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THE INDIAN COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION JAPAN

公益社団法人 在日インド商工協会

REPORT ON THE CENTENNIAL  
COMMEMORATION RECEPTION FOR  
CONVEYING GRATITUDE BY THE  
INDIAN COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY  
ASSOCIATION JAPAN (ICIJ)

Date: Wednesday, 15th November 2023

Venue: Ho-O-No-Ma Banquet Hall, Tokyo Prince Hotel

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVENT**

The occasion marked on the 15th of November 2023 stands as a historic milestone in the chronicles of Indo-Japanese collaboration, as it commemorates the 100th anniversary of the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan (ICIJ). Originally slated for celebration in 2021, the centennial event was deferred due to the global challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Undeterred by the delay, the rescheduled commemoration served as a testament to the resilience and enduring significance of the ICIJ.

Founded a century ago, ICIJ has had a remarkable journey from its humble beginnings in 1921 to emerge as a pivotal force shaping the economic and cultural ties between India and Japan. What began as a modest initiative has evolved into an influential institution, contributing to bilateral relations between two great nations in Asia. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the centennial celebration brought together key stakeholders on the 15th of November to reflect on the journey, accomplishments, and the promising future that lies ahead.

ICIJ stands as a testament to the enduring spirit of collaboration, bridging nations and fostering mutual understanding. Its membership comprises prominent leaders from the business realm, contributing to the organization's success and embodying the shared commitment to strengthening the ties that bind India and Japan. As we delve into the commemorative event, we uncover not just a century of achievements but a legacy that continues to shape the landscape of economic and cultural relations between these two nations.

## **1.2 HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION OF THE INDIAN COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION JAPAN**

1921 was a significant year of hope and peace as the US Congress in a joint resolution declared the end of World War 1. India was rebelling against the British colonial rule of George V Emperor of India. The British ladies lived a tradition of status by making exquisite Victorian dresses from beautiful Japanese silk. The Sindhis were renowned as Silk merchants. On Thursday 24th February 1921, The Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama was registered as a Shadan Hojin to promote and protect the interests of Indian Merchants who were primarily Sindhis, engaged in exports of silk and sundries.

Japanese emperor Taisho was ailing and Hirohito, the future emperor Showa, became emperor in all but title. The Japanese population was 56 million people with a life expectancy similar to India of only 42 years of age. The Japanese consulate in Mumbai was established in 1894. In the 45th year of the Meiji era (1912), the Nichi-in Kyokai (Japan-India Association) records several Indian firms as members in Yokohama.

1921 was a year of phenomenal change. Anglo-Japanese alliance was replaced by the “Four-Power Treaty”- Britain, United States, France and Japan. Thus the port of Yokohama was opened as a window of commerce with foreign countries. This treaty settled alien claims which encouraged a lot of foreign immigration to Japan. Commercial and Mercantile establishments were built continuously. It was the opening year of the history of foreign residents in Yokohama. The number of Indian residents in Japan increased from 28 in 1901 to over 100 residents. The export of silk fabric to India increased substantially. There were 22 Indian trading companies and the port of Yokohama was crowded with Indian merchants.

Much to everyone’s regret, the Great Kanto earthquake devastated Tokyo and Yokohama areas with more than 142,000 dead. 28 Indians of Yokohama died.

The loss of life and assets, as well as uncertainty and anxiety, made most Indians desperate to escape from the Earthquake tragedy. They had no prospects if they permanently returned to colonized India. Most Indians from Yokohama migrated to Kobe, a port city, for continuing export business.

India's movement for freedom and Japan's disengagement from WWII had important implications for Indians in Japan. The visit of Rabindranath Tagore who resided in the home of Baron Hara in the Yokohama Sankeien Gardens, the arrival of Swami Vivekananda that influenced higher awareness of peace, the movement for India's freedom in Japan by Sage Kiyoshi Tanno and Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, the historic judgement of Justice Radhabinod Pal in Japan's favour at the Tokyo Tribunal and settlement of the war reparations signed in the bilateral Peace Treaty paved the way for opening of the Embassy of India in Japan in 1952, bringing renewed confidence amongst the Indian community in Japan.

