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AKARI 明かり



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भारतीय प्रबंध संस्थान बेंगलूर
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT
BANGALORE

MIJSC
Mizuho India Japan Study Centre

Chairperson's Message

Dear Friends,

As we move into summer, Indian tourists flocked to Japan in record numbers for the 2026 cherry blossom season, building on a 38% increase in arrivals since 2024. Beyond tourism, this growing enthusiasm reflects a deeper strengthening of people-to-people ties between India and Japan, particularly among younger generations eager to engage with Japan's culture, society, and opportunities.

This momentum is equally visible at the strategic level. The 18th India–Japan Strategic Foreign Ministers' Meeting reaffirmed the growing importance both countries place on their partnership, with Japan establishing a dedicated desk for India–Japan Economic Affairs. Under this framework, the recent Japan–India AI Strategic Dialogue held in April highlighted the increasing focus on collaboration in emerging technologies and economic security. Together, these developments underscore the depth, continuity, and expanding scope of India–Japan relations.

These trends are reflected in MIJSC's own engagements. This year, we were delighted to host Executive MBA students from Waseda University for the third consecutive time, and, for the first time, welcome business students from Keio University for an immersive learning experience at IIM Bangalore. Such exchanges are invaluable in building future leaders with a deeper understanding of both countries.

We were also pleased to partner earlier this year with the Ota Tokyo cosplay and Japanese culture event in Bengaluru, which saw over 14,000 visitors in a single day. The scale of participation demonstrated the growing interest in Japanese culture in Bengaluru and across India, reinforcing the strong societal foundations of the India–Japan relationship.

As this issue of our newsletter illustrates, MIJSC continues to serve as a platform connecting academia, industry, policy, and culture in meaningful ways.

I thank all our partners and supporters for their continued encouragement and collaboration, which make our work possible.

Warm regards,

Prof. Jaideep Sarkar

Chairperson, Mizuho India Japan Study Centre

Indian Institute of Management Bangalore

Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

This edition of *Akari* captures the evolving momentum of the India–Japan partnership through academia, industry, culture, and strategic engagement.

In this issue, we invite you to revisit key moments and emerging conversations through:

- **Enhancing Collaborative Research:** Kizuna Sabha Call for papers...
- **Academic Initiatives:** The LMP program and its activities...
- **Societal Bonds:** Learnings from our webinars...
- **Interaction with Japanese Industry and Government bodies..**
- **Cultural Crossroads:** Where Japanese tradition meets global influence, revealing the shifts, stories, and spirit of a nation in transition.
- **Business Crossroads:** A dedicated space that explores trends in Japan's economy and society, spotlighting emerging risks and opportunities for India-Japan partnerships...

As you navigate through this newsletter, we hope the stories inspire you, the facts intrigue you, and the shared experiences resonate with you.

Warm Regards,

Dr. Saideep Rathnam

Chief Operating Officer,
Mizuho India-Japan Study Centre
Indian Institute of Management Bangalore

1. Enhancing Collaborative Research- Kizuna Sabha



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KIZUNA SABHA

CALL FOR PAPERS

A platform for advancing India–Japan scholarship, research, and strategic dialogue.

THEMES INCLUDE:



Technology & Innovation



Leadership & Management



Indo-Pacific & Geopolitics



Sustainability & Energy



Manufacturing & Supply Chains



Culture, Language & Society



Education & Talent Mobility



We invite faculty, researchers, students, policymakers, and industry practitioners to submit original research papers, case studies, and policy insights on the evolving India–Japan partnership.



HOSTED BY

Mizuho India Japan Study Centre (MIJSC)

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT BANGALORE



SUBMISSION
DEADLINE

Abstract Submission: 1 June 2026
Full Paper Submission: 15 July 2026



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2. Strengthening Academic Initiatives - Lean Manufacturing Practices Program

This quarter marked a significant milestone in the Centre’s Lean Manufacturing Practices (LMP) Program, as it moved seamlessly from celebrating outcomes to strengthening future cohorts and expanding its outreach. Across certification ceremonies, immersive conclaves, and strategic roadshows, the program continues to shape a growing ecosystem of Lean practitioners within academia—bridging classroom learning with industry relevance.

