

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF LAUNCHING OF SPIRITUAL CENTRE
PROJECT AT THE SAI-NO-SATO**

Sai-no-Sato, October 23, 2019

1. I thank you for your very warm, special and traditional welcome. The spiritual chants sung to greet me were truly uplifting. I am happy to be here amongst you on this auspicious occasion of the launching ceremony of the Spiritual Centre project.
2. This is my first visit to Japan. I attended the Enthronement Ceremony of the new Emperor yesterday. I also had the opportunity to plant a Bodhi sapling at the Tsukiji Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in Tokyo and pay my respects at the Meiji Shinto shrine in the capital city. Today's event has added even deeper meaning to my programme in Japan, a country with which India has had religious, cultural and spiritual exchange and engagement for over a millennium. As a tribute to our eclectic bond, I would like to gift a sapling of the Bodhi Tree to this spiritual Centre. The sapling is presently at the Indian Embassy in Tokyo and will be sent to you tomorrow. May we all prosper in its divine blessing!
3. I am impressed by the conceptual thought and layout of this project. I understand that the Centre would be a true representative of all faiths including Buddhism, which is a key civilizational link between India and Japan. This Spiritual Centre captures the essence of universalism and celebrates the confluence of cultures and peoples, in one and many ways. In that sense, it truly encapsulates the entire humanity.
4. In today's world, where we are searching for inner peace and happiness, looking to bring communities and cultures together, such places provide us the right answers. We need not just one but many more such fonts of peaceful existence, where women and men can contemplate about self and society, individual and community and eliminate the distance between "us and them". Let

us work to create that society, a society where we stand by each other, share and care for each other.

5. The new areas of cooperation between our two countries such as Yoga and Ayurveda would also be represented at the Centre. I am hopeful that you would further enrich holistic living in this blissful surrounding. This place would also provide a platform for celebrating our shared cultural heritage.
6. As you work to promote global peace and harmony, to deepen people-to-people relations between Japan and India, and to make the world a happier place, you will have my wishes and those of my people to support you in your noble path.
7. I wish this spiritual journey every success.

Arigatou Gozaimashita Thank you!