

**May 16, 1956**

**Bhabha and Jawaharlal Nehru Correspondence on  
Indian Nuclear History**

**Citation:**

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**Summary:**

A series of letters between Dr. Bhabha and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru covering a wide range of subjects, including the appropriate venues to voice opinions, the status of the Colaba site, meeting with the Pakistan Association for the Advancement of Science, and issues with coordination between the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Education on scientific research and education. Also includes a copy of a letter from The Tokyo Shimbun requesting Dr. Bhabha's presence at a forum discussing the justifiability of American hydrogen bomb tests in the Pacific.

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No. 1162-PMH/56

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New Delhi,  
May 16, 1956.

My dear Homi,

Your letter of May 12th, enclosing two letters from the Tokyo Shimbun.

I do not think it will be proper for you to write to the newspapers on this subject. If I had been asked to write, I would have refused. If I have to express an opinion, I do so in Parliament or at any other suitable place. You, as a scientist, can express your opinion from the scientific point of view on suitable occasions. But, to do so in a newspaper would not, I think, be appropriate.

*marsh  
island*

I have not the papers with me at present about what happened in the Trusteeship Council of the U.N. So far as I remember, a representation from the inhabitants of some island in the Pacific came up for consideration. These islanders said that they were very apprehensive of the consequences of the hydrogen bomb explosions in those areas and, therefore, requested they should not take place. In the alternative, they said that adequate precautions should be taken to protect them.

It was not our intention to press for a division or for voting but the Americans, I think, insisted on a vote, knowing that they had a majority. They got their resolution through, approving of the experimental explosions. India voted against it.

You might send a reply to the Tokyo Shimbun stating that, as a scientist, you would prefer not to engage in newspaper controversies even on this important subject. So far as the Government of India are concerned, their definite policy, frequently declared, has been against these experimental explosions.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. H. J. Bhabha,  
Secretary,  
Department of Atomic Energy.

COPY

THE TOKYO SHIMBUN

Telephones: (59) 3101-9  
7101-5Head Office  
10, 2-Chome Nishisaiwaicho  
Chiyodaku, TokyoCABLE ADDRESS  
"Tokyoshimbun Tokyo"

TOKYO,

Tokyo, Japan  
April 27, 1956

Dear Dr H.J.Bhabha:

In following up our letter of April 11, 1956, we humbly take the liberty to write again to you and ask your special consideration for our forum of world's dignitaries on the justifiability of the American hydrogen bomb test in the Pacific.

As the test of the bomb, which was originally scheduled to take place May first was postponed to May eighth, 1956, we once more dutifully beg your assistance for our project of a world-wide survey of opinions regarding this controversial issue.

We are firmly convinced that if you would avail yourself of our forum, your opinion, whether it be for or against the coming atomic test, through our nation wide presentation, will be cherished in the memory of the Japanese people for long time to come, which undoubtedly contributes to a better understanding between our beloved nations.

In closing this letter I am happy to add that we are prepared to compensate your contribution in any form, in currency, goods or services you may desire.

Yours most respectfully,

ed: Yuichiro Isobe,  
Assistant Managing Editor,  
and Foreign Editor,  
The Tokyo Shimbun

copied:ser:12.5.56

Ref:DIR/Per-PJN/ 356

May 12, 1956

My dear Bhai,

I enclose herewith copies of two letters, the second of which has just reached me. This is clearly not a matter in which I can express a personal opinion. If any opinion is to be expressed at all, it should be in conformity with our official position.

Reference is made in the first paragraph to the position taken by India in the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. I do not know what transpired there. Perhaps the simplest thing might be for me to recall the stand officially taken by India on this subject. Will you please let me <sup>have</sup> ~~know~~ your instructions.