For 4 decades, Yokohama Indians flourished with Japan becoming the world's 3rd largest economic power. Many Indians were born and married making Japan their permanent home. The four eras which began with Taisho, symbolizing agriculture and the home industry of silk cocoons, followed by Meiji for Industrialization with Showa for service Industries and Heisei as the hi-tech and IT era experienced important participation by Indian Companies.

Economic reforms of India in the 1990s contributed to an increased population of Indians in Japan, engaged in the import of raw materials, joint ventures, Information Technology, Tourism, Jewellery and Restaurants etc. To serve the growing needs of the Indian Community, at the dawn of the 21st century in 1999, IMAY inaugurated its new building with a community hall and a Sai Temple.

As the Indo-Japanese trade, economic and investment potential expanded significantly to other prefectures of Japan, it became necessary to expand our jurisdiction from Yokohama to all prefectures of Japan and as such the

name and structure were changed to THE INDIAN COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION JAPAN in the year 2012 duly validated by then Prime Minister of Japan, H.E Mr. Shinzo Abe under direct jurisdiction of the cabinet office. ICIJ is privileged as Japan's first and only Indian institution to be granted the highest corporate structure of 'Public Interest Corporation.'

As a non-profit Public Interest Association engaged with all major commerce and industry institutions, Our membership comprises several of the largest corporate groups with business operations all over India and abroad such as State Bank of India, Bank of India, New India Assurance, Tata Consultancy Services etc. We engage as an apex body for economic, and cultural exchanges and goodwill between India and Japan.

We offer our comprehensive services to Japanese manufacturers, general contractors and other investors in cooperation with other major institutions such as Keidanren, Japan India Business Corporation Committee, Japan India Association, Japan External Trade Organization, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Confederation of Indian Industry and other partner institutions to promote Indian agenda in Japan. We organize trade fairs and exhibitions and promote Make in India, and Study of India projects. We are privileged to host several esteemed dignitaries and Parliamentary exchanges.

We retain the character of being the premier public body of senior industry leaders forming the core of our Governing Board of Directors. Our leadership and membership have enabled us to move ahead and respond proactively to the dynamic changes that have taken place in the making of new India as a Global Super Partner.

The selfless sacrifices and services of office bearers and members are testimony to our history of 100 years. Today as we complete 100 years of founding we take this opportunity to reflect and rededicate our commitment to the changes of global order and are moving with confidence to serve the needs of our nation.

## **2. PROGRAM**

### **2.1 GUESTS**

The occasion was graced by 359 Guests and presided over by eminent personalities. Among them were H.E. Mr. Yoshihide Suga, the 99th Prime Minister of Japan, several Cabinet Ministers, and 63 Members of the Parliament of Japan. Additionally, the event welcomed Deputy Governors, Mayors, and leaders representing various facets of Japan-India economic, cultural, and scientific institutions. The esteemed gathering was further graced by the attendance of H.E. Mr. Sibi George, the Ambassador of India with Mm. Joice George.

The Guests were warmly greeted by the Directors of ICIJ, who expressed their gratitude for all their blessings and endeavours towards ICIJ.

Also present in the event were reputed businessmen, notable Japanese citizens, valued past and present members of ICIJ as well as Indian residents in Japan who remain valuable contributors to society.

All the Guests were recipients of warm hospitality and were delighted and honoured to be present at the event and congratulated ICIJ, wishing it all success.

### **2.2 PROGRAM SCHEDULE**

**The Program Schedule for the Event was as follows:**

18:30 Greetings by the Master of Ceremonies

18:31 Video Message from Hon. Prime Minister of Japan  
H.E.Mr. Fumio Kishida

18:35 Address by the 99th Hon. Prime Minister of Japan and  
Chairman of the Japan-India Association, H.E. Mr. Yoshihide Suga

18:40 Address by H.E. Mr Sibi George, Ambassador of India

18:47 Trailer video of Mahabharath Kabuki and greetings from  
Kabuki Master Hon. Mr. Kikunosuke Onoe

18:51 Address by H.E. Mr Natsuo Yamaguchi, Hon. Representative of  
Komeito Party, Member of the House of Councilors

18:54 Address by the Deputy Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture,  
H.E. Mr. Kenji Shuto

18:57 Video on ICIJ's History and the Future.

