

## Japanese firms keen on Tokyo-B'uru flight

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**Bengaluru:** A direct flight may connect Bengaluru with Tokyo, a top Japanese diplomat has hinted, stating that discussions are underway on several fronts, involving the Far East nation's two leading carriers — Japan Airlines (JAL) and All Nippon Airways (ANA) — one of which could potentially serve the said circuit.

Talking to DH on the sidelines of the Invest Japan Seminar here on Friday, Consul-General of Japan Takayuki Kitagawa said, "The Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Bengaluru is keen on linking Bengaluru to Tokyo by air, and has approached both JAL and ANA. Research and cost benefit analysis about the route are underway. The discussions at the moment are at the CEO level at both airlines, but in my personal opinion, I see it being realised."

Bengaluru is home to 478 Japanese companies, including auto major Toyota, and with the former being the IT capital of India, a direct flight to global tech hub Japan is opportune.

"If the projection is that more Japanese companies would be based in Bengaluru in the future, the profitability of course will increase, calling more for a direct flight," Kitagawa asserted.

The Consul-General said that he had spoken with the chairman of JAL (Masaru Onishi) about the direct flight. "As far as JAL's research is concerned, if the number of Japanese residents at a place is not more than 1,000, a direct flight doesn't make sense. But at the moment, there are 1,300 Japanese residents in Bengaluru, so the flight is worth considering," he informed.

Currently, there are limited direct flights between Japan and India, operated by JAL, ANA and Air India — between Mumbai and Delhi in India and Tokyo-Narita and Osaka in Japan.

Unlike destinations such as the US, Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, Japan sees fewer Indian travellers, who numbered 1,23,000 last year.

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