Batch 3 Certified as Lean Experts

On **March 15, 2026**, the Centre celebrated the successful completion of **Batch 3** of the LMP Program at the IIM Bangalore Auditorium. Launched in March 2025, this cohort brought together **65 faculty members** from engineering and polytechnic institutions across Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

Of these, **63 participants earned the prestigious Lean Expert Certification**, marking not just course completion, but a demonstrated commitment to embedding Lean thinking within their institutions.

The ceremony was distinguished by the presence of **Chief Guest Mr. Sunil Khuranna, Executive Chairman, BPL Medical Technologies**, who underscored a critical message:

“Lean thinking will remain central to industrial competitiveness, but must now evolve alongside capabilities in AI and emerging technologies.”

Excellence within the cohort was recognised through **Best Performance Awards**, presented to:

- Prof. Latha Shankar, Siddaganga Institute of Technology, Tumakuru
- Prof. Gajanan Gambhire, Vishwakarma Institute of Technology, Pune
- Prof. Radhika Kulkarni, Vishwakarma Institute of Technology, Pune

In addition, the team from **Sree Chitra Thirunal College of Engineering, Thiruvananthapuram** was honoured with the **Best Team Performance Award**, reflecting the program’s emphasis on collaborative problem-solving.

This milestone reinforces the Centre’s growing role in **building a cadre of faculty who can translate Lean principles into actionable, student-centric learning.**



2. Strengthening Academic Initiatives - Lean Manufacturing Practices Program

Batch 4 LMP Conclave : From Learning to Application

The LMP Conclave for Batch 4 of the Hybrid Lean Management Program (LMP) was conducted at Indian Institute of Management Bangalore from March 13–15, bringing together 36 faculty members from engineering and polytechnic colleges across the region for an intensive three-day immersive learning experience.

The conclave combined academic sessions, industry exposure, and experiential workshops to deepen participants' understanding of lean principles and their practical implementation.

Day 1 began with an insightful session by Dr. Saideep Rathnam, who highlighted the counterintuitive nature of lean practices and their transformative impact on organisational thinking. Participants then attended engaging sessions by IIM Bangalore faculty members – Prof. Nishant Kumar Verma on *Project Management: The Lean Way* and Prof. Hema Krishnamurthy on *Business Consulting for Growth and Impact*.



The day also featured an interactive *Heijunka Game*, designed and facilitated by LMP Module Director Mr. S. K. Ramesh. Through this hands-on activity, participants explored concepts of production planning and control while gaining practical insights into Heijunka – a lean approach that supports synchronised cash flow, stable production, and balanced workloads aligned with customer demand.



On **Day 2**, participants visited three industries as part of hands-on workshop sessions. During these visits, faculty members observed shop-floor operations, collected operational data, completed team-based assignments, and presented their findings. Participants also shared their Phase 2 implementation roadmaps, focusing on student-centric execution strategies within their respective institutions.



Post the industry visits, participants attended a special virtual session by Prof. Furuhashi Takeyaki, whose research on the *Flow Transformation Programme* laid foundational ideas for lean practices even before the emergence of the Toyota Production System. The session provided participants with a broader historical and conceptual perspective on lean thinking, highlighting the importance of flow, efficiency, and continuous improvement in operational system



Day 3 focused on project presentations by the participating faculty members. The projects were reviewed by the Module Directors, who provided detailed feedback and guidance. Participants also mapped production flows through visual charts and presented their analyses, reinforcing their understanding of lean flow management and operational efficiency.

The conclave concluded with a Valedictory Ceremony attended by Chief Guest Mr. Sunil Khuranna, Executive Chairman of BPL Medical Technologies. Participants were awarded certificates in recognition of their active engagement throughout the conclave, while the Module Directors were acknowledged for their continued mentorship and support in guiding the program.

LMP Batch 5 Outreach : Expanding the Ecosystem

Looking ahead, the Centre intensified its outreach efforts to onboard the next cohort.

In **January 2026**, the LMP team conducted targeted roadshows:

- **Bangalore (Week 1):** Engagement with **12 institutions**
- **Kolhapur (January 13–14):** Outreach to **~13 engineering colleges**

These interactions spanned **Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 institutions**, with leadership teams expressing strong interest in adopting the LMP framework.

This growing demand reflects a broader shift: institutions increasingly recognise Lean as a critical capability—not only for industry alignment, but for enhancing teaching, learning outcomes, and institutional efficiency.

