

We have great museum collections, but put up poor show: Ex-culture secretary

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Bengaluru: Absence of professionalism in hiring and training and lack of financial incentives are some of the lacunae that need to be addressed if museums in the country are to be transformed into efficient spaces that preserve history and culture, said former secretary to the ministry of culture Jawahar Sircar.

Delivering a talk on Why can't we have better museums? Problems and prospects of operating museums in India, Sircar said at the National Gallery of Modern Art on Wednesday: "What I say may not be necessarily acceptable, but these are the postulates.

"India puts up a poor show despite having a great collection. That all large museums are government-run doesn't help," added Sircar, who is currently the chief executive officer of Prasar Bharti.

Old, untrained individuals with a 'sarkari' attitude are generally tasked with maintenance of museums. Moreover, salaries that remain unchanged since the fourth pay commission only demotivates them further, he said.

Pointing to dangers of following a rigid rule-bound system, he also voiced concerns over the 'Hindu-influenced' culture of not preserving history. "What goes with the dead is considered unimportant, which is not how one must look at things," he said.

Calling for a greater degree of autonomy in the running of museums, he said, "I am not saying that all collections should go to

people outside the government. Government agencies are only managers of collections that belong to the nation. I mean autonomy in functioning, hiring and other aspects that constitute an efficient system."

Battling for corporate assistance in running museums, Sircar stressed on the need for strict guidelines.