). The exercise is particularly significant as it marks the first-ever deployment of Koku-Jieitai fighters to India, bringing our bilateral cooperation between the two air services to a new stage.













General Morita’s Remarks at Media Engagement

AP-san, it is a privilege to be with you today and I would like to show my appreciation for your warm welcome and hospitality.

I am grateful for the invaluable opportunity to fly on the Tejas. As an aircraft born from indigenous defense capabilities, Tejas stands as a symbol of India’s technological innovation and embodies “Make in India” initiative. While flying, I found myself reflecting on the efforts of many people, both in the military and industry, who contributed to its development. Through this experience onboard, I gained a firsthand appreciation of the outstanding training environment available to the Indian Air Force and the tremendous value that this exercise provides to the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Koku-Jieitai. I will remember it not only as a truly invaluable experience, but also as a powerful symbol of the trust, confidence, and friendship that have been built between our two air services over many years. Thank you.

Veer Guardian 26 is the second bilateral fighter exercise between our services. More importantly, it marks the first-ever deployment of the Koku-Jieitai fighters to India. For many years, we have steadily expanded defense cooperation and exchanges. Since Shinyuu Maitri, our first bilateral exercise in 2018 here, deployment of our fighters to India has been a long-standing aspiration, especially following the historic first visit of Indian Air Force fighters to Japan three years ago. We believe that advanced training deepens mutual understanding, strengthens trust and enhances practical cooperation. It was with this belief in mind that we have finally made it a reality together to bring our defense cooperation to a new stage.

The significance of fighter deployment also extends beyond the exercise itself. By deploying and operating our fighters in India, our two countries have now achieved reciprocal fighter aircraft visits, and the Koku-Jieitai is demonstrating its capability and will to deploy air assets across the Indo-Pacific region. Our partnership has progressed beyond simply conducting exercise together to refining our tactical capabilities at practical level. Through increasingly sophisticated training, our two air services have advanced our cooperation. These efforts strengthen our ability to contribute to peace and stability, and over time, help strengthen regional deterrence.

Japan and India share a common vision of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, and we are bound together by the Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership. As the strategic environment surrounding our countries becomes increasingly complex, the importance of closer defense cooperation continues to grow.

This shared understanding was also reaffirmed at the Japan-India Summit Meeting between Prime Minister Takaichi and Prime Minister Modi in July, as well as in the Japan-India Defense Ministers' Meeting between Minister Koizumi and Minister Singh in August, both of which were held in India. Building on this strong support and commitment at the political level, Japan and India are advancing practical cooperation in ways that create greater synergy between our efforts and contribute to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region.

Veer Guardian 26 is a tangible example of these efforts. It demonstrates how our cooperation has evolved from exchanges to practical cooperation. The sophistication of our bilateral exercises reflects both the maturity of our partnership and our shared commitment to peace and stability in the region.