Batch 5 had commenced on **February 14, 2026**, with further expanding the network of Lean-enabled educators across India.

Looking Ahead

From certifying experienced faculty to immersing new participants in real-world problem-solving and expanding institutional partnerships, the LMP Program continues to evolve as a **scalable model for academic–industry integration**.

More importantly, it is building something enduring:

a community of educators equipped to **embed efficiency, innovation, and continuous improvement into the next generation of engineers and technicians**.



3. Promoting Societal Bonds -

3.1 A glimpse of our Webinars and Seminar

In the spirit of continuous learning, our webinar series brought together thought leaders, industry experts, and curious minds to exchange ideas, spark conversations, and explore emerging trends. Each session served as a bridge, connecting knowledge with real-world insights to empower our community.

SHE-ROES OF HEALTH: Rethinking Women’s Health Innovation Across India and Japan

Women’s health is no longer a niche concern—it is fast becoming a global economic and innovation priority. On 6th March 2026, leaders from India and Japan examined how FemTech is reshaping healthcare systems, entrepreneurship, and policy frameworks in a webinar.

The discussion highlighted a critical reality: traditional healthcare systems have largely been designed around male-centric data. This has led to gaps in diagnosis, treatment, and research for women. As McKinsey & Company estimates, closing these gaps could unlock over \$1 trillion in global economic value annually.

In Japan, Tomoko Minagawa emphasized how demographic shifts, rising workforce participation, and technological advancements are driving FemTech adoption. However, challenges remain—particularly limited gender-specific data and persistent social stigma.

From the Indian perspective, Ankita Pegu highlighted structural barriers such as fragmented markets, limited funding, and uneven healthcare access across urban and rural regions. Despite this, India’s scale and startup ecosystem present significant opportunities, especially in preventive and digital health solutions.

Ground-level innovation was showcased by the founder of Arundati Healthcare, who addressed sanitation-linked health risks through a practical, user-centric product. Similarly, Japan-based Flora demonstrated how data-driven fertility solutions can scale across markets—though localization remains essential in a country as diverse as India.

A key takeaway across the panel was clear: awareness is growing, but systemic change requires better data, stronger institutional collaboration, and cultural normalization of women’s health conversations.

As FemTech continues to evolve, India and Japan are uniquely positioned to collaborate—combining scale with precision—to build inclusive, data-driven, and impactful healthcare solutions for women.



3.2 India Business Immersion Program- Reimagining India: Waseda EMBA Delegation Explores Innovation, Industry, and Digital Transformation

The Waseda University Executive MBA Delegation's recent India Business Immersion Program became far more than a study visit — it evolved into a journey of discovery into a country redefining its role in the global economy. Hosted by MIJSC from **14–16 February 2026**, the two-day engagement brought together senior Japanese professionals poised to enter strategic leadership roles, offering them a first-hand understanding of India's transformation across digital infrastructure, innovation, manufacturing, and policy.

14 February – Day Zero: Understanding India Beyond the Headlines

The experience began not in a boardroom, but with a smartphone. Delegates were introduced to India's Digital Public Infrastructure through a hands-on onboarding to the Cheq UPI app, allowing them to experience India's seamless digital payments ecosystem in real time. For many participants, this was their first direct encounter with the scale and accessibility of India's open digital architecture — an ecosystem increasingly viewed globally as a model for inclusive innovation.



Setting the intellectual tone for the immersion, Dr. Saideep Rathnam contextualized India through the lens of civilization, culture, and business philosophy. His session encouraged delegates to look beyond conventional economic narratives and understand India as a deeply pluralistic society shaped by centuries of evolving ideas and traditions. This cultural grounding became essential as discussions moved toward India's rapidly growing startup ecosystem and entrepreneurial mindset. Particularly striking for the delegation was India's changing perception of failure — increasingly seen as a stepping stone for innovation rather than a social stigma.

The dialogue that followed reflected the delegation's deep engagement with India's complexity.



Questions around women's participation in entrepreneurship, startup growth drivers, and societal dynamics transformed the session into a rich exchange of perspectives rather than a one-way lecture. Day Zero ultimately established a powerful foundation: India's economic rise cannot be understood without appreciating both its civilizational depth and modern ambition.

