

# There had been 'no decision' to shift National Museum, G. Kishan Reddy tells Parliament

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Almost seven months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi “inaugurated” a “virtual walkthrough” of Yuge Yugeen Bharat — the proposed new National Museum to be created in the North and South blocks of Parliament — Union culture minister G. Kishan Reddy on Thursday told Parliament that there had been “no decision” to shift the museum.

This comes after historians and intellectuals cautioned that such a shift could cause “irreparable damage” to artefacts. Trinamul MP and former culture secretary Jawhar Sircar had also warned the Centre in October against “pilfering and substitution” of India’s treasures during the proposed shift and explained how such a move would be impractical.

Sircar had recently asked the Centre that if the National Museum was going to shut, where would its artefacts be shifted to, whether the government had studied any similar exercise, and whether experts were consulted.

In a written reply to him in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, the culture minister wrote: “No such decision has so far been taken by the Government.”

Sircar told **The Telegraph**: “The government is not willing to risk something like this before elections. I’m sure they have postponed and not cancelled the move. The danger remains.... Every time the collections of museums have been shifted, theft happens.”

He added: “National Museum won’t fit in the North and South blocks. Nowadays museums are built around artefacts and not the other way round.”

In response to three Parliament questions by Trinamul MP Sircar since 2021, the Centre had consistently denied plans to shift the National Museum from its current premises on Janpath.

However, as part of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project, announced in 2019, the National Museum was to be moved to the North Block and South Block in order to make way for new Common Central Secretariat buildings. The deadline for the entire redevelopment was set at 2026 but progress is as slow as most government construction.

Neither the culture ministry nor the National Museum has offered any explanation for the Centre halting its plan. After inaugurating the virtual walkthrough — a computer-generated video of the National Museum’s new avatar — at the International Museum expo in May, Modi had referred to it in two of his speeches and claimed that it would be the “world’s largest heritage museum.”

A culture ministry official said: “I don’t expect the move to happen before the Lok Sabha (polls). A lot of work is required in the North Block and South Block. For example, there has been a complaint of a leak in North Block. This increases humidity and all this has to be rectified before we can shift.”

Both the blocks are currently in use by ministries. The Centre was reportedly contemplating shifting the museum’s inventory temporarily to a storage facility.

Indian museums generally display more exhibits per unit area than those in other countries. The National Museum has almost 2.1 lakh objects including the Harappan bronze dancing girl.