

## **Foundation Laying Ceremony of Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Centre**

*For Immediate Press Release*

Varanasi, 14 July, 2018 - The foundation laying ceremony of Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Centre, being developed with Japan's support, was held today in Raja Talab, suburban of Varanasi. The ceremony enjoyed the eminent presence of the Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Narendra Modi among other dignitaries representing the Indian side as well as Mr. Hideki Asari, Charge d'Affaires ad interim, on behalf of the Government of Japan.

Varanasi International Cooperation and Convention Centre is constructed by Japanese Grant Aid (JPY 30.6 billion, INR 186 crore, in total), at Varanasi City in the state of Uttar Pradesh in northern India.

"The Japanese Prime Minister, my dearest friend Mr. Shinzo Abe came to Varanasi and donated to Varanasi as well to India, this Convention Center. The people of Varanasi and India are highly grateful. VCC will promote cultural heritage as well as tourism of Varanasi and India." "Whenever I meet with Abe san or any Indian meets with Abe san, the Japanese PM always appreciates hospitality of Varanasi and Indian which was extended to him during his visit to Varanasi 2 years ago. The whole Japan welcomed our hospitality." Prime Minister Modi, in his remarks, acknowledged gratitude for Japan and reiterated the importance of the friendly relationship between Japan and India

In India, the share of the tourism industry in GDP is relatively low, in comparison with other countries in the Asia-Pacific region. However, this industry is a high-potential industry in India for driving the economic growth in the future. Especially, Varanasi city, located on the banks of the Ganga River, is one of the oldest cities in the world with around 3,000-year history and special significance for Hinduism and Jainism. Therefore, this city is considered as the hub of culture and history in India. However, there is no major facility currently available to propagate and preserve the great culture and history of the city

It is expected that around 50 thousands people will visit this centre at Varanasi city annually. After its completion, the centre will also help to promote people-to-people and cultural interaction at home and abroad, and contribute to strengthening the industrial competitiveness of the tourism industry in India.