15 February – Day One: Digital Transformation & Global Capability Centres

The first full day of the immersion shifted focus to the systems powering India's global emergence. Through discussions on UPI and ONDC, delegates explored how India is building public digital infrastructure at population scale — not through closed corporate ecosystems, but through interoperable public frameworks designed to democratize access and innovation. The sessions highlighted how technology, governance, and policy are converging to create entirely new models of economic participation.

Equally compelling was the exploration of India's Global Capability Centres (GCCs). Fatema Hunaid, partner at Granthornton Bharath introduced the role of GTB in nurturing GCC's in India. Anilesh Seth, GCC strategist and visiting faculty at ISB and IIMB, outlined how India's role has evolved dramatically from a destination for operational outsourcing to a global centre for strategy, analytics, R&D, and innovation leadership. Delegates gained insight into how multinational corporations increasingly rely on India not as a support function, but as a core strategic partner shaping global business decisions.



These ideas came alive during industry visits to Bosch Global Software Technologies and Lowe's India. These visits were also facilitated by GTB. At Bosch, delegates observed how GCCs contribute directly to innovation pipelines and business profitability. At Lowe's India, leadership emphasized a unified global operating model where Indian teams function not as outsourced units, but as equal stakeholders within a shared leadership ecosystem. Together, the visits reinforced a clear message: India's corporate ecosystem is becoming deeply integrated into global value creation.



16 February – Day Two: Manufacturing Excellence & Frugal Innovation

The final day brought the delegation closer to India's manufacturing capabilities and innovation philosophy. A visit to the TVS Motor manufacturing plant offered participants an inside look into India's industrial scale, operational discipline, and supply chain resilience. This visit was facilitated by IJCCI-K. Delegates observed how lean production systems, vendor integration, and quality processes enable Indian manufacturers to compete globally while maintaining efficiency and agility.



The immersion concluded with a thought-provoking session on frugal innovation led by Dr. Saideep Rathnam. Through the examples of Narayana Health and Aravind Eye Care, delegates explored how India has pioneered scalable models delivering affordable, high-quality healthcare through process optimization and standardization. The discussion reframed the idea of "low cost" innovation, emphasizing instead India's ability to achieve optimized efficiency with broad societal impact.

The program closed with an exchange of acknowledgements and gifts between Professor Tomoko of Waseda Business School and MIJSC leadership – a symbolic reflection of the mutual respect, intellectual exchange, and partnership strengthened over the course of the immersion.

Across three days, the Waseda EMBA delegation encountered an India that is digitally ambitious, operationally capable, innovation-driven, and globally connected. More importantly, the immersion challenged conventional perceptions and presented India not as an emerging support economy, but as a strategic partner shaping the future of global enterprise.

As MIJSC continues to deepen Indo-Japanese collaboration, programs such as these play an increasingly important role in building bridges between institutions, industries, and future leaders – fostering not only understanding, but long-term strategic partnership.



3.3 KEIO Business School Executives Explore India Through Entrepreneurial Immersion

From 2–6 March 2026, MIJSC supported an immersive engagement for executives from KEIO Business School at IIM Bangalore, focused on exploring India-oriented business opportunities and strengthening Indo-Japanese collaboration through entrepreneurship and innovation.



As part of the program, participating students presented business proposals inspired by their field visits across India. Their ideas reflected a deep engagement with India’s cultural and commercial ecosystems, covering sectors such as hair wigs, spiritual and wellness tourism, and the introduction of Ayurvedic medicine practices to Japan. To better understand market realities and supply chain ecosystems, students travelled extensively across India, visiting temples, businesses, and regional enterprises connected to their proposed ventures. Evaluating the proposals was a distinguished panel from MIJSC comprising Mr. Arul Kumar Palani, Ex-MD Spice India, Professor Subhashish Gupta, Professor of Economics, and Professor Kumar, former chairperson of NSRCEL and Professor of Entrepreneurship. Their insights and feedback encouraged students to refine their ideas through the lens of long-term cross-border collaboration and market viability.

The program reflected the growing interest among future Japanese business leaders in understanding India not only as a market, but as a strategic partner for innovation, culture-driven enterprise, and long-term collaboration.



