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# India seeks Jap investment in SEZs

II Press Trust of India

TOKYO/OSAKA, 2 AUG: Allaying concerns over land acquisition problems in the country, Indian businesses have asked Japanese firms to make investment and forge technological tie-ups in special economic zones during their week-long visit to Tokyo, Osaka and Yokohama.

At a conference in Tokyo last week, the Standing Committee chairman of Japan-India Business Co-operation Committee, Mr Yoshihiro Watanabe, expressed concerns that land acquisition in India could take a long time for doing businesses there.

To remove apprehensions in Japanese minds, Mr LB Singhal, director general of the Export Promotion Council of EOUs and SEZs, said land had been acquired for 568 SEZs that had been approved in India.

Of this, 315 zones have been notified also, Mr Singhal said.

"Notified means that after acquisition of land, the developers have completed all the formalities required to make these SEZs operational and they are on the verge of starting their operations," he said, adding that 91 SEZs had started operations.

The business delegation, led by Assocham president, Mr Sajjan

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Jindal, included representatives from real estate firm Raheja Developers, SEZ developers Sri City, Maharashtra Airport Development Company, Assam Company, Oil Field Warehouse and Services, AEZ Infratech, SKIL Infrastructure, JVL Agro Industries and Bengal Integrated Auto Industrial Park.

They left Delhi last Sunday to meet Japanese officials and company representatives in Tokyo, Yokohama and Osaka.

Representatives of Japanese com-

panies like Toshiba Corp, Mitsubishi Corp, Mitsui and Co, Mizuho Corporate Bank, Nippon Signal Co, Shimizu Corp, Sumitomo Corp, besides small and medium enterprises interacted with the Indian delegation.

Various participants asked whether SEZs were specifically meant for large companies and multi-nationals, or small and medium firms could also buy units there.

Mr Singhal explained that SEZs were beneficial for SMEs as well since they get all hassle-free environment in these zones. In fact, for IT units, SEZs provide plug and play facilities so that these firms could start their operations immediately, he added.

In Osaka, Mr Isao Yokoi, advisor of Overseas Vocational Training Association, said out of India, Bangladesh and Australia, he found business environment most difficult in India. "My experience in these countries tell me this," Mr Yokoi, who had stayed in India for 17 years, said. The delegation also interacted with officials and company representatives in Yokohama to familiarise them with benefits of SEZs.

Mr Navin Raheja, managing director of Raheja Developers and co-chairman SEZ Council of Assocham, said SEZs provided hassle-free environment.