

National Museum artefacts to be relocated directly to new museum Sources

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PTI Updated: April 29, 2024 15:11 IST

New Delhi, Apr 29 (PTI) Changing its earlier plan, the Ministry of Culture has decided to not move its collection of artefacts at National Museum to a temporary storage location, but shift them "directly" to the new museum that will come on the Raisina Hill complex, according to sources.

It is learnt that the decision was taken recently at a meeting after factoring in the safety of the artefacts during its movement and storage at an interim facility which may not be suitably equipped with temperature and humidity control mechanism.

The National Museum in Delhi is home to a collection of rich ancient artefacts which would eventually be moved to the proposed Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum to be located in the North Block and South Block of the Raisina Hill complex.

In September last year, an official source had said, "As part of the Central Vista redevelopment project, the plan is to vacate the National Museum by the end of this year (2023). Instructions have been given to search for a space where the collections could be safely and properly shifted."

Official sources on Monday, however, said, in a recent meeting, it was decided to shift them "directly to the new national museum site".

After an assessment of the artefacts was done, it was realised that given the precious nature of these artefacts, keeping them in a temporary storage location may be fraught with risk as lack of proper temperature and humidity control mechanism may cause damage to them, they said.

Sources earlier had indicated that the old National Museum would have become inaccessible to visitors and scholars once its artefacts were moved.

Now, the museum will remain accessible until the shifting timeline is decided and the move thereof, they added.

The 35,000-square metre National Museum presently holds approximately 2,00,000 objects, both Indian and foreign, covering over more than 5,000 years of Indian cultural heritage.

The foundation of the present building was laid by the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on May 12, 1955.

The first phase of the National Museum building was formally inaugurated by the then Vice President Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan on December 18, 1960. The second phase was completed in 1989.

The redevelopment of the Central Vista, the nation's power corridor in Delhi, envisaged a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one, a common Central Secretariat for ministries and the revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.

As per the fate of the old National Museum building, after its artefacts are eventually shifted, it is not clear whether the over 60-year-old building, one of the most iconic modern landmarks of the capital city, will be retained or razed after its objects and collections are shifted.

The move for temporary storage at a facility before eventually moving it to the new museum had raised concerns among the art and heritage experts and many others.

Last December, Union Minister for Culture G Kishan Reddy informed Parliament that no decision had so far been taken to shut down the National Museum to expand the Central Vista, the Centre.

He had shared this information in a written response to a query by TMC's Jawhar Sircar in Rajya Sabha.

Sircar, in his written query, had also asked if the government had decided a place to shift the priceless artefacts of the museum for interim storage, and if the government had studied any

shifting of such a scale anywhere in the world.

Sircar had also asked whether the government had consulted the best international and national experts on museums and antiquities; and whether, during such storage, the government will ensure appropriate requirements of light, heat, ventilation, humidity, etc. for all objects that require them.

The upcoming Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum, billed to be the largest museum in the world, will have eight thematic segments telling the story of India spanning over 5,000 years.

France will partner with India for the ambitious new national museum, and a top French official and a team of experts have discussed the "next steps in this cooperation", the country's embassy here had said on April 23.

The team of experts had also visited the North Block and South Block, the site of the new museum.

The new museum, to be housed in the North Block and South Block in the heart of the country's capital, will cover an area of 1.17 lakh sqm with 950 rooms spread over a basement and three storeys, Indian officials had earlier said.

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