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Let differences not create any disconnect: PM

Lays foundation stone for new Parliament building; harps on supreme national interest

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AMID the ongoing stand-off between farmers and the Centre over the contentious farm sector reform laws, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday stressed the need to stay connected despite differences.

"Apart from governance, democracy has always been a medium to resolve differences of opinion. Differences strengthen democracy. While there should be space for differences, there should not be any disconnect," Modi said, while laying the foundation stone for the new Parliament building.

Modi harped on the supremacy of national interest, despite differences. "The determination to serve the nation and dedication to national interest should be reflected constantly," he said. Underscoring the importance of healthy interactions, Modi invoked the teachings of Guru Nanak, who said "dialogue must go on". The choice of a Nanak couplet was perhaps his attempt at maintaining connectivity with the

protesting Sikh farmers.

If the old Parliament House gave direction to the country after Independence, the new one will be witness to the making of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, he said, adding it will have many new features to help increase efficiency and improve the work culture of members of Parliament.

However, the construction of the new Parliament building cannot begin for now as the Supreme Court is hearing petitions challenging the project on environmental grounds.

The new Parliament House is part of an ambitious ₹20,000 crore Central Vista project to refurbish buildings over a 3 km stretch between Rashtrapati Bhavan and the iconic War Memorial at India Gate.

Modi performed the groundbreaking ceremony amid chanting of *mantras* by priests from the Sringeri Mutt in Karnataka. Around 200 dignitaries, including ministers, lawmakers, foreign envoys and religious leaders attended. Ratan Tata, whose Tata Projects bagged the contract, was also present.