

Indian President Welcomes SGI Leader
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Gandhi's spirit lives on in Mr. Narayanan, who is dedicated to the common people, SGI leader says.

A friendly, relaxed atmosphere characterized SGI President Ikeda's meeting with President Kocheril Raman Narayanan of the Republic of India in his presidential office. Mr. Ikeda congratulated Mr. Narayanan on his inauguration as India's president in July. Smiling broadly, the head of state said he was delighted to see Mr. Ikeda again.

In fact the friendship between the two men dates back 18 years, to 1979. Mr. Ikeda then visited New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, where President Narayanan was vice chancellor. When President Narayanan invited the SGI leader to be "professor for a day," Mr. Ikeda declined, saying he preferred the role of a visiting student. They reunited later in Japan after Mr. Narayanan became India's vice president.

Mr. Narayanan said today that Mr. Ikeda was not a student but a professor — a teacher of the entire world. In turn, the SGI leader said that India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's "discovery" of Mr. Narayanan was surely one of his greatest legacies to India.

The SGI leader added he was particularly impressed by the Indian leader's presidential inauguration speech, in which he said: "Gandhi used to say that 'true democracy is what promotes the welfare of the people.' We have, therefore, an obligation to direct all our efforts to the task of abolishing poverty, ignorance and disease from among our people." Gandhi lives on in Mr. Narayanan, who has inherited the Mahatma's wish to "wipe every tear from every eye," President Ikeda said.

On the subject of education, Mr. Ikeda stressed that young people remain the key to a country's future. He thus applauded President Narayanan's efforts to provide youth "new opportunities, new hopes and new challenges." Mr. Ikeda noted that despots see youth as a means, using them as pawns for their ambitions, but that true leaders devote their energies to raising youth.

Touching on Mr. Narayanan's illustrious diplomatic career, Mr. Ikeda said he had heard that Mr. Narayanan had enjoyed an amicable relationship with President Ho Chi Minh (1890–69) of North Vietnam during Mr. Narayanan's time in that country.

President Narayanan said that he had met with Ho Chi Minh many times and described him as a person of great integrity and strong will, with a wide range of intellectual and philosophical interests.

President Narayanan concluded that he is forever finding his encounters with the SGI president most enjoyable and enlightening, adding that there are many leading intellectuals he wants to introduce to the SGI leader.

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