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PAPER CLIPPINGS

18

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United Parliament must to back soldiers at borders: PM

He calls for unity, amid demand for debate on LAC face-off

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday called for unity and said it was Parliament's "special responsibility" to give a strong, united message of support to the country's brave soldiers guarding the borders, as the monsoon session began in New Delhi.

The remarks, made just before Parliament convened, were a reference to the ongoing border row with China in Ladakh, which shows no prospects of de-escalating soon.

"This Parliament also has a special responsibility, especially in this session. This Parliament, its every member will give this message in one voice, one sentiment and one resolve that the country is standing behind our soldiers. If [country] is doing so through Parliament and its members, I am confident that this Parliament will give this very strong message that it is standing behind our country's brave soldiers in one voice," Mr. Modi said.

Border stand-off

The Prime Minister's call for unity comes even as the opposition has demanded a discussion on the border situation with China, including

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NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

Will the Prime Minister speak on this [India-China border] issue? We do not want debate, but at least a clarification should be given on day one as the entire country is watching

GAURAV GOGOI,
DEPUTY LEADER OF CONGRESS IN LOK SABHA

what went down in the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of India and China last week.

The Opposition has been sharply critical of the Modi government's handling of the border stand-off, and a Business Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting is being held on Tuesday to determine the time and duration of a debate on this issue in the Lok Sabha.

"It is our experience that the more deep and diverse debate happens in Parliament, the more benefits it brings to the subject of discussion and the country," Mr. Modi added.

He also struck a cautious note on the raging COVID-19 pandemic across the country, stating that the session was taking place under special circumstances and as-

serted that the MPs have chosen the path of duty.

'Follow guidelines'

He referred to the host of changes, including staggered timings of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha and the decision to run them on weekends too, brought to the running of this session due to the COVID-19 crisis, and said that MPs had welcomed them.

"Everybody has to follow guidelines and precautions about which they have been informed," Mr. Modi said, adding, "Ye bhi saaf hai jab tak dawai nahi tab tak koi dhilai nahi" (It is clear that there can be no laxity till a vaccine is found). He expressed the hope that a vaccine would be available soon, and people are helped out of this global crisis.