

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE INDIAN COMMUNITY RECEPTION**

Tokyo, October 22, 2019

1. I am delighted to meet you. I thank you for your warm welcome. I bring with me the greetings from your family and friends in India.

2. I am visiting Japan for the Enthronement Ceremony of the new Emperor. I attended the Royal Ceremony today and conveyed to the Emperor, the good wishes of the people of India and of the Indian community in Japan. The Japanese Royal family maintains close ties with India. They deeply value our friendship. As a nation, we have also done our best to preserve this warmth and close bond. In 1990, when Emperor Akihito was coronated, my predecessor President R. Venkataram had represented India at the ceremony.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. India's external engagement has seen a sea change in the last few years. In this approach, we have brought the Diaspora to the center of our action and engagement. In my own travels overseas, I have made it a priority to meet with our brothers and sisters abroad. This has been a very special experience for me and I am truly delighted that I have had the opportunity to do so.

4. On this trip, before coming to Japan, I paid a State Visit to the Philippines. Apart from my official meetings, I had the opportunity to meet with the Indian Community and to unveil a bust of Mahatma Gandhi. This year, as you know, we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi the world over. You also remembered his life and sacrifice here in Japan. This year is also special for us, as we are commemorating the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak

Devji. On the occasion, I convey my wishes to all of you, in particular to our Sikh sisters and brothers.

5. Our community in Japan is fairly large and spread all over the country. Your hard work and success have brought laurels to you and praise for India. Some of you have been here for decades, while others have arrived recently. The more important aspect, however, is that you are together as a community, well-knit and well-meaning. I am happy that living away from home, you have maintained your culture and your family values. I understand you have formed a number of cultural associations and organizations. This has allowed you to celebrate your festivals and traditions, and for your children to learn their native languages and deepen connect with India.
6. I am told that Japanese are warm people but even warmer friends. Your social and cultural intermingling with them would have been seamless, for we have had centuries of dialogue and conversation with them. It is not surprising that your Japanese friends are reminded of Omikoshi when you celebrate Rathayatra and of their Odori festivals when you perform Garba.
7. Our cultural relations with Japan are, indeed, deep and historic. We share spiritual and religious connections, from Buddhism to Hinduism and more. The connections are so vivid, so deep, that it would be a miss if I did not recall the visit of monk Bodhisena to the temple in Nara in 752 AD that nourished the roots of Buddhism in this pious land. To deepen these ties, I planted a bodhi sapling at the Tsukiji Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in Tokyo yesterday. I also met with a delegation from the Gotemba Peace Pagoda. This organization founded by the famous Fuji Guruji built the World Peace Stupa in Rajgir in the Gandhi Centenary year - 1969. As Governor of Bihar, I often visited the Stupa in Rajgir to seek Lord Buddha's blessings. On 25th October, few days from now, I would be visiting Rajgir yet again to participate in the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Stupa.

8. Along with religion and spirituality came the influence of Indian art and language to Japan. India-Japan intellectual engagement has continued ever since. Rabindranath Tagore visited Japan several times. Swami Vivekananda and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose strengthened our mutual understanding further. Needless to say, Indian studies in Japan and Japanese scholarship in India are much sought after. In 2017, I was happy to confer upon Professor Hiroshi Marui, our Distinguished Indologist Award.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Our bilateral ties with Japan today is counted amongst our foremost relations. Our strategic, political, security and economic collaboration has assumed a new high. Japan is a lead partner for us in transforming our economy. Their participation in the High Speed Rail project from Mumbai to Ahmedabad is a symbol of our deep mutual trust and friendship. To deepen our technology collaboration, we have established the India-Japan Digital Partnership. This would help in better appreciation and understanding of your high digital skills and strengths, especially at a time when the two countries are helping each other to discover and drive the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
10. India and Japan are old civilizations. We both have deep understanding of ancient science and tradition. I applaud the efforts of various organizations who are promoting Ayurveda and Yoga for healthy living in this country. You as a community have played an important role in this endeavour. You have also been celebrating the International Day of Yoga each year with zest and enthusiasm. We continue to count on you to promote India's knowledge and heritage.
11. I am happy that among your several bonds with the Japanese people, you have also added sports. Cricket has

now reached the playgrounds in Tokyo. The story of Kabaddi is also encouraging. I understand that this popular Indian sports is played in several schools and colleges here. Even more fascinating, and much to our delight, we now have Japanese players playing in the Indian Kabaddi League. I hope just as you have taught your Japanese friends how to play Kabaddi and Cricket, you must also try your hand at Sumo, or am I suggesting too much!

12. More than 125 years ago, Swami Vivekananda visited Japan on his way to Chicago. He had then expressed that Indian youth should visit this proud country and share and learn from it. His prophetic words are guiding us to expand our partnerships involving Indian and Japanese institutions and youth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. India is on a transformational path. Our economy is growing at a fast rate. We are creating new infrastructure apace. We are making efforts to lead the world on digital economy, on new technologies, on climate change action and on fashioning the contours of the knowledge society. India offers immense opportunities for you to participate in our progress and prosperity. We seek your support and commitment to create an India of our vision and dream, an India that promises to light millions of homes with progress and prosperity; an India that cares for one and for all.
14. On our side, we remain deeply committed to meet your needs and to connect with you stronger. We must talk to each other regularly for us to better serve you. In this regard, I am happy that we have begun the Pravasi Bharatiya Panel Discussion to develop ideas and to collaborate with you. We have also rolled out several Diaspora programmes for you. We have streamlined and simplified our OCI card procedures and consular services. There is a sea-change in our working culture as far as public service delivery is concerned. Our Embassies today are mandated to be available to you round

the clock and to help you and support you when in need. This efficiency is as much reflected in our domestic arena. As a result, there is new confidence and a new energy in our country. I invite you to join us in our promising journey.

Ladies and gentlemen,

15. It has been a pleasure meeting you. I wish you success, health and happiness. I also convey my warm Diwali greetings to you in advance. And before I say good bye, I warmly invite you to visit Rashtrapati Bhavan when you are in Delhi next. Yes, it is my official residence, but it belongs to all Indians. We look forward to welcome you.

Thank You!