19:04 Address by ICIJ Chairman, Mr. Hira Ryuko, and presenting the  
Citation of Gratitude to Hon. Mayor of Yokohama city and speech by H.E. Mr. Takeharu  
Yamanaka

19:07 Toast Speech, followed with "Kampai" by H.E. Mr. Tetsuo Saito, Hon. Minister  
of Land, Infrastructure and Transport.

19:10 Dinner Reception

20:30 Closing

## **2.3 EVENT OVERVIEW**

The Centennial Commemoration of the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan (ICIJ) unfolded at the prestigious Tokyo Prince Hotel in the Ho-O-No-ma Banquet Hall on the 15th of November 2023. The evening was graced by the presence of 359 distinguished guests, including H.E. Mr Yoshihide Suga, the 99th Prime Minister of Japan, several Cabinet Ministers, 63 Members of Parliament, Deputy Governors, Mayors, and leaders from Japan-India economic, cultural, and scientific institutions. Ambassador of India, H.E. Mr Sibi George, also attended the event, adding to its esteemed ambience.



The event commenced with warm greetings by the Master of Ceremonies, followed by a video message from the Hon. Prime Minister of Japan, H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida. The highlight of the evening was the address by H.E. Mr. Yoshihide Suga, reminiscing on the historical ties between Japan and India. Ambassador Sibi George expressed gratitude and laid out aspirations, while the cultural aspect was highlighted with a trailer of Mahabharata in the form of Kabuki (Japanese Theatre). The speeches by dignitaries and officials complimented ICIJ's accomplishments and highlighted the similarities and friendship between India and Japan and the potential for further collaboration as well as steps taken to complement the growth of the respective countries.

A brief video on ICIJ's history and future set the stage for the Chairman, Mr. Hira Ryuko's address, culminating in the presentation of the Citation of Gratitude to Hon. Mayor of Yokohama City, H.E. Mr. Takeharu Yamanaka, followed by his speech.

The symbolic "Kampai" by Hon. Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, H.E. Mr. Tetsuo Saito, marked the celebration of the Japan-India High-Speed Rail Project.

The evening concluded with a delightful dinner reception, featuring an array of culinary delights.

Following is the menu for the event:

**Western Cuisine:**

Sweet Potato Stew

Tomato Caprese

Sandwich

### **Japanese Cuisine:**

Tempura

Tofu

Sashimi

Japanese Noodles

### **Indian Cuisine:**

Paratha

Samosas

Spring Roll

Basmati Rice

Gulab Jamun

Rasgulla

During the event, the Guests were treated to Live Indian Traditional Music that was immensely enjoyed by one and all. The soulful music comprised the following instruments, Sarangi, played by Yuji Nakagawa, Tabla played by the pair Leo Hayashi and Dinesh Chandra Dyoundi and Sitar played by Keisuke Muto.

The Traditional Indian music elicited much praise and appreciation from the Japanese Guests.

### **3. VIDEO MESSAGE FROM HON. PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN, H.E. MR. FUMIO KISHIDA**

Greetings, I am Fumio Kishida, the Prime Minister of Japan. It is an honour to extend my congratulations on the momentous occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Japan-India Association of Commerce and Industry.

Since its inception in 1921, the Association has been a pivotal force in fostering Japan-India relations through initiatives in economic and cultural exchange. Over the past century, we have faced numerous challenges, including the immediate aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake. Today, we stand resilient on this significant day, a testament to the collective efforts of everyone involved. My sincere appreciation goes to all, starting with Chairman Ryuko Hira.

Japan and India, bound by shared values and strategic interests, continue to strengthen their ties across various domains. Economic collaboration, exemplified by the commendable efforts of the Indian Commerce and Industry Association in Japan, has played a pivotal role in nurturing the broader relationship between our nations. In July, Yoshihide Suga, Chairman of the Japan-India Association, led a robust economic mission to India with the support of Keidanren, comprising 103 individuals. In this critical juncture in global history, the cooperation between Japan and India holds increasing significance, not only for our two nations but also for the peace and prosperity of the international community as a whole.

