

Independence Day of India

Publicity

Strengthening economic ties

By Masami Iijima
Chairman, The Japan-India Business Co-operation Committee
Representative Director, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Mitsui & Co., Ltd.

On behalf of the Japan-India Business Co-operation Committee, I would like to offer sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 69th Independence Day of India.



Masami Iijima

Japan and India have built amicable relations as two of Asia's largest democracies for many years, and since the establishment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, the enhancement of bilateral economic relations has become a particularly important theme. During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan last September, the target of "doubling Japan's foreign direct investment and the number of Japanese companies in India within five years" was set with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and cooperation between the two governments to achieve this target has been confirmed.

In addition, in April this year a joint statement was signed by Mr. Yoichi Miyazawa, Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, and Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, India's Minister of State for Commerce and Industry. Matters noted in the statement included the devel-

opment of 11 Japan Industrial Townships in India.

The number of Japanese companies in India reached 1,209 in October 2014, a considerable increase from 1,072 in 2013, and new large-scale investments have been recently announced. The Indian economy is on an upward trend, as can be seen in the International Monetary Fund's prediction that Indian economic growth in 2015 will reach 7.5 percent. With the increasing business momentum in India, Japanese companies are expected to enter the market at an accelerated pace.

The Japan-India Business Cooperation Committee was established in 1966 to enhance mutual understanding and friendship, and facilitate economic relations between Japan and India. This year's meeting in Tokyo is the 40th regularly held joint meeting with the India-Japan Business Cooperation Committee. Prime Minister Modi is actively inviting foreign investment under the "Make in India" initiative program, and we will deal with related challenges and prospects as topics of particular focus during the upcoming joint meeting. The JIBCC hopes to contribute to the further development of business between the two countries through an animated discussion.

I will conclude by once again offering my congratulations for the 69th Independence Day of India, and my best wishes for India's increasing development and prosperity in the future.

Japan's role in India's fight for independence

By Ryuko Hira
President-ICIJ
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As India, which celebrates its 69th Independence Day today, and Japan are now strengthening their strategic partnership as two of Asia's largest democracies, it is the most opportune moment to remember that Japan played its role in India's struggle for independence during World War II.



Ryuko Hira

In his first press conference in Tokyo on June 19, 1943, as prominent nationalist of the Indian independence movement, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose said, "India and Japan have in the past been bound by deep cultural ties that are about 20 centuries old. In recent times these ties have been interrupted because of the British domination of India. It is however certain that once India is free these ties will be revived and strengthened." Today, these words seem truly prophetic. In that press conference, he also mentioned that Japan's victory over Russia in 1905 had made Indians proud. They looked upon Japan as a defender of Asian dignity.

It was during World War II, especially between 1943 and 1945, that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's relations with Japan became very close. In Berlin, Netaji was already in touch with the Japanese Embassy. However, we witnessed the bonding with Japan on the Japanese submarine where he was transferred from a German one on

April 28, 1943, in the middle of the Indian Ocean. He reached Sabang on the coast of Sumatra on May 6, 1943. In a message on the photograph with the crew before he left the submarine he wrote, "...this will mark a milestone in our fight for victory and peace."

On arrival in Tokyo Netaji met high-ranking Japanese officials. His meeting with Prime Minister Gen. Hideki Tojo took place on June 10, 1943. Netaji asked him two very pointed questions. One, was Japan prepared to help India's freedom struggle unconditionally? "I wish to confirm there will be no strings attached to this," Netaji said to Tojo. Second, was Japan ready to take the war operation on to Indian soil? To the first question, the answer was "Yes." On June 16, in a special session of the Diet, Tojo made a historic speech. He declared, "We firmly resolve that Japan will do everything possible to help Indian independence. I am convinced the day of Indian freedom and prosperity is not far off..." Subhas Chandra Bose sat in the gallery and listened to the speech. But the answer to the second question of pushing the war into India needed expert military opinion. No immediate decisive answer was possible.

On July 5, Netaji took charge of the Indian National Army in Singapore and declared it was the proudest day of his life to announce to the world that India's Army of Liberation had come into being. "If you follow in life as well as in death, I will lead you to victory and freedom," he promised his followers.

The proclamation of the Provisional Government of Free India (Azad Hind) took place on Oct. 21, 1943. Netaji and his cabinet ministers took the oath of allegiance to the

Azad Hind government and vowed to fight until Indian independence was won. Japan was the first of nine countries to grant recognition to this government of a free India in exile.

Tojo announced the transfer of the Andaman and Nicobar islands to the Azad Hind government in spite of reservations on the part of the Imperial Japanese Navy. So, the Free India government now had a territory that was necessary for international recognition. He visited the islands on Dec. 30 and 31 of that year. Netaji's real dream of crossing into India then happened in March 1944.

The INA crossed the border of India on March 18, 1944. Shaikat Malik of the INA hoisted the tricolor Indian flag at Moirang on April 14. Gen. Md. Zaman Kiani held on to the Tegnapal Pass for three months. Col. Enayet Kiani, in a surprise attack, occupied Palel airport. But in spite of the heroism of the INA soldiers, the Imphal campaign ended in military disaster. The tenuous supply lines across Burma snapped, and no army can fight on an empty stomach. The monsoon arrived early, and Anglo-American airpower kept up a relentless bombing campaign. In

On his last visit to Tokyo in November 1944, Netaji had an audience with Emperor Showa. He died on Jan. 21, 1945.

In this relationship of cooperation during difficult times, India and Japan became very close indeed. The battle of Imphal was a military defeat for Japan and the INA, but for India the role of the INA proved to be a political victory. The Red Fort Trial of the INA officers inspired the whole of India and dealt a grievous blow to the loyalty of the British-Indian forces of the King-Emperor. It was almost a miracle how Netaji's soldiers snatched political victory out of military defeat.

"If God wills," Netaji had said in one of his stirring orders of the day, "we shall die a martyr's death. And in our last sleep we shall kiss the road that will bring our army to Delhi. The Road to Delhi is the Road to Freedom, Chalo Delhi." The blood of Indian and Japanese youth mingled in the battlefields of Imphal, Kohima and Burma in the course of the long march to Delhi. That common sacrifice has forever cemented an indissoluble spiritual bond between the peoples of Japan and India.

Wishing you a Happy Independence Day 2015

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