

Indian PM Visit Special

Indian Chamber of Commerce welcomes PM Singh to Japan

Japan, India strengthening strategic, global partnership

By Ryuko Hira
Honorary President of ICCJ/IMAY

On behalf of all members of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Japan (ICCJ) and the Indian Merchants Association of Yokohama (IMAY), I am honored and privileged to welcome India's 14th Prime Minister, H.E. Dr. Manmohan Singh and his wife Mrs. Gursharan Kaur as well as his entourage and members of the high-level economic delegation to Japan. In this 93rd year of the founding of ICCJ/IMAY, we take this opportunity to thank our prime minister for providing every assistance and care to we overseas Indians in Japan.



Ryuko Hira

A renowned economist, he is the first Sikh to become a prime minister. A Sikh is a follower of the Sikh religion founded by the revered Guru Nanak Dev. The essence of the Sikh religion is summed up by Guru Nanak in his words: "Realization of truth is higher than all else. Higher still is truthful living." Dr. Singh has demonstrated to India and the world the noble ideal of truthful living.

Dr. Singh's accomplishments are extraordinary. The India that existed when he took office as finance minister in 1991 was an inefficient, centrally planned economy. For 45 years, bureaucrats had occupied its commanding heights, stifling enterprise under a straitjacket of regulations and licenses, erecting protectionist barriers against foreign trade and investment in the name of self-reliance, subsidizing an

unproductive public sector, and struggling to reduce the country's poverty. Twenty years later, India boasts a thriving, entrepreneurial and globalized economy, with a dynamic business culture. Today's India competes on its own terms and pulls more than 10 million people out of poverty every year.

The world has witnessed the presence of great leaders like Shigeru Yoshida, Nobusuke Kishi, Sun Yat-sen, Jawaharlal Nehru, John F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela and many other highly accomplished leaders. But never has there been a statesman like Dr. Manmohan Singh, who has been loved and revered equally at home in India and by most countries of the world. Many leaders of the world have visited India and experienced the satisfaction of true friendship and sincerity of his goodwill.

History will write Dr. Manmohan Singh as "a man without enemies." Even China and Pakistan, which have had historical issues with India, have made great progress with Prime Minister Singh's policy of "India is a friend to all nations." U.S. President Barack Obama, during his visit to India, said "Prime Minister Singh is my guru." Guru is often translated into English as a master for a disciple or a teacher for a student; but the true meaning of "gu" is darkness and that of "ru" is remover.

A "remover of darkness, illusion and ignorance" is the best description for Prime Minister Singh as he has removed the illusion of fate by empowering hundreds of millions of his fellow countrymen with unprecedented opportunities to work hard and build India's infrastructure of roads, railways and ports.

In 2009, India's general election

was the largest democratic election in the world with an eligible electorate of 714 million people. He became the first prime minister in 50 years to win reelection in 2009 after completing a full five-year term since 2004. His second term expires in 2014, and even at the age of 80 he is popularly revered as the best choice for a third term.

Health care and education

Prime Minister Singh started the National Rural Health mission, which has mobilized half a million community health workers. He implemented the allocation of seats to the underprivileged in the prestigious All India Institute of Medical Studies, the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institutes of Management and other central institutions of higher education. Dr. Singh has announced that eight more Indian Institutes of Technology will be opened in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Orissa, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. The IIT in Hyderabad is a symbol of India-Japan partnership in promoting educational excellence in India through various contributions of Japan. It is supported by nine prestigious universities from Japan and is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency through official development assistance, with support from the Japanese government and private companies.

Sri Sathya Sai University is the only college in India to have received an "A++" rating by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. To endorse commitment and importance for being India's pride to the world in the highest academic standards, Prime Minister Singh twice at-

tended Sri Sathya Sai University's graduation ceremonies in 1995 and 2010, emphasizing health care and education as priorities for development of India.

Prime Minister Singh has a pragmatic foreign policy. His government has worked toward stronger ties with the United States. He initiated negotiations for the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear agreement. Two years after the agreement was signed, India was given much-needed access to American nuclear fuel and technology.

India-Japan-U.S. trilateral dialogue is scheduled to enhance security. Periodic joint Indo-Japan naval exercises reflect the strategic partnership. India and Japan continue to move forward with talks on civil nuclear energy cooperation.

The Mumbai Metro project, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor and the Chennai-Bangalore Industrial Corridor are the mega projects costing several hundred billion dollars undertaken for India's much-needed infrastructure, including constructing new smart cities, sea ports, airports, trunk and ring roads, railways, logistics and energy plants. These developments will greatly add to the competitiveness and efficiency of India's manufacturing sector.

Prime Minister Singh has diligently and devotedly placed India on the sustained path of high growth integrating it with the global economy. Indian Saint Sri Sathya Sai Baba's poem benefits Dr. Singh's unprecedented contribution to world peace and prosperity. "Moon illumines darkness, sun illumines the sky, a noble son (of mother India) illumines the whole nation."

May Your Excellency's visit be happy, memorable and most rewarding.

During Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Japan this week, Japan and India are expected to reaffirm the commitment the two countries made in December 2011 in New Delhi to enhance their "strategic and global partnership for peace and prosperity." In a joint prime ministerial statement issued at the time said, "Japan and India enjoy deep mutual understanding and vibrant face-to-face contact as their relationship is based on universal values such as democracy, human rights and rule of law, as well as a wide range of strategic and economic interests."

Japan and India originally agreed to forge a "global partnership" in August 2000, when then Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori visited New Delhi. In April 2005 then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi paid an official visit to India at the invitation of Singh, who became the 14th prime minister of India almost a year earlier, and the two governments agreed to take turns holding annual summits in each other's capital.

When Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was at the helm of the government for the first time, the Indian prime minister had summit meetings with the Japanese leader in Japan in December 2006 and then in India in August 2007.

According to the December 2011 joint statement, the two governments reaffirmed the significance of their countries' annual summits. The 2001 summit took place after the enactment of the Japan-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agree-

ment on Aug. 1 of the same year.

Security cooperation

The joint statement also hailed "the growing security and defense cooperation between the two countries." As a sign of progress in such cooperation, the Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Indian Navy held their first joint exercise in Sagami Bay in June of last year with the participation of two MSDF destroyers and four Indian vessels.

Meanwhile, the Japan Coast Guard and its Indian counterpart have conducted joint antipiracy and search and rescue exercises since 2000. In January 2012, they staged a joint exercise off Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

The December 2011 statement also emphasized "the importance of various working-level discussions between the two countries, and welcomed the launch of the Japan-India-U.S. trilateral dialogue, which would deepen strategic and global partnership amongst the three countries."

In the joint statement said Japan said it would continue to provide its official development assistance "at a substantial level to encourage India's efforts toward social and economic development including in the area of infrastructure development."

Heartiest Welcome
to His Excellency Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India,
on the Occasion of His Official Visit to Japan

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