

Address by Ambassador Satoshi Suzuki
at the Opening Ceremony of the Japanese Zen Garden and Kaizen
Academy Hall in Ahmedabad
(June 27, 2021)

H.E. Mr. Sujan Chinoy, Former Ambassador of India to Japan and
Honorary Patron Advisor of Indo-Japan Friendship Association,
H.E. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Verma, Ambassador of India to Japan,
Mr. Balasubramanian Shyam, Consul General of India in Osaka-Kobe,
Mr. Mukesh Patel, President of Indo-Japan Friendship Association,
Gujarat,
Dr. Yasukata Fukahori, Consul General of Japan in Mumbai,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

[Opening]

Very good morning to you from Delhi. It is my great pleasure to attend this inaugural ceremony of the Japanese Zen Garden and Kaizen Academy Hall at the Ahmedabad Management Association.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and congratulations to those who have made today's inaugural ceremony possible, based on the friendship and cooperation between the State of Gujarat and Hyogo Prefecture. 関係者の皆様、この度は心からお祝いを申し上げます。

[Relationship between Gujarat and Hyogo]

I understand that the relationship between the State of Gujarat and Hyogo Prefecture started a very long time ago. Some people say that we put the date back to the early Meiji Period. Historically, there lived many Indian expatriates in Kobe City, many of whom came from Gujarat. When the Hanshin-Awaji Great Earthquakes hit Hyogo in 1995, the Indian community in Kobe as well as Indian people kindly offered relief goods to Hyogo. And then, in 2001, the people of Hyogo, in witnessing the huge losses and damages caused by the heavy Earthquakes in Gujarat, decided to return goodwill to the people of Gujarat by extending emergency assistance for reconstructing the lives of those affected by the Earthquakes.

Since then, the friendship between the two peoples has expanded

through various people-to-people exchanges. As Governor Ido just mentioned in his message, it is fondly remembered that a Memorandum of Understanding to further promote cooperation between the two regional governments was signed in Kobe in 2016 in the presence of Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

I am pleased to learn that the relationship has become even closer through the visit of Governor Ido to Gujarat in 2017 and Prime Minister Modi's visit to Kobe in 2019.

I myself visited the Indo-Japan Friendship Association in January last year, luckily enough just before the spread of COVID 19, as Mr. Patel kindly mentioned. I had the pleasure of meeting and discussing with Mr. Patel and also had a chance to greet Mr. Hisamoto, Mayor of Kobe, and members of the City Council, who were visiting the Association at that time. I was very impressed by the efforts made by all the people concerned to elevate the India-Japan relationship to a higher level in Ahmedabad.

[Japanese Zen Garden]

I understand that the construction project of the Japanese Zen Garden at AMA was conceived and materialized when Governor Ido paid a visit to Ahmedabad in 2017. With the support of the Hyogo International Association, Indian architects from Gujarat were invited to Japan for training for garden construction.

As I understand, it is said that the origin of the word "Zen" itself is the Sanskrit word **ध्यान** (dhyaan), which means "to meditate, or to concentrate." This very fact alone shows how closely related our two cultures are. I strongly hope the Japanese Zen Garden will become a symbol of even-closer relationship and long-lasting cooperation between the two regional governments.

[Promoting the India-Japan relationship]

IJFA Gujarat, working closely with AMA, has made significant contributions to various exchanges and friendship between the two countries as well as to promote mutual understanding in the field of business, academics and culture. In addition, the institution has played a major role in promoting "Kaizen" in India, which is by now an

internationally-known Japanese business concept.

The relationship between Gujarat and Hyogo pioneered and spearheaded the development of the India-Japan relations.

The High Speed Rail project is a prime example of the extent to which the cooperation between our two countries has deepened. Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi himself once visited the Shinkansen rolling stock manufacturing company in Kobe. The construction of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail is steadily progressing, particularly in Gujarat, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

As Ambassador of Japan to India, I am very encouraged by the fact that the exchanges and cooperation between the two regional governments immensely contributed to our bilateral relations. The significant presence of Japanese companies in Gujarat, of which a good example is Maruti-Suzuki, has also been serving to promote “Make in India,” which will further strengthen the bond of our two countries.

[Closing]

Ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, let me express my sincere gratitude to the peoples of Gujarat and Hyogo who are promoting the friendship under this current pandemic.

Next year, we will jointly celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic ties between Japan and India, and the 75th anniversary of independence of India. It is my sincere hope that the Japanese Zen Garden will become a new symbol of the friendship between the two peoples as well as the two nations and that this cooperation will further contribute to the expansion of our bilateral relations.

Thank you very much.

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