

Japan wants Indians to teach them mathematics

Japan may soon open its gates to Indian primary schoolteachers specialising in mathematics. For, the Japanese believe that Indians are the best in the world when it comes to teaching this subject.

The deputy leader of the visiting Indo-Japan Business Co-operation delegation, Ryuji Inamura, says the Japanese are extremely interested in the way this crucial academic subject is taught in India.

'Even though the idea is still in an incipient stage, we in Japan have already started poring over the Indian elementary mathematic syllabi and plan to take concrete steps ahead in the matter,' Inamura told IANS here.

Inamura said: 'India has brought out IITians who are respected technocrats and sought after all over the world. Their foundation of mathematics is laid in the way they were taught during elementary schooling.'

When asked how the Japanese planned to tackle the language barrier, Yoshihiro Nishida, chairman of Yokohama Foreign Trade Association and co-chairman Yokohama India Center Council, explained: 'Mathematics is primarily a subject having its own unique numerical language. Just the basic knowledge of Japanese is enough for teaching purposes at the primary level.'

Nishida revealed that they were seriously planning to introduce the Japanese language in India in a big way. 'It will not only help iron out the psychological barrier, but also the language barrier if trade between the two countries has to flourish.'

Concurring with Nishida, Inamura pointed out that the interest in the subject could be gauged from the fact that two copyright cases of Indian school mathematics textbooks were currently pending in Japanese courts.

'I do not have more details on the issue, but then it shows the kind of influence the Indian educational system has in our country.'

When asked the reason behind the spurt of interest in this subject, Makino Masatomo, a special writer for one of Japan's top ranking newspapers Kanagawa Shimbun, explained at length.

'Since the 1980s and 90s, there has been a sharp dip in mathematics education in Japanese schools. After making a deep assessment of educational systems all over the world, particularly the developed countries, a majority of our educators have concluded that the teaching system in the Indian subcontinent can do wonders for Japan.'

'After all, India has right now the best IT professionals. And take a look at academic institutions the world over, you find Indians occupying high-level teaching chairs.'

Apart from the keen interest in Indian primary education system, the delegation has come to India with a focus on reviving economic ties.

Nalin C. Advani, director and chairman, Working Group, Yokohama India Center Council, told IANS: 'In recent years, the Japanese have made India synonymous with a one-liner - 'Oh, your country had

discovered the concept of zero isn't it?' That is very true and a good sign of the high level academic excellence of our own teachers, despite severe handicaps.'

Referring to the business tie-ups, Advani said that Japanese businessmen are very keen that Indian businessmen explore sunrise Japanese industrial sectors like bio-pharma and IT.

'However, many others are keen to explore joint ventures in areas like city planning, real estate, rail network, port development and infrastructure development, specially in the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. Primary discussions have been conducted, but the fact remains that the Japanese certainly are among the best town planners in the world.'

Another aspect of immense interest is boosting tourism between the two countries. Apart from specialised tours, Nishida said efforts are now on to promote Indian culture and put the country among the Most Favoured Tourist Destinations for the Japanese traveller.

Prabhat Sharan (© IANS / India eNews)