

A divided Japan over Shinzo Abe's goodbye

Tokyo, September 27: Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who was assassinated on 8 July was finally laid to rest in Tokyo on Tuesday. Abe's state funeral came a week after the global leaders attended the funeral of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in London. The funeral saw about 700 guests from 217 different countries including prominent leaders like US vice president Kamala Harris, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau among others.

Compared to the Queen's £8 million or 1.3 billion yen state funeral cost, the assassinated leader's funeral cost was reported to be around 1.66 billion yen. This fact has largely divided the Japanese general public who believe it to be too extravagant. According to a Kyodo news agency poll, 70% of the people said it was too expensive.



A portrait of former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe hangs over the stage at his state funeral in Nippon Budokan Hall, Tokyo. Source: Takashi Aoyama/Pool/AFP via Getty Images

Besides, in Japan state funerals do not happen too often. Only one leader had been accorded this honour before in 1967; it was Shigeru Yoshida who had ended the US occupation of Japan by signing the San Francisco Treaty, and restored ties with the allies.

The three-day event started with a 19-volley salute, lined with 1000 Japanese troops around the venue. Termed 'funeral diplomacy', the estimated cost of hosting dignitaries as per reports is about 600 million yen. Followed by the other major expense of security, estimated to cost around 800 million yen. While part of the Japanese public disapproved of such an event, funerals in general are an expensive affair in this Asian country.

Shinzo Abe who was Japan's longest serving Prime Minister had enjoyed close ties with India and in particular with PM Narendra Modi. He can be credited with giving the bilateral ties a new momentum by being the first Japanese PM to have visited India four times. India has also declared a one-day state mourning on the 9th of July as a mark of respect to Abe.

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