

Japan-UK Relations

Exchange

Ambassador Orita attends wreath laying ceremony at Sandhurst

18 May 04



L-R: Lt.Col. Emerson, Major General Ritchie, Ambassador Orita and Mr Hirakubo

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On May 17, a wreath-laying ceremony in memory of those who died in Myanmar (Burma) during the Second World War was held by the Burma Campaign Society at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. It was the first time a ceremony had been held in honour of the Indian Division. As an act of reconciliation, a wreath was laid together by Masao Hirakubo (Chairman of the Burma Campaign Society) for Japan, and Lt. Colonel Patric Emerson (Hon Sec Indian Army Association) for Britain.

Ambassador Masaki Orita attended the ceremony accompanied by Captain Norimasa Nakao (Defence Attaché). The Commandant Major General A.S. Ritchie CBE welcomed Ambassador Orita as the first Japanese Ambassador ever to visit the Academy. Also in attendance were over 100 veterans of the Burma Campaign, along with Sandhurst officer cadets, including those from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Kenya.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the battles of Kohima and Imphal, which took place between the Japanese and the British 14th Army. The event was held as a part of the continuing spirit of reconciliation and friendship between Japanese and British veterans. In his speech at the ceremony, Ambassador Orita said, "*the relationship between Japan and the UK has prospered greatly, and we have come to enjoy a friendship which few could have imagined before. We owe it to those who perished or underwent extreme hardship to ensure that their sacrifice will not have been in vain.*"



L-R: Major General Ritchie, Ambassador Orita, Lt.Col.Gray,
Mr Hirakubo and Brigadier Sharma (Indian Defense Attaché)

Speech made by Ambassador Orita

Major General Ritchie, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be here with you today at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, which occupies such a significant place in Britain's history, and to pay my greatest tribute to the Indian Divisions together with British and Japanese Second World War veterans and the members of the Burma Campaign Society in memory of those of all nationalities who sacrificed their lives in Burma during the Second World War.

Everyone knows the tremendous sacrifice and suffering wrought by the war. By the same token, our knowledge and recollections of the horrors of that conflict have helped keep us free from world war for more than half a century. In the post-war era, the relationship between Japan and the UK has prospered greatly, and we have come to enjoy a friendship which few could have imagined before. We owe it to those who perished or underwent extreme hardship to ensure that their sacrifice will not have been in vain.

This ceremony is another occasion that demonstrates how mutual understanding and solemn remembrance can bring former enemies together. The people of Japan and UK yearn for an enduring world peace and an ever-closer friendship between our two nations. I know that all of us here today are united in our determination to work to this end.

Thank you.
