

# LOST OPPORTUNITY: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE ACRIMONY OVER THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Parliament - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

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The [inauguration of the new Parliament building](#) scheduled for May 28 could have been an occasion of national unity, but, unfortunately, politics is taking centre stage. [Opposition parties have announced they would boycott the event](#), pointing out that the President, the head of state, and not the Prime Minister, who is the head of government, should have been inaugurating the building. There is merit in the Opposition argument, though a boycott is too extreme a response. The government and the Opposition have contributed to converting this too into an episode of acrimony, which has already made meaningful functioning of Parliament very difficult. In a joint statement, the Opposition has said that “this undignified act insults the high office of the President and violates the letter and spirit of the Constitution”, and has specifically mentioned that India has its first woman Adivasi President now. The [Bharatiya Janata Party \(BJP\) has countered the charge](#) by recalling that former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had inaugurated the Parliament Annexe building on October 24, 1975, and Rajiv Gandhi had laid the foundation of the parliament library on August 15, 1987. The inauguration of an annexe or a library is not, however, comparable to the inauguration of the majestic edifice of representative government.

Turning a milestone in the journey of the nation into a partisan event is certainly bad optics, but what is more worrisome is the substantial damage that is happening to democracy. The irony cannot be starker. Though a new, glittering physical space for deliberations is opening, interactions between the government and the Opposition are either absent or hostile. Democracy is not about buildings and statues, but about deliberations and the search for common ground. The ascent of executive power at the cost of parliamentary authority is a growing concern in many democracies, and India is, sadly, witnessing the same. The new building is a part of the reconstruction of the Central Vista, which is the seat of the Government of India. The BJP government did little to take the Opposition into confidence. Not only the President but also the leaders of the Opposition should have had active roles at the opening ceremony. Parliament is meant to hold the executive accountable to the people; it is not a venue for executive predominance. The unfortunate trend in recent years is a continuing erosion of this core function of Parliament. The inauguration of the new building could have been an opportunity for course correction.

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