

Remarks by H.E. Mr SUZUKI Hiroshi,
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,
at the UK-Japan Celebration of 200 Years of Rail
on 7th October 2025

Permanent Secretary Shanmugalingam,
Chairman Murphy of Irish Rail,
Mr McLean of National Railway Museum,
Ms Oshi of JR Central,
Mr Kuroda of JR East,
Mr Inoue of Tokyo Metro,
Mr Brewin of Hitachi Rail,
Distinguished guests,

Thank you very much for joining me this evening to celebrate together the 200th anniversary of the glorious history of Railways.

I will say a few words on behalf of the co-organisers, keeping in mind the phrase, ‘a good speech should be like a train journey’. That is to say, it should run smoothly, carry everyone along, and arrive on time.

200 years ago in 1825, the Stockton and Darlington Railway commenced operations as the world's first public railway. I myself visited Darlington just last month and toured the Railway Museum.

George Stephenson said that the length of UK railways would measure “8,054 miles - *about the diameter of the globe*” by the end of 1854. Since then, the railway has had an immense impact, bringing industrial revolution to every corner of the world.

The origin of Japan's railway is traced back right here to Britain. Mr Masaru Inoue, the Father of Japanese Railway, studied railway technologies at UCL and aspired to bring railway to Japan. In 1872, when Japan's first railway line opened between Shinbashi and Yokohama, the tracks were laid under the guidance of British engineers, and all the rolling stocks were imported from Britain.

Today, Japan-UK collaboration in the railway sector stands at an unprecedented level. Hitachi Rail Newton Aycliffe factory is manufacturing battery trains, which can dramatically reduce the emission of CO2.

What is amazing about this is that you can retrofit batteries in existing rolling stocks. So, if you replace all 3 diesel engines, they will become CO2 zero emission.

Hitachi is also developing HMAX, new innovative technologies to detect necessary parts to be replaced before they break. So, the rolling stocks will never go out of service due to broken parts. So, the rolling stocks will never go out of service due to broken parts.

JR Central has maintained an exchange training program with the UK for over 30 years. Today, a reunion seminar was held in grand style just before this reception, ensuring that these engineers will continue to act as a bridge between Japanese and British railways.

JR East is expanding its station vending machine business and working to develop station-based retail operations in the UK. They aim to utilise AI-driven data analysis to develop smart retail businesses at transportation hubs.

Tokyo Metro has been operating the Elizabeth Line in collaboration with Sumitomo Corporation and the UK's GoAhead Group since May of this year. In 1914, The Father of Japanese Subway, Noritsugu Hayakawa visited the UK and marveled at the London Tube. He was so inspired that he spearheaded the establishment of what is now the Tokyo Metro.

I am deeply moved to witness that Tokyo Metro is now cooperating with British engineers for the operation of the Elizabeth Line.

Tonight, we have representatives from many companies and organisations. But all of you have one important thing in common. That is, passion for railways. I can see it on the face of

everyone. I can feel that this room is filled with that passion.

As we embark on a new journey into the future of railway together, this passion, shared by all British and Japanese engineers and managers, will provide a powerful driving force to advance cutting-edge manufacturing and innovation technologies worldwide.

It is my ardent hope, that through UK-Japan railway partnership, we will lead the world of railways into a bright, prosperous future.

Thank you very much.