Having had the privilege of visiting India twice and engaging in candid discussions with Prime Minister Modi during both the G7 and G20 presidencies held by Japan and India, respectively, this year, I am committed to working alongside Prime Minister Modi. Our shared goal is to further enhance Japan-India relations and realize a free and open Indo-Pacific. The growing interest in India across various sectors in Japan is palpable. In closing, I extend my heartfelt wishes, hoping that the Indian Commerce and Industry Association in Japan, along with the companies from both nations, including its member companies, will continue to thrive as the enduring friendship between Japan and India flourishes. Congratulations once again.

#### **4. ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. YOSHIHIDE SUGA, FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF JAPAN**

Good evening, everyone.

I am Yoshihide Suga, serving as the President of the Japan-India Association. On this momentous occasion, I extend my heartfelt congratulations on the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan.

I express my deepest gratitude to Chairman Mr. Ryuko Hira, whose efforts have acted as a bridge between Japan and India, fostering bilateral exchanges for a century. I've learned that the Hira family, involved in trade between Japan and India since the time of Meiji, significantly contributed to the establishment of the Yokohama Indian Chamber of Commerce Association, the predecessor of our association.

Over the past 100 years, the Association has faced numerous challenges, including natural disasters, the last World War, and shifts in the global economy. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the member companies and stakeholders who have not only weathered these challenges but have also tirelessly worked to promote the activities of Indian companies in Japan.

As the world stands at a historic turning point, India emerges as a key partner in addressing the challenges facing Japan. Japan is actively collaborating with India within frameworks such as the Quad, consisting of Japan, the United States, Australia, and India, to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific.

India's economic growth has been remarkable, with a high GDP growth rate of 7.2% last year, positioning it as the world's fifth-largest economy. Notably, despite being the world's most populous country, India boasts a very young average age of 28, and the number of young workers is expected to rise further.

In the Japan-India summit meeting last year, both nations set a target of 5 trillion yen in public-private investment and loans from Japan to India over the next five years. The Japan-India Association is committed to firmly supporting the government's policy.

During my visit to India in April this year with a Keidanren mission comprising 103 individuals from 54 companies, I held talks with Prime Minister Modi. The scale of this mission reflects our strong expectations for India. In our discussions, I emphasized the importance of improving the business environment in India, specifically addressing the consistency of the tax system, enhancing the investment environment for logistics infrastructure, and establishing a bilateral crediting system related to climate change. Prime Minister Modi expressed his understanding of these concerns.

Prime Minister Modi and I underscored that people-to-people exchanges are the foundation for strengthening Japan-India relations over the medium to long term. We pledged to expand such exchanges across various fields, including tourism, international students, and the Specified Skilled Worker System. As these exchanges increase, opportunities for individuals from India to contribute to Japan's economic growth will grow. I am hopeful that Indian human resources will play a significant role in Japan's future economic development.

With your wisdom and support, I am committed to actively contributing to the ongoing development of Japan-India relations as the Japan-India Association. In conclusion, I extend my best wishes for the continued prosperity of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan and the companies of both Japan and India. Congratulations.

## **5. ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. SIBI GEORGE, AMBASSADOR OF INDIA**

Good evening to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Chairman of the Japan-India Association, Mr. Natsuo Yamaguchi, Representative of Komeito, Mr. Tetsuo Saito, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and Mr. Ryuko Hira, Chairman of the Indian Commerce and Industry Association in Japan.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to everyone at the Japan-India Commerce and Industry Association on its remarkable 100th anniversary. It is an honour to share this joyous occasion and to express my gratitude to Chairman Yoshihide Suga for taking the time to be with us despite his busy schedule.

Last year, His Excellency Suga led a successful visit to India with over 100 business leaders, marking a significant milestone in the burgeoning India-Japan relations. In recent years, our ties have evolved into a special strategic global partnership, encompassing trade, investment, technology, defence, security, culture, and people-to-people exchanges.

This relationship is truly unique—a special bond that sets it apart on the global stage. The rule of law, respect for values, and the vast expanse of the Pacific Oceans unite our nations. The India-Japan partnership is not only pivotal for the Indo-Pacific region but also a force for peace, prosperity, and stability globally. It serves as the guiding light for India's "Act East" policy and forms the core of our Indo-Pacific vision.

