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No border visible from space: Shukla interacts with Modi

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NEW DELHI: No borders are visible on Earth from space, and there is a sense of oneness connecting all of humanity, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla said from the International Space Station (ISS) in an interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Shukla became the first Indian to reach ISS on Thursday after SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft, carrying the Axiom-4's crew, docked at the orbiting laboratory. During the 18-minute conversation, the PM underscored that the 39-year-old's feat marked a new era in India's journey.

"When we see the Earth from outside, it seems that no border exists, no state exists,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla, who is aboard the International Space Station, through a video link.

ANI

and no countries exist. We all are part of humanity, and the Earth is our one home. You can truly feel the sense of oneness," he said during the interaction, which was broadcast on Saturday.

Modi said that Shukla's achievement will add fresh momentum to the march towards Viksit Bharat (developed India).

"Today you are farthest from the motherland but closest to

the hearts of Indians... Your journey is also the beginning of a new era... We have to take Mission Gaganyaan forward. We must build our own space station. And we must ensure

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SHUKLA, PM INTERACT

that an Indian astronaut lands on the Moon... Your experiences will play a crucial role in all these future missions," the PM said. Shukla thanked the PM for encouraging him and said that him reaching the space station was India's collective achievement.

During his talk with Modi through a video link from ISS, Shukla said that India's true scale comes to the fore from space. "When I saw India for the first time from space, it appeared much larger and grander than on the map," he said.

A Falcon 9 rocket with Shukla and three of his crewmates lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center on Wednesday as part of the Axiom 4 mission, making the Indian Air Force (IAF) pilot only the second Indian in space. Shukla added that he was absorbing all the "new experiences like a sponge".

"Everything is different here," the astronaut said, shar-

ing his experience in micro-gravity conditions. "We trained for a year, and I learnt about different systems... but after coming here, everything changed... Here, even small things are different because there is no gravity," he said.

After reaching the orbital lab on Thursday, Shukla and his three crewmates—Peggy Whitson from the US, Sławosz Uzmański from Poland and Tibor Kapu from Hungary—spent the day settling in and setting up their sleeping quarters. Whitson's quarter is located in the Airlock, Shukla's in Dragon, Wisniewski's in Columbus, and Kapu's in the Japanese Experiment Module (JEM), news agency PTI reported. Apart from the Axiom-4 crew, seven-members of Expedition 73 are also on ISS.

The mission carries scientific weight beyond its symbolic value. During their planned two-week stay aboard the ISS, the crew will conduct 60 experiments representing 31 coun-

tries. Shukla will oversee seven Indian-designed studies ranging from the impact of microgravity radiation on edible microalgae to examining how microgravity affects the growth of food crop seeds.

Modi said that he was confident that Shukla's feat will inspire the youngsters of the country. "I am confident that this will become a source of inspiration," he said.

The Lucknow-born astronaut urged youngsters to help in the development of the country. "I want to send a message to the younger generation that if you work hard, the future of the nation will be good. The sky is never the limit," he said.

Shukla also told the PM that he had brought with him gajar ka halwa, moong dal halwa and aam ras (mango nectar), which was relished by fellow astronauts.

The conversation ended with the Prime Minister and Shukla raising the slogan of "Bharat Mata Ki Jai".