4. Interaction with Japanese Industry and Government Bodies..

Celebrating Japanese Pop Culture in India: MIJSC Partners with Ōta TOKYO

On 10 January, Bengaluru became a vibrant meeting point of Indian and Japanese pop culture through **Ōta TOKYO**, India's first anime festival dedicated to doujinshi and cosplay culture. Inspired by Japan's rich fan-driven creative ecosystem, the festival brought together enthusiasts of manga, cosplay, VTubers, gaming, and anime-inspired art under one roof.

Powered by passionate creators, artists, and volunteers from both India and Japan, the event reflected the growing cultural connection between the two countries and the rising popularity of Japanese pop culture among Indian youth.

MIJSC partnered with Ōta TOKYO as the Knowledge Partner for the festival, supporting the initiative's broader vision of strengthening cultural understanding and people-to-people ties between India and Japan. The collaboration aimed to go beyond entertainment by creating a platform for cultural exchange, creativity, and community engagement.

MIJSC also installed a stall in the festival where we displayed our Centre's activities and advertised our language course to the visitors. The stall received large amount of foot fall.

The overwhelming response to the festival highlighted this growing interest. With over 14,000 tickets sold and thousands of attendees participating across activities and performances, Ōta TOKYO demonstrated the expanding influence of Japanese culture in India and the enthusiasm of Indian audiences to engage with it in meaningful ways.

Ōta TOKYO



Ms. Naho Murakami
Nitto Denko Corporation, Executive Officer

Manga Partner



Official Knowledge Partner



MIJSC
Mizuho India Japan Study Centre

Corporate Crowdfunding Partner



5. Cultural Crossroads—Stories from Japan’s Societal Interaction

New Delhi symposium reframes people-to-people ties as a strategic asset

ICRIER hosted a symposium in New Delhi on March 3 titled “Enhancing People to People Exchange between India and Japan,” bringing together policymakers, academics and practitioners. In his inaugural remarks, Amitabh Kant, former CEO of NITI Ayog argued that the partnership has moved from project-based cooperation to shaping the regional order amid supply chain restructuring and strategic trade realignment, making mobility pathways for students, skilled workers and professionals central to the next phase. Ambassador Keiichi Ono stressed that despite strong diplomatic and economic ties, people-to-people exchanges remain underdeveloped and require tailored strategies for students, industrial talent and researchers .



Japan Mega Festival in Mumbai turns soft power into mass-market outreach

World Trade Center Mumbai announced the “Japan Mega Festival IV,” organised with the Indo Japanese Association and held on 31 January –1 February 2026. The festival brought together Japanese art, food, travel booths, cosplay, and lifestyle products in a large public showcase, pitched as an entry level platform for cultural exchange and tourism promotion. With free entry and full day programming, the event was designed to attract families, youth, and Japan enthusiasts, using popular culture to demystify Japan and spotlight travel, business, and education opportunities. Organisers framed it as a bridge between consumer level interest and policy level ties.



What this means for India–Japan collaboration:

Large format cultural festivals help broaden the bilateral relationship beyond policy elites and corporate boardrooms. By normalising Japanese culture in a commercial capital like Mumbai, they create latent demand for tourism, study abroad, language learning, and Japanese brands—demand that Japanese and Indian institutions can later channel into structured exchanges. In the long run, this soft power base underpins political support for deeper strategic and economic cooperation

6. Business Crossroads - Insights from Japan Inc.

A quick take on key business news from Japan, with a twist. We highlight what matters and why it could be interesting for entrepreneurs, investors, and researchers. No fluff, just insights worth thinking about.

Delhi and Tokyo hard-wire economic security and AI into India–Japan partnership

At the 18th Japan–India Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue in New Delhi, Foreign Ministers Toshimitsu Motegi and S. Jaishankar shifted the centre of gravity of the relationship toward economic security and advanced technology cooperation. The talks delivered concrete mechanisms: a Japan–India AI Strategic Dialogue under the broader JAI (Japan–India AI Cooperation Initiative), a Joint Working Group on critical minerals, and a new private sector dialogue on economic security focused on resilient supply chains. Both sides also reaffirmed coordination on a Free and Open Indo-Pacific and cooperation through the Quad framework . This meeting operationalises the “Joint Vision for the Next Decade” by moving from rhetoric to institutionalised platforms around AI, critical minerals, and economic security. It locks-in a long term agenda where supply chains, digital infrastructure, and dual-use technologies become core pillars of the partnership rather than add ons to traditional infrastructure financing.