India and Japan collaborate closely within the Quad framework, and the Indian Commerce and Industry Association in Japan has played a vital role in enhancing people-to-people exchanges between our nations. I extend my gratitude to Chairman Hira for his leadership in fostering this critical

association that contributes significantly to Japan-India relations. The Embassy of India in Japan actively promotes projects to facilitate people-to-people exchanges, recognizing the slogan of connecting the Himalayas and Mt. Fuji as a key aspect of this partnership.

However, our ambitions extend further. While we currently have 1,500 Japanese companies in India, we aspire to increase this number to 15,000. We appreciate the contributions of the members of the Indian Commerce and Industry Association in Japan and eagerly anticipate your continued efforts in furthering the expansion of the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.

Congratulations once again, and finally, my sincere thanks to everyone involved.

## **6. GREETINGS FROM KABUKI MASTER HON. MR. KIKUNOSUKE ONOE**

Good evening. I am Kikunosuke Onoe.

Heartiest congratulations on the 100th anniversary of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan. Special congratulations to Chairman Hira. The Mahabharata Chronicle you just witnessed debuted six years ago. Going back a decade, it coincided with the 60th anniversary of the Japan-India Cultural Exchange and the Cultural Agreement. Last year marked the significant 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and India, and this year, we celebrate the 71st anniversary of the commencement of diplomatic relations.

Mr. Hira has been involved in fostering connections with the previous Ambassador and, recently, with Ambassador Sibi George at the Embassy of India in Japan. I had the pleasure of greeting him there not long ago.

Reflecting on why I chose to adapt the Mahabharata into a kabuki performance, there are many charms to this epic, and if I were to highlight one, it would be "Dharma." Dharma, to me, embodies fulfilling one's mission while maximizing support for others.

Despite current concerns such as geopolitical conflicts and economic uncertainties, my commitment is to bring this Mahabharata War Chronicle to its completion and contribute to the continued growth and exchange between Japan and India.

I extend my gratitude for the presence of Dr Suga's wife at the theatre recently. It was an honour to host Ambassador Sibi George and his wife at the Embassy last Sunday.

In closing, I express my sincere wishes for the ongoing development of our relations. Thank you very much.

## **7. ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. NATSUO YAMAGUCHI**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

I am Natsuo Yamaguchi, the representative of the Komeito Party. Congratulations on commemorating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan.

I express my sincere gratitude for extending the invitation to a considerable number of members of the Diet from our party to partake in this celebratory event.

Reflecting on the 100-year history of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, I understand that the Indian Association of Commerce and



Industry was established in Yokohama in 1921. This was a significant period marked by the final stages of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and Japan's renewed focus on trade, particularly the export of silk fabrics after the conclusion of World War I. Overcoming adversities such as the Great Kanto Earthquake, World War II, and the more recent Great East Japan Earthquake, the association has evolved to encompass diverse fields, including science, technology, economy, and culture.

I appreciate the reassuring role such an association plays. In Japan, we observe the robust functions of organizations like JETRO and the International Exchange Association.

Personally, my connection with India has numerous touchpoints. Growing up in the northern part of Ibaraki Prefecture, an area where Tagore engaged with Okakura Tenshin and Yokoyama Taikan, I developed a particular affinity for India. The presence of a Hitachi company in our town meant encounters with Indian engineers during my childhood, leaving a lasting impression.

Now, as a member of the Diet in Tokyo, Nishikasai in Tokyo's Edogawa Ward has become a major hub for Indians, particularly those skilled in IT technology—a symbol of our current era.

In 2014, I had the privilege of visiting Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru at the invitation of the Government of India. Each city, representing modern India, showcased the practical utilization of various Japanese infrastructures. Today, in the presence of former Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Keiichi Ishii and current Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Tetsuo Saito, I am reminded of those experiences.

Bengaluru, in particular, stood out as a global IT hub, fostering talent through friendly competition, connecting with the world, and contributing significantly to the IT landscape.

As the saying goes, the power of a country is determined by its territory and population. I firmly believe that India today is a nation presenting a myriad of possibilities for future development.

I expect the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan to continue playing a pivotal role in fostering connections. On the Japanese side, I envision an era of collaboration with India across various domains, including culture, economy, science and technology, and education, for the prosperity and stability of the world.

A former Ambassador of India to Japan once highlighted the deep cultural commonalities between our nations and encouraged collaboration based on our solid foundation without complicated historical issues. Indeed, the time for such collaboration has arrived.

