

**Diversity our pride: Modi**  
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NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India was a multi-cultural nation whose spectacular diversity was its “pride”, comments seen as his reaction to growing incidents of communal and caste violence. The Prime Minister, who has faced criticism for his alleged silence on the prevailing climate of intolerance in the country, made these remarks towards the end of his monthly radio talk Mann Ki Baat in which he said: “Peace, amity and unity are the building blocks of development.” Without India’s inherent pluralism, there would be little to be proud of, Modi said. “A multitude of sections, communities, languages, castes, environments... our country is filled with such diversity and it is this diversity that gives us our honour and pride.”

Extolling the contributions of Congress leader Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, India’s first home minister, towards uniting the country, Modi said though the country had achieved geographical unity, social cohesion should be the “mantra” for every citizen. The PM’s remarks came in the wake of the killing of a Muslim man in Uttar Pradesh’s Dadri over rumours of beef consumption and the burning alive of two Dalit children in Faridabad, Haryana, allegedly by upper-caste men. These incidents have also found a resonance in poll-bound Bihar, where rivals have targeted Modi’s BJP for polarising the country.

Modi also talked about BR Ambedkar, a Dalit icon, saying the government had bought the house where the chief architect of India’s Constitution lived in London. “I will be making a trip to Britain a day after Diwali. I am looking forward to my trip. I’ll inaugurate the Ambedkar Bhavan in London, which is now the Indian government’s property,” he said. Bihar, which is seeing a furious electoral battle being played out, has a sizable chunk of Dalit voters. The third phase of polling is scheduled for October 28.

The Opposition Congress said the Prime Minister did not directly address the issues of intolerance, nor did he condemn the recent violence. “He didn’t touch upon communal tension, atrocities that are taking place on Dalits, he did not talk about price rise?” Congress leader RPN Singh said. Earlier in his radio address, Modi urged greater efforts to promote organ donation, saying he had taken the issue up because some girls from Kerala asked him to talk about organ donation.