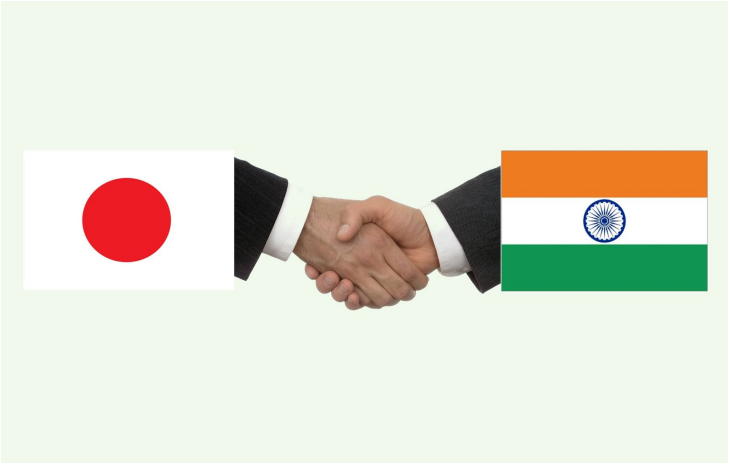
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# India and Japan join hands for stem cell research

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In the light of Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to India, the two countries have signed a host of agreements to further cooperation in science and technology, including research into stem-cells for making bone-marrow transplants more accessible.

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) already has an India-Japan cooperative programme that has Christian Medical College & Hospital, Vellore, and Kyoto University, Japan, as participants.

Though the DBT and Japan's National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) have been collaborating in these areas, they renewed the agreement for five more years.

The aim of the programme is to develop infrastructure and expertise for India to be a competitive force in regenerative medicine and induced pluripotent stem cell biology. The focus of the collaboration is on developing treatments for sickle-cell anaemia, Beta thalassemia and brain disorders, and creating a haplobank relevant to Indian populations.

A haplobank refers to a specially maintained collection of embryonic cells that can, in theory, be directed to become any kind of cell and thus progenitor of replacement organs.

Japanese scientist Shinya Yamanaka was a co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for medicine for discovering ways to reprogram mature stem cells.