In concluding my congratulatory remarks, I extend heartfelt prayers for the further strengthening of the relationship between Japan and India and the continued success and development of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Congratulations! Thank you for inviting me.

## **8. ADDRESS BY DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF KANAGAWA PREFECTURE, H.E. MR. KENJI SHUTO**

Dear esteemed guests and members of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan,

I am honoured to convey warm greetings on behalf of Mr. Kenji Shuto, the Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan.

Since its founding in 1921, your esteemed Chamber has been a steadfast presence in Yokohama City, Kanagawa Prefecture, serving as a vital bridge between India and Japan across various domains such as science and technology, economy, and culture. On behalf of Governor Shuto, I extend heartfelt appreciation for the significant contributions made over the years.

Kanagawa Prefecture, under Governor Shuto's leadership, has embarked on a groundbreaking healthcare initiative aimed at creating a new societal framework to address the challenges posed by our rapidly ageing population. Under the banner of our healthcare new frontier policy, we are dedicated to realizing a society of healthy longevity. Moreover, we are actively engaged in fostering industries related to Ruscara, collaborating not only with domestic universities and companies but also forging partnerships with institutions abroad, including those in the United States and Singapore.

Despite the global slowdown in international exchanges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognize the importance of seizing this moment to revitalize our connections. We believe that strengthening our cooperation with India, home to the world's largest population is of paramount significance. We eagerly anticipate fortifying our collaborative ties with India through the extensive international exchanges cultivated by the Indian Association of Commerce and Industry in Japan over more than a century.

In conclusion, on behalf of Governor Kenji Shuto, I extend heartfelt congratulations on the continued success and development of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan. To all gathered here today, we wish you continued health and prosperity.

Congratulations once again.

## **9. ADDRESS BY MAYOR OF YOKOHAMA, MR. TAKEHARU YAMANAKA**

Dear distinguished guests,

I extend my heartfelt gratitude for this letter of appreciation. It is a great honour to stand before you today.

The enduring exchange between Yokohama and India spans a considerable period. Yokohama opened its port in 1859, marking the beginning of a relationship that has flourished ever since. Over the years, a significant number of Indians have not only resided in Yokohama but have also played pivotal roles in establishing trading companies and fostering economic ties. During times of hardship, such as the reconstruction following the Great Kanto Earthquake and the challenges of war, Yokohama received invaluable support from the Indian community residing here.

As highlighted in the earlier video, the citizens of Yokohama reciprocated this support during the Great Kanto Earthquake, demonstrating a spirit of solidarity. To express gratitude, a magnificent Indian paddy rice field was established in Yamashita Park—a symbol of appreciation for the profound connection between Yokohama and India. Additionally, Yokohama City proudly stands as the first sister city to Mumbai, with a sister city agreement signed in 1965. This historic agreement has paved the way for warm exchanges that have continued for over half a century.

Remarkably, nearly 4,000 Indians currently call Yokohama City home—an outstanding number within the landscape of Japanese municipalities. The depth and longevity of the exchange between Yokohama and India are truly exceptional.

Looking ahead, we aspire to deepen this rich tapestry of exchange by building upon the strong foundation cultivated over the years. Our commitment is to work collaboratively, hand in hand with the Indians who

hold a deep affection for Yokohama, to further enhance the bond between our two communities.

Thank you sincerely for your attention.

## **10.ADDRESS BY ICIJ CHAIRMAN, MR. HIRA RYUKO**

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,

Today, we stand on the cusp of history as we commemorate the remarkable 100-year journey of the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan. It is truly an honour to welcome each of you distinguished friends of India and to reflect upon the incredibly humble legacy. On behalf of all the members and directors, I offer my deepest gratitude and highest appreciation. THANK YOU ALL.

A century ago, a vision was born- to foster economic ties, promote cultural exchanges and strengthen the bonds of friendship between India and Japan. Today, we pay tribute to the trailblazers and visionaries, who, with foresight and determination, founded and fostered the Indian Commerce and Industry Association Japan. Their spirit and commitment laid the foundation for what has become India's apex and oldest institution in Japan.

As we look back on the past 100 years, we see a story of resilience, collaboration and growth. ICIJ has been a bridge, connecting businesses, fostering innovation and facilitating understanding between India and Japan. It has weathered economic shifts, geopolitical changes and global challenges, emerging stronger and more relevant with each passing decade.