Yours ever,

H B

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Government of India,  
NEW DELHI

HJB:aer:12.5.56

27/1/54

Ref: DIR/Per-PJM/1644

2 April 1954

*My dear Bhai,*

Professor Carl L. Siegel will spend four months at the Institute from 1 November this year as a Visiting Professor. Professor Siegel is among the two or three best distinguished mathematicians in the world. I am writing to suggest that the Indian Science Congress invite him as a distinguished foreign scientist to attend its next session, and arrange for visits by him to other centres in the country at the same time as the visits of its other distinguished foreign scientists. The Indian Science Congress will be able to avail itself of Professor Siegel's presence in India at a relatively small expense, since the Institute will pay him an honorarium to cover the expenses of his stay in India. The expenses of his visits to other places in India will naturally have to be borne by the Science Congress. His programme to other places should be arranged in consultation with the Institute, since he will be on our staff as a Visiting Professor during the four months of his stay here. He could leave the Institute soon after the 20th of December for visiting other places, and should be back again by the 15th of January,

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when the next term starts.

As regards his travel to India and back from Zurich, I would suggest that it is a fair proposal that the Science Congress should bear half if the Institute bears the other half, since the Congress will be benefitting from Professor Sierel's visit to India, most of the expenses of which are borne by the Institute.

If you agree with this proposal, will you please pass it on to the Committee for inviting foreign scientists to the Indian Science Congress with your recommendation?

I am looking forward to meeting you again at Shimnagar.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Government of India,  
NEW DELHI

Copy to: Professor K. Chandrasekharan

HJBaer

Ref: DIR/1/7/144

11 January 1954

*My dear Shri,*

Now that the frantic rush which preceded and accompanied the function on the 1st of January is over, I would like to thank you once more for having agreed to lay the foundation stone of the Institute. Apart from making it possible for us to start building operations this month, which would otherwise have been impossible, your agreeing to take part in the function has been a source of great encouragement to the staff of the Institute, and I am sure will bring forth from them even greater efforts than in the past. Often, when I have left the Institute at 8 in the evening, I have seen junior members of the staff reading in the library or working at their apparatus. The entrance register shows that many theoretical workers come in after dinner to work till midnight, while experimental workers have on occasion worked through the night, when their experiments demanded it. It is our aim to maintain and to increase this tempo and enthusiasm.

I cannot sufficiently express to you - and here I speak for the Council and the entire staff of the Institute - our appreciation and gratitude for your interest and support, which have made it possible for us to do what we could to add to the progress of science in India.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Government of India,  
NEW DELHI

*Yours ever**Homi Bhabha*

HJBaer

Copy to: File DIR/Per-PJN ✓

Ref: DIR/Per-PJN/1075

December 19, 1953.

*By line above*

This refers to your letter to me of December 9 and is in continuation of my letter of December 11. I enclose herewith a copy of a letter I have just received from Brigadier K. C. Varma, Commanding the Bombay Sub-Area. I would like to draw your attention to paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 7 of that letter. It seems now that alternative accommodation is being offered to the P & T Department at Kurla by the Military, which would enable the Defence Ministry to move out the remaining MES families from our Colaba site. I believe the P & T Department maintain that the quarters belonging to the Defence Ministry which they now occupy are not fit for occupation by Defence Ministry personnel. Evidently the Defence Ministry does not think so and is prepared to move its personnel there.

As stated in the first two paragraphs of Brigadier Varma's letter the portion of the site we needed immediately for the laying of the foundation stone and for the commencement of our building operations early in January has been released to us. Some days ago I sent a note to you through Bhatnagar regarding the calling of tenders for the new buildings. In anticipation



of your approval I have asked the local architects, Messrs Master, Sathe and Bhuta, to proceed with this matter, as they informed me that unless action was taken immediately it would not be possible to commence building operations before the middle of January. Will you please send the note back to me with your approval?

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Government of India,  
NEW DELHI

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HJBaer

Ref: DIF/Per-RJN/10-7

December 11, 1953.

Thank you for your letter of December 9. The Defence Ministry had certainly decided to release part of the site which is needed for the function and the commencement of building operations. They had not yet committed themselves to releasing the entire site by a specified date, but I gather from your letter that this decision has also been taken and that they hope to do so by the 15th of December. But for your intervention this matter may easily have dragged on for yet another year, and I cannot adequately express my appreciation of your interest in this Institute.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Government of India,  
NEW DELHI

HJBaer

Copy to: File I/7



18 (2/2)

New Delhi,  
December 9, 1953.

