



President of India in Maharashtra Today; Graces Function in Mumbai to Declare 'Urban Maharashtra Open Defecation Free', Inaugurates Shirdi Airport & Centenary Year Celebrations of Samadhi of Sai Baba

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The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, graced and addressed a function organised to declare urban Maharashtra Open Defecation Free (ODF) today (October 1, 2017) in Mumbai.

on the occasion, the President said that a healthy and prosperous India will be built only on the foundations of a clean India. He congratulated the Government and Chief Minister of Maharashtra on the historic occasion of urban Maharashtra being declared Open Defecation Free. He congratulated all the members of the "Swachh Maharashtra Team" and those who worked hard on the ground to achieve this goal and had kept to the commitment of a two-year deadline, set on October 2, 2015. He stated that such success is possible only with the cooperation and participation of all stakeholders.

The President said that the declaration of 'ODF' Urban Maharashtra is particularly relevant for the state as 49 per cent of Maharashtra's people live in urban areas. 'Smart Cities', he said, also require 'Smart Sanitation' and 'Smart Waste Management'. The President added that it was a matter of great satisfaction that the Government is focusing on sustainability of this successful campaign. The 'OD Watch' monitoring will be useful in alerting people and helping them quit old habits and not relapsing to open defecation. He hoped that just as the state has been successful in realising the goal of 'ODF', it would also realise the goal of 'Managing 100 per cent Waste'. The President said that tomorrow is Gandhi Jayanti and Maharashtra has paid a befitting tribute to Gandhiji by declaring urban Maharashtra Open Defecation Free today.

Earlier in the day, the President inaugurated the Shirdi International Airport, flagged-off the inaugural flight from Shirdi to Mumbai and also inaugurated the centenary year celebrations of the Samadhi of Shri Sai Baba in Shirdi.

Speaking in Shirdi, the President said that in our country, Sai Baba attracts people from every caste, religion, sect and class. Using simple phrases such as '*Sabka Malik Ek Hai*', Sai Baba explained the philosophy of '*Advaita*' to the common man. The influence of Sai Baba can be seen all over the world.

The President added that along with 'spiritual connectivity', the country also needed 'physical connectivity' through large infrastructure projects. He commended the building of the airport as a measure that would help pilgrims and visitors as well as trigger economic activity and job creation in Shirdi. He hoped that people in large numbers would use the Shirdi International Airport inaugurated today.

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