

Opening Remarks by Masafumi Shukuri, Chairman, IHRA

Thank you very much for joining us today at the IHRA Forum 2025. It is a great honor to host this grand event, the first IHRA Forum in three years, with so many participants from 13 countries around the world.

Despite his busy schedule, we are honored to have Honorable Mr. Shigeru Ishiba, who until the day before yesterday was engaged in the demanding duties of Prime Minister, join us as our distinguished guest to deliver the guest of honor remarks.

I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude that we are honored to receive the guest of honor remarks from Mr. Yasushi Kaneko, who was appointed Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism the day before yesterday.

IHRA was established in April 2014, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Shinkansen's inauguration. IHRA's founding purpose is to contribute to the global development of safe and efficient high-speed rail (HSR) through the sharing of information, knowledge, and experience regarding the world's safest and most reliable Shinkansen system. Since its founding, IHRA has steadily pursued its activities over the past 11.5 years, made possible through the warm support and cooperation of our board directors, advisory board members, members, associate members, the Government of Japan, related organizations, and all involved countries with keen interest in HSR. We have built trust with government and parliamentary officials, railway, media, and countries' interest in introducing HSR. The successful hosting of the 5th IHRA Forum owes to the support of all concerned, and I would like to express my deepest gratitude.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the opening of the railway in the United Kingdom in 1825. Japan followed 47 years later. In 1872, Japan introduced a British railway technology through British engineers. Tracks were laid right here at the site of this Takanawa Gateway Convention Center. This place used to be the sea. An embankment was built and Japan's first railway opened between Shimbashi and Yokohama. I am truly delighted to host the IHRA Forum at this commemorative time and location, welcoming all of you here.

Before discussing this year's IHRA Forum, I would like to briefly look back at previous IHRA Forums.

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At the inaugural IHRA Forum in Tokyo in October 2014, when we were honored to have former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Tim Fischer deliver a special keynote address. Mr. Fischer praised Shinji Sogo, the fourth president of the Japanese National Railway, as “the father of the Shinkansen, carrying on the legacy of Stevenson”. He emphasized that “the Shinkansen itself became a true game-changer for the world—an innovation comparable in impact to the Industrial Revolution”. As you all know, in the early 1960s, before the rapid development of highways and aviation, he pioneered a new path for the world's railways, then becoming obsolete as a main city transport by introducing HSR. Subsequently, the adoption of HSR became a global trend.

The 2nd IHRA Forum, held in Kyoto in November 2016, engaged in multifaceted discussions on the challenge of truly leveraging HSR for society over the long term—requiring sustained efforts to transform economies, societies and people's lifestyles and to significantly reshape nations and regions.

The 3rd IHRA Forum, held in Fukuoka in November 2018, featured discussions under the theme, “Overcoming Challenges in a Complex World- Past, Present and Future” looking ahead to the future of the Indo-Pacific region.

The 4th IHRA Forum, originally scheduled for October 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and was held two years later in October 2022 in Nagoya, under the theme “Beyond the Period of Turmoil - Towards a New Future with High-Speed Rail”. Faced with prolonged global travel restrictions, we reaffirmed the joy and value of face-to-face encounters and shared the view that HSR has the potential to foster diverse human connections and generate innovation that shapes the future.

Now, the theme of the 5th IHRA Forum is “Painting the Future Landscapes with High-Speed Rail, Bridging to a Better Tomorrow”. This venue, Takanawa, served as the gateway to Edo along the Tokaido Road connecting present-day Tokyo and Kyoto during the 265-year Edo period from 1603. As mentioned, it is also the site where Japan's first railway opened in 1872.

Through development of Takanawa Gateway City, the embankment used during the railway's opening 153 years ago was found for the first time in tact and became a major topic of discussion. These ruins are currently being carefully preserved by JR East and with plans to open part of them to the public in the future.

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Furthermore, in this Shinagawa Takanawa area, railway development and urban planning are currently advanced in tandem. A large-scale rolling stock depot once occupied this site, but the recent reorganization of the depot and railway network, along with a review of the operational system, has opened up approximately 13 hectares of land where large-scale redevelopment is now underway.

The land that once served as the gateway to Edo is now transforming into a gateway to the future. Adjacent to Takanawa, Shinagawa will host the starting station of the Chuo Shinkansen featuring SC MAGLEV technology and a new Tokyo Metro line is also planned. With excellent access to Haneda Airport, this area is progressing with urban development aimed at becoming a new gateway to the world. At this new gateway, we wish to discuss with you “Painting the Future Landscapes with High-Speed Rail for Bridging to a Better Tomorrow”.

Today, we will deepen our discussions through 4 sessions.

Session 1 will explore the theme, “What the World Expects in Reliable Rapid Connectivity for Global Growth”. Session 2 will explore “Shaping the Future Together: Railway and Urban Development”. Session 3 will address “Present State and Future outlook of HSR projects”. The final Session 4 will focus on “Driving the Evolution of HSR: Technology and Talent”.

And following today's Main Meeting, the Grand Reception will be held at HAPPO-EN. We hope you will enjoy the beautiful Japanese garden and the diverse Japanese cuisine.

The Shinkansen in Japan, which commenced operations 61 years ago in 1964, now forms a HSR network exceeding 3,300 kilometers nationwide. Furthermore, the Chuo Shinkansen by Superconducting maglev technology between Shinagawa and Nagoya, as well as the Hokkaido Shinkansen, is now currently under construction. Including other planned routes, a total of 4 new lines are being developed, which will amount to approximately 850 kilometers of new HSR network. We believe that safe and highly reliable HSR, showcased by the Shinkansen, is an international public good. Its benefits should be widely shared across borders. I believe that contributing to the world's further

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development through the international deployment of safe and highly reliable HSR is the very core of IHRA's mission.

Finally, I sincerely hope that the three-day IHRA Forum 2025, starting today, will foster many new exchanges and lead to innovation. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude once again to the many distinguished guests present today.