

No stopgap relocation, National Museum artefacts will go directly to new complex

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Overturning its earlier proposal, the Ministry of Culture has decided [not to move the artefacts at the National Museum](#) to a temporary location until a new complex, planned to come up at a different site under the Central Vista Redevelopment Project, is constructed, it is learnt.

Instead, at a review meeting held a few weeks ago, it decided that the artefacts will be shifted directly to the new museum complex — to be named Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum — as and when it is ready.

The new complex will be housed in the buildings currently comprising the North Block and the South Block a few kilometres away.

The refurbishment — on the lines of the Louvre Palace, in collaboration with France — is to be finished in two years, although the Ministry might get partial possession of the complex as early as March 2025.

With the present National Museum building on Janpath planned to give way to government offices as part of the Central Vista project, the Ministry had earlier decided to look for an alternative space to house the artefacts and the museum staff until the new complex was ready.



As reported by [The Indian Express](#), at a meeting on September 2 last year, attended by Union Culture Secretary Govind Mohan, four other Ministry officials, and four officials of the National Museum, including its Director General B R Mani, it was decided that “[a suitable space for storage and for the existing staff of National Museum needs to be identified for which a space consultant or a space assessment company should be appointed](#)”.

However, the proposal caused concerns about the storage and movement of the landmark collection, with many expressing apprehension that it may lead to pilferage and loss of the prehistoric and contemporary antiquities representing over 5,000 years of Indian art and craftsmanship.

Trinamool MP Jawhar Sircar, who was the Union Culture Secretary from 2008 to 2012, wrote to the then Housing Minister Hardeep Puri and Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy, warning about the “magnitude of the task and the risks of attempting it without thorough knowledge of what the job entails”.

Sircar also asked how the Government could entrust outsourced staff with “identifying, documenting, packing, transporting etc. of the irreplaceable national treasure...”

A specific guideline dated September 15, 2014 by the Ministry of Culture states: “Shifting and transportation of museum objects should be carried out by professionally skilled people in the field and not the unskilled people... before shifting... a detailed condition status report should be prepared after having a clear cut opinion from the Conservator in writing whether the object is fit to be moved or not.”

During the Winter Session of Parliament in December last year, Congress MP Manish Tewari raised a question about “the manner in which the Ministry (of Culture) proposes to ensure safe package, storage and preservation of 2 lakh objects within the tight timeline to vacate the existing National Museum by the end of this year”.

Responding, Reddy assured of following “adequate standard protocols... as per the experts’ requirements” while packaging and storing these priceless objects, officially admitting for the first time that the artefacts were being moved to a temporary location.

However, sources said, during the follow-up meetings on the issue a section of Ministry and Museum officials flagged concerns about the possibility of loss and damage of artefacts.

In the end, it was decided the two-lakh strong collection won’t be moved to any temporary storage location but to its final destination at the Yuge Yugeen Museum.

Ministry of Culture and National Museum officials did not respond to emails and SMS for comment.

Under the Central Vista plan, the North Block, which currently houses the offices of Ministries of Finance and Home Affairs, and the South Block are set to be moved to the Common Central Secretariat (CCS) buildings on Janpath (coming up in place of erstwhile Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts) by the end of this year.

According to sources, the artefacts are planned to be moved to the part of the new museum complex replacing North Block, which is expected to be ready first by early or mid 2025— its interiors retrofitted to function like a museum, with a temperature-controlled storage facility for artefacts.

The South Block, which houses the Prime Minister’s Office and Ministry of External Affairs offices, will be vacated and readied in due course, they said.

Covering an area of 1.17 lakh sq metres, the Yuge Yugeen Museum is slated to be the world’s largest museum.

The Government is collaborating with France for its retrofitting on the lines of the Louvre Palace.