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Parliament project set for launch

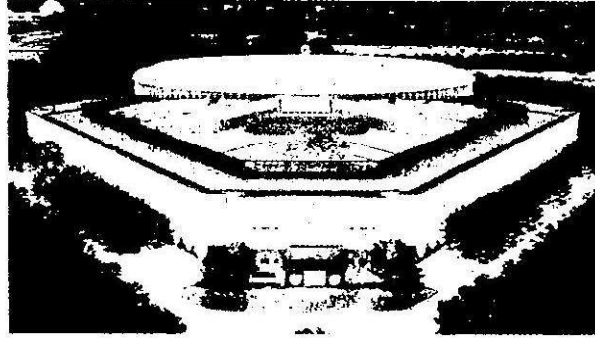
PM will lay foundation stone on Dec. 10, floor leaders of all parties invited: Speaker

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Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Saturday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi would on December 10 lay the foundation stone for the new Parliament building, which would be a symbol of "atmanirbhar Bharat" and a "temple of democracy" for Independent India.

Addressing the media at his residence here, Mr. Birla said the project would be initiated with a *bhoomi puja* by the Prime Minister. He said the floor leaders of all political parties would be invited, and depending on COVID-19 protocols, some of the invitees would attend virtually. The event would be telecast live as well, he said.

He said the long-pending demand of MPs for a new and modern building and offices for 414 MPs had been addressed. The MPs' offices, of 40 sq m each, would be built in place of the Shram Shakti



More room: The new building can accommodate up to 1,224 MPs during joint sessions. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Bhawan by 2024 and would be connected to Parliament via an underground pathway, Mr. Birla said.

22-month plan

The new building would be built adjacent to the existing building in over 22 months.

He said it was a matter of pride that artisans and sculptors from across the country would contribute to the new building, showcasing diversity and making it a symbol of "Atmanirbhar

Bharat". The existing building would be preserved for future generations, he said.

The building would have modern equipment, would be earthquake-safe and accommodate up to 1,224 MPs during joint sessions in the Lok Sabha chamber.

The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha chambers themselves would accommodate 888 and 384 MPs respectively.

The building, to be constructed by Tata Projects

Ltd. at ₹971 crore, would have a built-up area of 64,500 sq m over four floors.

According to government sources, the existing Parliament building, constructed by the British in the 1920s, was designed for the Imperial Legislative Council and not for a bicameral Parliament. The building has been modified over the years, including in 1956 when two floors were added.

While the number of Lok Sabha seats has remained 545 based on delimitation carried out on the basis of the 1971 Census, it is likely to increase after 2026 as the number of seats has been frozen till then.

The sources said the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha halls were packed and would not be able to accommodate additional members when the number of seats goes up.

The new Lok Sabha chamber would be three times the size of the current one, they said.