

## Speech (Video) by Prime Minister Abe

I am delighted to welcome you all to Japan from all around the world on the occasion of the 3rd IHRA International Forum.

In Japan, as you may know, our high-speed rail system is referred to as the Shinkansen. The success of Shinkansen technology was the culmination of efforts by many individuals who worked hard to drive our nation forward. Railway technology was first brought to Japan in the late 19th century by Masaru Inoue, who was from Choshu in Western Japan, my family's home region. He imported the technology from the United Kingdom as Japan came out of self-imposed isolation and started on the road towards modernization.

A century later, in 1964, the year of the first Tokyo Olympics, the Shinkansen began operating on its first line, the Tokaido Shinkansen. In those days, Japan was not such a rich country, but the development of the Shinkansen, which linked the two major cities of Tokyo and Osaka at 210km per hour, truly inspired the Japanese people, giving us hope for the future.

Here in Kyushu, the Kyushu Shinkansen opened along its entire route in 2011. Sadly, Kyushu has since then suffered several natural disasters including the Kumamoto Earthquake and the torrential rains in northern Kyushu, but due to lessons learned from previous disasters, the Shinkansen is now a truly robust service that can restart operations quickly after forced interruptions of service, making a

powerful contribution to regional reconstruction as a core part of our transport infrastructure.

Now, more than 50 years after the birth of the Shinkansen, the Shinkansen network runs 3,000 km across our whole nation, transporting 400 million passengers a year. The Shinkansen has had zero fatal accidents, and continues to operate on a precise and punctual timetable with some services operating with intervals of just three minutes.

Our railway engineers continue to develop new technology, and the construction of a new faster magnetic levitation service Superconducting Maglev running at 500km per hour is now making a steady progress.

Currently, many nations around the world are deeply interested in importing high-speed rail technology due to its potential to bring major social change.

In September last year, I took part in a groundbreaking ceremony for a new high-speed rail service in India. I was struck by Prime Minister Modi's deep desire to provide inspiration to the people of India and by the Indian people's high hopes for high-speed rail services. The Shinkansen has played an important role in supporting the development of our nation's economy and the quality of life of our citizens, and in the near future, we look forward to the Shinkansen crossing the seas and also beginning to speed across the Indian continent. Our government and the related companies are dedicated to making the Indian Shinkansen a reality as soon as we can.

For many centuries, Kyushu prospered as a hub of trade between Japan and overseas destinations including the Chinese mainland and Korean Peninsula. Kyushu went on to import many new ideas and technologies from overseas nations, including steelmaking and shipbuilding, to develop its industries and play an important role in the Meiji Restoration, which marked the dawn of the modernization of Japan.

Our ancestors continually took on the challenge of using new ideas to achieve reform and build a new era, and I hope that, in the same way, here in Fukuoka, Kyushu, you will be able to take part in free and vigorous debate over new approaches.

I would like to conclude my welcome with the hope that you, the leaders of various industries gathered here from all over the world, can engage in a meaningful exchange of opinions and information over the role that high-speed rail can play in changing society.