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President, Venkaiah lay stress on unity

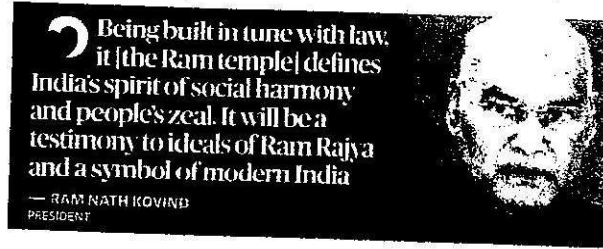
Om Birla calls for support of people of all religions and classes for temple

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Ram temple in Ayodhya defines India's spirit of social harmony and people's zeal, President Ram Nath Kovind said on Wednesday.

"Felicitations to all for the foundation laying of Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Being built in tune with law, it defines India's spirit of social harmony and people's zeal. It will be a testimony to ideals of Ram Rajya and a symbol of modern India," President Kovind tweeted.

Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu said the construction of the temple was much more than a religious affair and the structure would stand as a tribute to the best of timeless human values. Lord Ram's conduct and values constitute the core of the consciousness of India, cutting across all kinds



of divisions and barriers, and they are still relevant today, he tweeted.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla expressed hope that the temple construction will lead to unity and harmony. "It is a matter of great pleasure that the construction of the temple will be achieved with the support of people of all religions and classes," Mr. Birla said in a statement.

Home Minister Amit Shah, who is in hospital after testing positive for COVID-19, called the event "historic". In a series of tweets, he asserted that temple construction is now a reality because

of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "strong and decisive leadership".

'Historic day'

"Today is a historic and proud day for India. The consecration of the grand Ram temple by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Lord Ram's birthplace has written a golden chapter in the history of the great Indian culture and civilisation and heralded the beginning of a new era," he said. "The construction of the grand Ram temple demonstrates the strong and decisive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. My

heartiest congratulations to all Indians on this unforgettable day. The Modi government will always remain committed to the preservation of Indian culture and its values."

BJP president J.P. Nadda complimented the citizens for accepting the Supreme Court verdict. "After a long struggle of 500 years, the Supreme Court paved the way for the construction of the temple and it is a matter of pride that all sections of society happily accepted this decision. The entire country set a unique example by following the ideals of Lord Ram," Mr. Nadda said.

Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who had once represented the deity in court as a lawyer, tweeted: "The grand Ram temple is also the temple of the country. It is also a celebration of India's pride, self respect and our spiritual inheritance."