

Korea/Japan: S. Korea court orders Mitsubishi Heavy to compensate for forced labor

Sunday 18 August 2013, by [Kyodo News](#) (Date first published: 30 July 2013).

SEOUL — The Busan High Court ordered Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd. on Tuesday to pay 80 million won (about \7 million) each in compensation to the families of five deceased Koreans who were forced to work for the company during Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

It was the second decision by a South Korean court in three weeks ordering private Japanese companies to pay compensation to South Koreans for conscript labor during World War II. On July 10, the Seoul High Court ordered Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp. to pay 400 million won to four Koreans who were conscripted to work for Japan Iron & Steel Co.

Japan Iron & Steel was later renamed Nippon Steel Corp., a predecessor company to Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal.

In a statement released in Japan, Mitsubishi called the Busan appellate court's ruling "unjust," saying the rights of South Koreans to seek compensation for conscript labor have been settled through formal agreements between the Japanese and South Korean governments.

The company said it will file an appeal with the South Korean Supreme Court.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga reiterated on Tuesday that the wartime compensation issue was already resolved with a 1965 treaty that normalized diplomatic ties between South Korea and Japan.

In a landmark decision in May 2012 that reversed previous lower court decisions, the South Korean Supreme Court ruled that the right of former forced workers and their families to seek withheld wages and compensation was not invalidated by the 1965 treaty.

The Supreme Court ordered the retrials of two cases involving Koreans forcibly taken to Japan to work in Japanese factories.

The five Koreans involved in the Busan trial claim they were conscripted in 1944 and 1945 to work in Hiroshima at a Mitsubishi machine-making factory and a Mitsubishi shipyard.

They took their case to the Busan District Court in 2000. The lawsuits were taken over by their families after they died.

Kyodo News, July 30, 2013

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<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/07/30/national/s-korea-court-orders-mitsubishi-heavy-to-compensate-for-forced-labor/#.UgrLldgSrc>