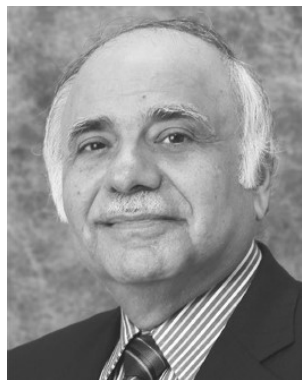


RYUKO HIRA

CHAIRMAN, INDIAN COMMERCE AND
INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION JAPAN



The COVID-19 challenge has certainly created a stronger case for greater international cooperation to facilitate economic recovery. Those with shared interests and common values will find

it easier to forge stronger partnerships.

In ensuring economic recovery, Indo-Japanese relations have a notable role, even beyond Asia. The partnership is seen today as among the most significant in the region. Both countries are partners in each others' national, regional and global engagements.

Our cooperation reflects the needs of the time, whether it is through a fund to support start-ups or an agreement to receive skilled workers and professionals from each other. Our strong strategic convergence is evident in our annual summit, "2+2" meetings and strategic, as well as regional and multilateral, forums.

With recent successful common projects such as the bullet train initiative, the Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor and the dedicated western freight corridor, Japan's long-standing foreign direct investment

footprint in India is steadily expanding.

2022 marks the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and India. Many of Japan's prefectures that have varied interests with India are planning to further enhance our relations by hosting economic and cultural events throughout the year.

On July 15, the opening ceremony for the Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Centre, which was constructed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency, was held in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

At the ceremony, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "the friendship between Japan and India is one of the most trusted ones in the world, both strategically and economically, and Japan has always been the most reliable partner in India's development."

The Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan, celebrating its 100th anniversary this year, serves as an apex body to provide support, guidance and consultancy/ advisory services to all interested parties, enabling them to fully develop the economic and investment potential between Japan and India.

While felicitating India's independence and freedom, on behalf of all ICIJ members, I convey our deepest appreciation to all who have contributed to India's cause and to the readers of The Japan Times.