

【KAUTILYA ECONOMIC CONCLAVE 2025】 Speech by Mr. SHUKURI (October 3, 2025)

Distinguished guests, Namaskāra (Good evening). I am Masafumi Shukuri, Chairman of the Japan Transport and Tourism Research Institute, called “JTTRI,” and Chairman of the International High-Speed Rail Association, called “IHRA”. I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the grand opening of the “KAUTILYA ECONOMIC CONCLAVE 2025” here in Delhi today.

First, please allow me to briefly introduce my organizations.

JTTRI is a think tank established in 1968 by the Japanese Government, industry and academia. Since then, we have proposed policy recommendations related to transport and tourism through comprehensive research and studies, constantly conscious of the crucial role that transport and tourism have to play in realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”.

Working together with our overseas branches, through the ASEAN-India Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand, we disseminate important information and have built a relationship based on cooperation to address the needs of the South Asia, especially India and the Southeast Asia.

And further, through the Japan International Transport and Tourism Institute in Washington D.C., USA, we have worked to strengthen cooperation between Japan and the United States on the issues of common interests including shipbuilding and shipping challenges.

IHRA was established in 2014 as a non-profit organization to mark the 50th anniversary of the inauguration of the first Shinkansen in Japan. We act internationally, for the common good, with the aim of contributing to further development of safe and reliable high-speed rail worldwide. Finance Committee Chairman, Mr. NK Singh, and the Minister of External Affairs, Dr. Subramaniam Jaishankar, have once served as IHRA Senior Advisors and have provided tremendous support as IHRA Senior Advisors right since its inception up until today.

As you know, India today stands at the center of global attention as the most promising growth market. With its abundant labor force, India is witnessing accelerated investment and innovation through its ‘Make in India’ policy. In this context, ahead of the other countries, Japan has maintained a cooperative relationship with India. Maruti Suzuki has played a significant role in the growth of India’s manufacturing sector for over 40 years.

In order to sustain this growth, to address regional disparities and to improve quality of life, it is crucial to stabilize sustainable business environment through infrastructure development. Sustainability, decarbonization and Innovation are also today’s global challenges.

With this in mind, I would like to share some insights and Japan’s past experiences with regard to

infrastructure development.

First, I would like to discuss Delhi Metro, often cited as a `shining example` of Japan-India cooperation. This metro network was planned in 1990s and has now grown to more than 400 kilometers, which surpasses even the subway network in Tokyo. Today, people in Delhi can travel safely, comfortably, punctually, without worrying about traffic congestion. Furthermore, it is truly gratifying to see that personnel of the Delhi Metro, who have acquired Japanese know-how, are now contributing to railway projects not only in other Indian cities such as Mumbai etc, but also overseas in countries like Bangladesh and Indonesia.

The Western Dedicated Freight Corridor between Delhi and Mumbai is also another important infrastructure project of logistics which is a fine example of Japan-India cooperation.

It has been over 150 years since Japan's first railway began operations in 1872, twenty years after the operation started in India, which were both based on the technologies from the UK. The operations in Japan started as national railways, but, due to fiscal constraints, private capital was utilized for network expansion. Since then, both national and private railways have developed in Japan. The current network exceeds 28,000 kilometers.

The development of the economy and society of Japan and the advancement of Japan's railways are strongly inter-linked. They have four key characteristics.

The first is the privatization of the national railways. Japan pioneered the privatization of its large-scale national railway in 1987. Since the management reforms focused on the enhancement of service quality and user convenience, today, passengers enjoy the safest, most punctual and comfortable public transport in the world.

Secondly, urban railways have driven city development in Japan. Since the first subway opened in 1927, in addition to the railway network that I mentioned, these urban railways have not only alleviated road congestion but have also become integral to urban functions and our daily life.

The third point is the integration of railway construction with city development along their routes. This unique approach of Japan is famous as the "Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)". I believe this model can be an important reference for countries like India, that are experiencing rapid urbanization.

The last is the success of "Shinkansen". When the Shinkansen opened 61 years ago in 1964, it was a "game changer" that fundamentally transformed the global railway landscape, enabling the high-speed and high-frequency operation, with the highest levels of safety and reliability in the world. At a time when the world's railways were becoming obsolete as trunk transport systems between major cities in the face of the rapid rise of automobiles and aviation, the Shinkansen pioneered a new path with the advent of

high-speed rail. Today, Shinkansen has grown into a high-speed rail network of more than 3,300 kilometers in Japan and construction is going on for four additional lines including the 500km/h Shinkansen line using the Superconducting Maglev technology.

Eighteen years ago in 2007, the Shinkansen crossed the sea and expanded to Taiwan. The Taiwan High Speed Rail has played a vital role as key infrastructure supporting Taiwan's economic and social development to this day. Today, Shinkansen continues to maintain a record of zero fatality and one minute delay both in Japan and Taiwan.

More recently, a next-generation model N700ST is scheduled to begin operation in 2027 and will further enhance transport capacity and energy efficiency.

Furthermore, I believe the potential of high-speed rail could be most effectively applied in India. Currently, a high-speed rail system based on Japanese Shinkansen technologies is under construction between Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Since 2018, every year except during the two years of COVID-19, I have been visiting the construction sites. It is encouraging to see that the project is making steady progress. I would like to continue to contribute to the success of this FLAGSHIP project, which has been mentioned in the Japan-India Joint Statement released during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan this August.

As domestic and international logistics are expected to expand further, the development of logistics infrastructure is an urgent priority. This is also the most important theme in the ASEAN regions. JTTRI has been engaged in extensive discussions with ASEAN member states, including Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia, on the solutions for improving logistics.

In India, other than the dedicated freight corridor that I mentioned earlier, there is also an increased need to ensure stable global supply chains and sea lanes by strengthening ports, shipping, and shipbuilding.

Furthermore, airports function not only as logistics infrastructure but also as critical facilities for people-to-people exchanges.

People-to-people exchanges are essential for strengthening relations between countries. In the case of Japan and India, however, such exchanges have yet to reach their full potential. One important pillar in this regard is tourism. India is blessed with a wealth of tourism resources, including historical cultural heritage sites, natural attractions, and places of religious significance.

In July this year, I held discussions with Minister of Tourism Mr. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and we agreed to establish a working group to discuss sustainable tourism, including the effective use of

historical sites. Going forward, we will work to further enhance cooperation aimed at expanding mutual exchanges between Japan and India.”

I understand that India is now undergoing a period of significant transformation towards ‘Viksit Bharat 2047’. India's growth is not only vital for India itself but also for the future of the world. Like the success of Delhi Metro, the innovation of “transportation” is the driving force for “transformation”. In conclusion, I firmly believe that, by sharing Japan's accumulated expertise such as quality infrastructure, the integration of transport and urban planning and efficient logistics, we can jointly shape the brilliant future with our two countries.

Dhanyawaad. Thank you for your kind attention.