

INDEPENDENCE DAY OF INDIA—AUG. 15

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Deepening India-Japan bonds for progress, prosperity

By Alok Prasad
Ambassador of India

On the happy occasion of the Independence Day of India, I extend my cordial greetings to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress as well as to the government and friendly people of Japan. I felicitate my fellow citizens and persons of Indian origin living in Japan.

I also wish to express my sincere condolences for the recent loss of lives in the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. The devastation caused by this unprecedented natural disaster evoked spontaneous sympathy and heartfelt emotion across India.



Alok Prasad

We were happy to be able to respond quickly and effectively through the provision of some emergency supplies as well as by sending a 48-member relief team for a period of two weeks to Japan. This symbolizes the sense of solidarity and civilizational links that the people of India feel toward Japan. The bravery and fortitude with which the people of Japan have faced this disaster has been an example to the world. We are confident that with its customary resilience Japan will soon overcome the impact of this calamity.

India is the proud inheritor of the ideals and values of one of the world's oldest civilizations. Over the last more than six decades since independence, India has made significant strides in all spheres. Among the remarkable accomplishments has been an unwavering adherence to the values and ideals of secular democracy that have helped forge a sense of unity in the multicultural, multiethnic, multilingual society. The motto of unity in diversity has been realized in practice and India's pluralistic traditions have developed a solid foundation. Our political social and economic institutions have grown in strength and maturity, and serve as effective instruments of both economic development and social justice.

As Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has often stated, India seeks not just growth but inclusive growth in which no section of society is left out of the development process. Today, India ranks among the fastest-growing economies of the world.

India and Japan have historical and civilizational ties. Our relations have been marked by mutual goodwill, amity and respect and enriched by the mutual flow of knowledge and ideas. This legacy has remained unbroken into the modern era, which has seen our bonds strengthen based on our shared values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Today, in the modern context, the political leadership of both countries and across all parties is fully committed to developing our global and strategic partnership.

The signing of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in February this year has added yet another dimension to our shared vision. The entry into force of CEPA on Aug. 1 has opened up new opportunities in our bilateral economic engagement. India's economic dynamism and youthful vibrancy provides ample opportunities for mutually beneficial economic relations that can underpin progress and prosperity in both societies through the 21st century.

Besides intensifying trade and investment relations between India and Japan, our two countries are also pursuing flagship infrastructure projects, such as the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) and Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC). As indicated by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, investments in infrastructure in India will have to expand to as much as \$1 trillion over the next five years. This will provide further opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships between Japanese and Indian corporations.

Japan has been a generous development partner for India. India sincerely appreciates the significant amounts of official development assistance provided by Japan that have been very beneficial in promoting India's economic development, particularly in the infrastructure and social sectors.

We are also witnessing greater people-to-people contact through enhanced cultural and educational exchanges. 2012 marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Japan. We look forward to celebrating it in a befitting manner that will bring our two nations closer.

Today, our economic complementarities, strategic interests and common aspirations for Asian economic integration make us natural partners. Indeed, we have a mutual stake in each other's progress and prosperity. As the century unfolds, we must stand together in our determination to bring peace, stability and economic advancement to our respective



President Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh

peoples, to the region and to the world at large.

I am confident that the coming year will see further enhancement of the close bonds of friendship between India and Japan. We look

forward to working closely with the Japanese government, business and industry as well as the Japanese public to realize the common desire of our two great peoples for universal peace, progress and prosperity.



Courtesy of Indian Embassy

Indian Ambassador Alok Prasad, second from right, and guests celebrate the Aug. 15 Independence Day of India at the Indian Embassy in Tokyo on Monday.