

# Weekly Notes

## **A Jubilee of Civil Aviation**

THE youngest transport service in India is 25 years old this week. When on the morning of October 15, 1932, Shri J R D Tata, the first Indian to earn a Commercial 'A' Licence, flew a tiny de Havilland Puss Moth from Karachi to Bombay on the first lap of a journey to Madras, one could hardly have foreseen in the event the starting-point of the great roar of flight that fills our air today. Yet, Shri Tata had the vision to foresee it, and, what is more, the faith, courage and persistence to make his dream come true. The last quarter century has seen far-reaching developments in many a field of national life; but there has been nothing to outrival the progress in the field of civil air transport. From a curiosity and an object of suspicion and fear, the aeroplane has grown to be a part of the country's skyline and also of its pattern of life, almost as unreservedly accepted as the railway train and steamship. Indeed, life even in the remotest village would lose some of its meaning without the occasional flutter of a plane overhead.

If this change was not wrought overnight, neither was it achieved without considerable perplexity and strenuous endeavour in the face of seemingly insuperable difficulties. To begin with no passengers could be carried as the choice was between a human cargo or mail. And then when bigger planes came on the scene, they could carry only a few; and the economics of transport were anything but satisfactory. But the pioneering spirits persisted in their endeavour until the War came to deal another blow to the progress of civil aviation. With the end of hostilities, however, the prospects brightened up considerably; and within a decade, the Tata Airlines, which had so long been a department of the House of Tatas, came into its own as Air India Limited. The planes multiplied in number and became more capacious, powerful and also comfortable, while the urge of the people to prefer air travel to other modes of transport grew in intensity. With this expansion of service in the country, the stage was appropriately set for the launching of Air-India Inter-

national for adventure abroad. Even after the Government took over the country's airlines It wisely decided to have Shri Tata guide the destinies of the International wing. And there is no doubt that our airlines are doing extremely well. From the puny Puss Moth to the giant Super B-Constellation of today or the Boeing 707 to come may be a far cry; but the spirit of enterprise and pioneering zeal behind them are the same.

## **Japan and Asia**

ONLY those who expected full and complete accord between India and Japan, as a result of Pandit Nehru's visit to the latter country, will be disappointed at the communique issued by the two Prime Ministers. There is no basic issue in dispute between the two countries. It was, therefore, not difficult for the Prime Ministers to reach accord on issues in general. More than the communique, Pandit Nehru's statements disclose Japan's eager desire to establish closer contacts with south-east Asian countries. Much has happened during and since the war to estrange relations between Japan and her Asian neighbours. Japan may be committed to alliance with America. That may explain why Japan does not recognise Peking, but has diplomatic relations with Taipeh. But ever since Bandung, it has been evident that, Japan has been consciously trying to win friends in Asta.

If Japan is eager to revive friendly contacts with Asian countries through common issues like banning or nuclear tests and weapons and disarmament, Tokyo hopes that these relations will become closer through increased economic collaboration. Though not as spectacular as of West Germany, Japan's economic recovery since the war has been phenomenal. Pandit Nehru is not alone among visitors to Japan to express appreciation of war-ravaged Japan's rapid economic recovery. That economic relations between Japan and other Asian countries can, and should expand to the mutual advantage of all the countries concerned, will not be denied. But Japan's wrong psychological approach to this problem has retarded progress in this

direction. This is not the first time since the war that Japan has mooted the plan for an Asian Development Fund. Nor is it for the first time that some such offer by Japan has revived pre-war memories of Japan's Co-prosperity Sphere. Pandit Nehru has now advanced another argument against an Asian Development Fund. Some such plan will have to include countries all of which are not committed to Panch Shila. Some of these countries are members of military pacts and alliances. This political antipathy among the countries concerned is a bar to a common plan for economic development.

That does not mean that bilateral economic agreements cannot be concluded. Negotiations for such an agreement between India and Japan will continue. Disappointment has been expressed over the economic aspects of the joint communique issued by the Prime Ministers of India and Japan. A closer examination suggests that Pandit Nehru's visit has not been unfruitful in this respect. Mr Kishi's offer to establish technical training centres in India for the purpose of helping the development of medium and small scale Industries in this country has been welcomed by Pandit Nehru. It is to be hoped that, as a result of further discussions at governmental levels, the proposal will soon be implemented. Equally encouraging is Mr Kishi's sympathetic attitude to the Second Plan. As a sequel to talks between the two Prime Ministers, It is expected that a plan for yen credits to finance the supply of capital goods from Japan in exchange for exports of Indian ore to that country will materialise. On both political and economic fronts, a good beginning has been made. Pandit Nehru's visit to Japan has not been unfruitful.

## **Fall in Rate of Decline**

WITHDRAWALS from the foreign balance of the Reserve Bank of India during the first 18 months of the Second Five Year Plan, which are shown below, broadly indicate the rate at which foreign exchange has been spent so far.

The depletion of foreign exchange reserves since the very beginning of the Plan 1 e from April 1956 on-