

**Congratulatory Remarks by Prime Minister SUGA**  
**on the Inauguration of**  
**Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Center**

Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Namaskar,

On behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations on the inauguration of Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Center.

The city of Varanasi is the center of India's long history and rich culture. The city has a close relationship with Japan and has continued cultural and academic exchanges with Kyoto, an ancient capital of Japan that Prime Minister Modi visited. The exchange between Banaras Hindu University and Kyoto University is one such example.

I am very pleased to see that the International Cooperation and Convention Center was built in such a special city, as a symbol of friendship between Japan and India through Japan's grant aid.

The Convention Center, with the highest pitch of perfection in every detail, was designed and constructed by Japanese companies and shows what Japanese technology can achieve. Prime Minister Modi himself named this center Rudraksh with a hope to make it a symbol of wisdom.

I hope that this center will be used as a stage to showcase close Japan-India cooperation through hosting international conferences and cultural and art events, and become a new symbol of friendship between Japan and India.

Japan and India share fundamental values such as freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and strategic interests. Both countries have maintained cordial relations throughout the long history of exchanges.

It is true that the COVID-19 pandemic has made our mutual visits difficult at this moment. Japan and India, however, will work hand-in-hand to overcome this challenge, and make utmost efforts to further develop our bilateral ties under the

“Special Strategic and Global Partnership,” through cooperation in such areas as green society, digital, cyber, healthcare and enhancing connectivity.

I too am looking forward to the day when I can visit India at an appropriate timing so as to further strengthen the Japan-India relations together with Prime Minister Modi.

In closing, I would like to express my sincere wishes for this Convention Center contributing to further deepening of the friendship between our two countries.

Dhanyawad.

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