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INTEGRATED NATIONAL
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# DEFENCE 4RORATION SIGNIFICANT CORNERSTONE

India and Poland share similarities in their respective cultures, national heritages as well as strong democratic traditions. Ambassador of Poland, His Excellency Adam Burakowski, in an exclusive interview with DSA, sheds some more light on the historic relations with India and future growth prospects of both countries.

### **Defence and Security Alert:**

Ambassador, India and Poland share a unique humanitarian experience. Could you please explain to our readers that particular event in European wartime history that is both heartwarming and exemplary? His Excellency Adam Burakowski: Poland and India share many similarities – both our countries are bound by our respective cultures and national heritage, as well as the importance both place on upholding

Both our countries have also had to endure oppression and the horrors of war. I believe that these trying experiences have not only cemented our strong relationship, but have

our strong democratic traditions.

also led us to further strengthen the democratic values that underpin our nations.

One of the singular examples of this deep bond between our counties can be evidenced by the story of the Maharaja of Jamnagar, Jam Saheb Digvijay Singhji, and his heroic act in providing a refuge to over 1,000 Polish orphans in Jamnagar and Balachadi, in the present-day state of Gujarat during the course of the Second World War.

The tireless work of the Maharaja was supplemented by other notable luminaries, such as the Maharaja of Kolhapur, who also established a refugee camp for Polish children in Valivade-Kolhapur. The camp was established in 1942 and functioned



until 1948. The Royal Family of Kolhapur, descendants of Shivaji, also played a role in organising this camp, for which we are grateful.

The Maharaja took special care in instilling Poland's national identity in his wards. He intended the camp to not only serve as a settlement for these children, but as a home. In short order, he arranged for the construction of a Polish school, as well as a church with services in Polish at the camp.



To this day, the surviving Polish children remember the Maharaja fondly as 'Bapu'. In fact, the surviving children of the Polish settlement camps in Balachadi still carry the memory of the extraordinary generosity of the man they considered as a father.

This act of extraordinary compassion and kindness has served as a historic bond between our two nations.

# **DA**: Over the years how have the survivors benefited?

Ambassador Burakowski: The Polish children of the Maharaja and their descendants continue to commemorate the memory of the Maharaja to this day.

During last year's celebration of the 100th anniversary of Poland regaining its independence in 1918, I had the privilege of hosting the celebrations in Jamnagar and Balachadi, two of the places most-closely associated with the Polish children of the Maharaja.

I am pleased to say that some of the children of the Maharaja and their descendants also took part in these celebrations, and recalled their experiences during their time in India.

Several films and books have been made of their experiences. Additionally, an association of the surviving children of the Maharaja has also been formed to preserve the legacy of the Maharaja.

The kindness of the Maharaja has also not been forgotten by Poland. In 2011, the Maharaja was posthumously awarded one of Poland's highest decorations -Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland.

In 2016, 50 years after the Maharaja's death, Poland's Parliament unanimously adopted a special resolution honoring Jam Saheb Digvijay Singhji for his aid to Polish children refugees during WWII.

His memory continues to be cherished in Poland to this day. Today, one of the central squares in the capital, Warsaw, is named after the Maharaja – "Skwer Dobrego Maharadży" (Square of the Good Maharaja). A statue of him is placed prominently at its centre.

In addition, a school in central Warsaw is also named after the Maharaja - the Jamsaheb Digvijay Singhji School. I, myself, am a graduate of this school.

### **LA:** How would you describe the current state of Indo-Polish relations?

Ambassador Burakowski: The bilateral relationship between Poland and India has been growing from strength to strength. Bilateral trade and investment between our two countries has shown significant growth in recent years. In 2018, the total volume of trade between Poland and India stood at US \$3 billion.

Furthermore, Polish companies are significant investors in India. In fact, the Polish firm CAN-PACK S.A., a producer of aluminum and glass packaging for beverages, is one of the largest European investors in India.

Indeed, India is today the most significant destination for Polish foreign direct investments in Asia.