My dear Homi,

I gather that the Defence Ministry have at last decided to release the Colaba site for you. They propose to do so by the 15th December.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Homi Bhabha,  
Tata Institute of Fundamental Research,  
Old Yacht Club,  
Apollo Pier,  
Bombay, 1.

Ref: DIP/Per-PJN/84

January 29, 1953.

*My dear Mr. Jinnah,*

I enclose herewith a copy of a letter, which I have received from the General Secretary of the Pakistan Association for the Advancement of Science inviting me to attend the next Science Conference at Lahore from the 16th to the 21st February this year. I cannot afford to be away for a whole week at this time, but I do think it would be good to accept the invitation for the first two days. We have invited Pakistani scientists to the Indian Science Congress, and this year's Pakistani delegate, -namely Professor Abdus Salam, Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge, who spent a fortnight at this Institute before the Congress, attended the sessions at Lucknow. It will also give me an opportunity to see how science is developing in Pakistan and report to you on it. I would like to know whether you are in favour of my going.

The Hon'ble Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Ministry of External Affairs,  
NEW DELHI

HJBaer

Ref:

February 28, 1952.

I am writing to remind you of certain general proposals regarding the administration of higher scientific and technical education and research which I believe have met with your general approval in the past, but which have not been put into effect for various reasons. The present juncture after the elections may perhaps be a suitable moment for putting them into effect.

The separation of advanced scientific and technical teaching from research is not desirable. The reasons for this have been elaborated at somewhat greater length in the attached sheet which is an extract from a Note I submitted to the Planning Commission in September, 1950. Far closer cooperation could be established between the scientific departments of the universities and the national laboratories if the two were dealt with by the same Ministry. It is desirable that higher scientific education, meaning thereby scientific education at the university stage, should be dealt with by the same Ministry as deals with scientific research, whereas the pre-University scientific education could be dealt with by the Ministry of Education as at present. This would be a far more natural and logical division

10/2/21

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of functions between the two Ministries than the present one. In any case, the fact that the national laboratories, which are the best equipped and most up to date scientific laboratories in India, are under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Scientific Research while a number of other scientific institutions doing advanced teaching and research such as the Indian Institute of Science at Bangalore are under the Ministry of Education is the cause of a considerable lack of coordination, unnecessary duplication, and waste. There seems no doubt that the natural place for the institutes of higher technology and science like the Indian Institute of Science is under the Ministry which deals with scientific research.

Yours sincerely,

The Hon'ble Jawaharlal Nehru,  
Prime Minister,  
Ministry of External Affairs,  
NEW DELHI.

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2.3                      Research should be an integral part of a university's activity, and the number of staff in any subject should be such as to allow any member of the staff to devote at least half his time to research if he so desires. In general, only those who have contributed to the advance of a subject have a deep enough insight into it to impart a sound knowledge of it to their students. Similarly, teaching, provided it does not take up the major part of a scientific worker's time, has a good effect on his research work in suggesting new approaches to the subject and often in suggesting new ideas. Thus, each of the research institutes which have already been established in India should cooperate closely with a university in their neighbourhood in its teaching activities. Only thus will some of our best scientists, who are at present locked up in research institutes, be able to give off their best to the country, not only by doing their own research but by helping to teach the future generations in the universities. The beneficial effect on universities by such close cooperation will be very far-reaching, for if students have received courses of lectures from those who are leaders in their subject then they will immediately have a standard by which to measure the quality of the lectures given by others, and this in its turn will have the effect of compelling the other teachers in the universities to improve the quality of their teaching.

2.4                      The separation of scientific teaching from research is not healthy and it should be considered whether it would not be better to have a department or ministry of scientific education and research which would be responsible for all the scientific education of the country

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at the university stage. Scientific education up to and including the secondary school stage could then be left as at present with the Ministry of Education.

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