Indian vice-chancellors court Kansai universities to deepen academic integration

A delegation of Indian vice-chancellors, led by the Association of Indian Universities in collaboration with Acumen, visited Kansai University and held meetings with Osaka University, Osaka Metropolitan University, and Kyoto University on 16 January 2026. Discussions focused on expanding joint research, innovation partnerships, and long term institutional linkages, culminating in a new MoU between AIU, Acumen, and Kansai University. The agreement aims to build robust academic ecosystems, promote student and faculty mobility, and scale collaborative programmes across higher education institutions in both countries. Indian officials framed the visit as part of a broader “Study in Japan–Study in India” synergy.



Yamanashi delegation scouts Noida as a new state–prefecture growth corridor

On January 31, 2026 an eight member delegation from Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture, led by Deputy Governor Junichi Ishidera, visited Noida and met Noida Authority officials to explore long term cooperation in investment, business, culture, education, and tourism in Uttar Pradesh.



The visit followed a meeting with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow, where both sides discussed Japanese investment opportunities and the prospect of hosting a 200-member Japanese business delegation later in the year. Noida officials pitched the city as a manufacturing, services, and tourism hub, positioning the region as a gateway for Japanese firms into North India's urban corridor.

Bengaluru mobility summit turns India–Japan transport MoUs into an execution agenda

The Japan–India Mobility Summit 2026 (JIMS 2026), held on March 9 at the Taj West End, Bengaluru, brought together policymakers, industry leaders and technology firms to advance a shared vision for sustainable mobility. The summit sought to operationalise the Next-Generation Mobility Partnership and the Initiative of Clean Energy Mobility and Infrastructure for Next-Generation (ICEMAN), focusing on EVs, battery ecosystems, smart charging, and urban transport digitalisation. Discussions linked Japanese automotive and component expertise with India's rapidly growing mobility market and policy experiments in green public transport



Tokyo creates dedicated Japan–India Economic Affairs Division, formalising India’s priority status

On April 1, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs established a Japan–India Economic Affairs Division under the South-west Asia Division of its Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department. The new unit is tasked with strengthening public–private efforts to promote Japanese companies’ expansion into India and deepen economic security cooperation with New Delhi. MOFA’s statement cited India’s high growth rate and the rising importance of economic cooperation within the bilateral relationship as core motivations. Notably, this marks the first dedicated country specific economic division of its kind in the ministry’s regional structure.



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Mumbai hosts inaugural India–Japan AI Strategic Dialogue, moving from MoUs to implementation

The first India–Japan Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategic Dialogue was held in Mumbai on April 21, co-chaired by MEA Joint Secretary (Cyber Diplomacy) Amit A. Shukla and Japan’s Deputy Assistant Minister for Cyber Security, Hanada Takahiro. Officials from multiple ministries and agencies, along with industry representatives, discussed cooperation across the AI stack—co-creation of solutions, policy convergence, talent mobility, and joint research. The dialogue also examined coordination on AI governance and standards in multilateral fora, advancing the AI Cooperation Initiative announced at the 2025 leaders’ summit as a central pillar of the Joint Vision for the Next Decade .

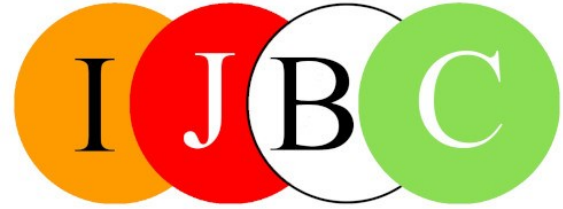


India tech delegation to SusHi Tech Tokyo points to a startup driven Indo Japan business track

The Indo-Japan Business Council announced an “India Technology Delegation to Japan” from April 25 to May 2, 2026, anchored to SusHi Tech Tokyo 2026, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government’s flagship global city-tech platform.

The curated delegation targets Indian technology companies exploring Japan and broader Asian markets, with planned engagements in Tokyo and Yokohama.

Positioned as a gateway to Japanese business culture and innovation ecosystems, the programme follows earlier IJBC learning tours and is designed to connect Indian founders with Japanese corporates, investors and municipal innovation initiatives.



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