

Historians and Opposition MPs back online appeal to save museum

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Centre has not responded to Trinamul MP and news reports that collection could be in storage for a year before North and South Blocks on Raisina Hill are converted into the Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum in 2025

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The National Museum. **File picture**

An online appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Union culture ministry “to reconsider the decision to demolish the National Museum” has been endorsed by leading historians and Opposition MPs.

The development comes less than a week after Trinamul MP and former Union culture secretary Jawhar Sircar cautioned the Union housing and urban affairs minister and culture minister against demolishing the National Museum and shifting its 2.1 lakh-strong inventory.

The Centre has not responded to Sircar and news reports that the collection could be in storage for a year before North and South Blocks on Raisina Hill are converted into the Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum in 2025.

The appeal says: “Moving these artefacts risks irreparable damage, loss, or theft, which would result in the permanent loss of our cultural treasures.

“Furthermore, we earnestly seek clarity regarding the intended location where these invaluable artefacts will be housed during and after the demolition of the National Museum.”

It adds: “We respectfully request that the Ministry of Culture provides a comprehensive plan detailing the new facility or location that will serve as a temporary or permanent replacement for the National Museum.

“In light of these concerns, we also seek assurance regarding how academicians, researchers, students, and the public will access the National Museum’s collection during the transitional period. Continued access to these artefacts is vital for ongoing academic research, educational programmes, and cultural studies.”

Karwaan Heritage, a student group that works to make history accessible, initiated the appeal that attracted 2,234 endorsements in two days.

Those who have supported the appeal include academics Romila Thapar, Mridula and Aditya Mukherjee, Harbans Mukhia, S. Irfan Habib, Zoya Hasan, Tapati Guha Thakurta, Dilip Menon, Narayani Gupta, Nandini Sundar, Ramachandra Guha and Ananya Vajpeyi, Opposition MPs D. Ravikumar and Manoj Jha, and architects Prem Chandavarkar and A.G.K. Menon.

Karwaan Heritage founder Eshan Sharma told **The Telegraph**: “The Union government has worked hard to get back historical objects stolen from India. If the shifting is not done properly, these objects could be stolen and would appear in the black market.”

Several historians such as Sudeshna Guha and Uma Chakravarti have volunteered to conduct heritage walks in the museum to raise awareness about the institution and its treasures.