Moreover, more and more Polish companies are increasingly expressing their interest in entering the Indian marketplace. This is evidenced by the increasing participation of Polish companies in Indian exhibitions, business seminars, trade shows, etc.

On the other hand, significant Indian investments by companies such as UFLEX, have also entered the Polish market. Indeed, several large-scale Indian IT companies have established their offices in Poland, and use their presence there to act as a springboard for the wider Central and Eastern European marketplace.

Several agreements and Memorandums of Understanding between Poland and India and their respective regional State governments in the fields of agriculture, coal and mining have also been undertaken in recent years.

Bilateral cultural cooperation between Poland and India has also similarly witnessed tremendous growth in recent years. Several universities and academic institutions in Poland and India have already signed agreements to foster greater collaborations.

What is more, Poland has become an extremely attractive destination for Indian students. The number of Indian students studying in tertiary and higher education institutes in Poland has grown exponentially in recent years.

I believe strongly that these factors act as an indicator that the future bilateral relationship between Poland and India will become deeper and more meaningful still.

### **DA**: After the signing of the MOU on civil aviation nearly two years ago, what progress has been made?

Ambassador Burakowski: There

has been significant progress made in the sphere of civil aviation between Poland and India. Poland and India signed the Memorandum of Understanding in the field of civil aviation during the visit of the Secretary of State in the Ministry of Infrastructure of Poland, Mr. Mikołaj Wild, at the Global Aviation Summit in Mumbai in January of this year.

The Secretary also held bilateral talks with the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation, Shri Suresh Prabhu, on the sidelines of the summit.

I am also pleased to state that Poland's national airlines, LOT Polish Airways, has recently announced plans on



launching a new direct flight service linking Warsaw and New Delhi. The new connection, which begins in September 2019, will have five flights a week.

I am confident that this new direct connection between Poland and India will facilitate the growth of peopleto-people and business-to-business contacts in the future.

DSA: Were air flights and commerce affected by the closure of airspace by Pakistan after the Balakot strike by the Indian Air Force? How was the situation handled? Can such unilateral acts be prevented under international laws and conventions?

Ambassador Burakowski: Poland is aware of the issue regarding the closure of Pakistani airspace for international airline carriers, and has taken cognizance of this fact.

As has been reported in various press reports, the situation has had an impact on several major airlines operating routes between Northern America and Europe to destinations in South and Southeast Asia.

We hope that the situation will be resolved shortly, to the mutual satisfaction of all parties concerned.

## DA: Does it adversely impinge on possibilities of an eventual strategic partnership between India and Poland?

Ambassador Burakowski: The strategic partnership between Poland and India is broad-based, and is built on our mutual commonalities based on our political, economic and defence collaboration.

We believe that our long-term and steadfast strategic partnership with India is built on firm foundations, and is set to grow even closer in the coming years.

India upgrade the T-72 tank engine from 800 horsepower to 1000 horsepower. Will Poland share the technology with an Indian private sector defence oriented company to produce more powerful tank engines for military vehicles?

Ambassador Burakowski: Defence collaboration has always been a significant cornerstone of the bilateral relationship between Poland and India.

We remain open to discussions with our Indian counterparts about the potential for the export of our new military products, modernisation of existing equipment or technology transfers. Polish companies are aware of the requirements related to the 'Indianisation' of the military production for the needs of the Indian Army.

Polish defence sector companies are actively engaged in understanding the needs of India's defence sector and in providing tailor-made solutions to facilitate the continued development of this sector in India.

# PSA: In what other defence related areas can Poland and India collaborate in the future within the joint research and development framework? Ambassador Burakowski: The

Polish defence sector is one of the most advanced in the world, and is characterised by modern and state-of-the-art equipment and machinery. It is a leading pioneer across various new spectrums of the defence industry in the European Union.

Polish companies are open to the possibility of joint ventures and joint research projects across these fields, according to the capabilities of Polish defence sector companies and the needs of the requisite stakeholders in India.

We must now only explore the different avenues of cooperation and find the most advantageous ways to move forward.