The success of ICIJ is not only measured in economic terms but also in developing regional partnerships and cultural exchanges. ICIJ members have played a pivotal role in shaping the narrative of collaboration and mutual benefit between India and Japan.

In the fast-paced, interconnected world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, ICIJ continues to be a dependable and trustworthy source for the fruition of the Indian agenda in Japan. Its legacy is not just in the achievements of the past, but in the potential it holds for the future. As we march towards the Centenary of India's Independence in 2047, the Honorable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi has declared the next 25 years as "Azadi ka Amrit Kaal" which promises even greater opportunities for collaboration, innovation and shared prosperity of raising India towards becoming the world's largest economy.

As we commemorate this centennial, let us renew our commitment to principles that have guided ICIJ throughout its history – integrity, inclusivity and a shared vision for a better future. ICIJ shall continue to build bridges, overcome barriers of trade and protectionism and forge partnerships that will define the next era of India-Japan economic relations.

On this occasion, ICIJ conveys its heartfelt gratitude to the Cabinet Office, all ministries, prefectural and local governments and especially the Embassy of India for their continued cooperation and goodwill.

To the members, past and present, who have dedicated their time, expertise and passion to ICIJ, we owe a debt of gratitude. Your support has been instrumental in shaping the success of this association and it is your continued commitment that will propel us in the future.

In closing, may I wholeheartedly thank each one of you for your gracious presence and goodwill extended to ICIJ.

May the next 100 years be as Extraordinary as the first 100 years.

## **11.ADDRESS BY MR. TETSUO SAITO, MINISTER OF LAND, INFRASTRUCTURE, TRANSPORT AND TOURISM.**

Ladies and gentlemen,

As much as I understand your anticipation for the toast, I would like to offer a few words of greeting.

Congratulations on the momentous occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan. Allow me to extend my sincere gratitude to Chairman Ryuko Hira and all those involved who have tirelessly contributed over the past century.

Chairman Hira has been a guiding force, offering invaluable insights. Currently, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism enjoys a collaborative relationship with India across various domains, including public safety, flood control, urban development, and redevelopment. One of the most significant projects, recently visited by Prime Minister Suga, is the Shinkansen high-speed rail system. India has chosen Japan's system for its inaugural high-speed rail endeavour. Collaboratively, we are constructing a 508 km high-speed railway connecting the cities of Mumbai and Ahmedabad, involving Japanese private companies, Indian counterparts, and active participation from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

This 508 km train is an Indian version of Japan's E5 series, akin to JR Japan. The journey is anticipated to be completed in a remarkable 2 hours and 7 minutes. In less than four years, with a partial opening slated for August 2027, we are working diligently to realize this ambitious project. The prospect of Japan's bullet train coursing through the Indian landscape is a source of immense joy, aligning with the shared vision that birthed this transformative idea in the land of India.

Here's to the enduring partnership between our nations and the success of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan!

## 12. CLOSING

The symbolic "Kampai" led by Hon. Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, H.E. Mr. Tetsuo Saito, signalled the culmination of the marvellous program and a transition from formal proceedings to Dinner Reception where all ICIJ Directors attended over 30 tables full of guests conveying their gratitude for the past and soliciting their support and co-operation for the future.

The dinner reception featured a delightful array of delicacies, seamlessly blending the flavours of both nations.

The Closing segment, at 20:30, brought the commemoration to a graceful conclusion. The event had well achieved its intended purpose — a reflection on a century of accomplishments, recognition of key contributors to ICIJ's success, and a spirit of optimism for the future. As the doors closed on this historic occasion, guests were warmly seen off, each departing with satisfaction and joy evident on their faces.

The evening was not just an acknowledgement of 100 years of ICIJ but a celebration of the enduring partnership between India and Japan. The ICIJ, with its rich history and promising future, remains a linchpin in shaping the economic, cultural, and diplomatic ties between the two nations. The collaborative spirit kindled on this memorable night serves as a beacon for the future, promising many more decades of shared success, prosperity, and warm, delightful evenings such as this one.

To all the patrons, dignitaries, officials, Embassy of India, Members and all those who worked selflessly, ICIJ extends a heartfelt gratitude.