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Centre's Stand on Central Vista Redevelopment Project

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Why in News

The **Central Government** has recently tried to **justify** its decision to **construct a new Parliament building** under the proposed '**Central Vista Redevelopment**' project, in the Supreme Court (SC).

One of the issues raised by the petitioners was **if it's possible to refurbish and use the existing Parliament building**.

Central Vista Redevelopment Project

- **The Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs proposed the Central Vista redevelopment project in 2019.**
- **The project envisages:**
 - **Constructing a triangular Parliament building next to the existing one.**
 - **Constructing Common Central Secretariat.**
 - **Revamping of the 3-km-long Rajpath — from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.**

North and South Block to be repurposed as museums.

- **Currently, the Central Vista of New Delhi houses Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House, North and South Block, India Gate, National Archives among others.**

Key Points

- **Centre's Stand:**
 - Underlining the cost and infrastructure advantages of the proposed project, the Centre told the SC that **the question whether or not to have a new Parliament building is a policy decision which the government is entitled to take.**
 - The government had taken an important policy decision to construct a Parliament complex and central secretariat as the **existing one is under tremendous stress.** Further, the project cannot come up at Noida or elsewhere, but on Central Vista.
- **Arguments Put Forward by the Government:**
 - **Pre Independence building:** The **current one was built in 1927** to house the legislative council and was not intended to house a bicameral legislature that the country has today.
 - **Lack of Space:** The current building will be under more stress when the **number of seats to Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are raised.** Both Houses are already packed and members have to sit on plastic chairs when joint sessions are held, diminishing the dignity of the House.
 - **Safety Concerns:** The existing building does not conform to **fire safety norms. Water and sewer lines are also haphazard** and this is damaging its heritage nature. Security concerns in the wake of the **2001 Parliament attack shows its vulnerable nature.** It is also **not quake-proof.**
 - **Cost Advantage:** Many central ministries **are housed in different buildings** with the result that the government ends up paying rent for many of them. The new building, a new central secretariat will help avoid this.
 - **Environmental Benefits:** The fact that people and officials have to run around the city to go to different ministries also **increases traffic and pollution.** The project **also proposes interlinking of metro stations** which will minimise use of vehicles.
- **Criticism:**
 - The Opposition, environmentalists, architects and citizens have raised many concerns even before the pandemic brought in extra issues.
 - They have **questioned the lack of studies** to ascertain the need for the project and its impact on the environment, traffic and pollution.
 - Several key approvals for the proposed Parliament building have been pushed during the lockdown. This led to allegations of a **lack of transparency.**
 - They argue that in the **situation created by the pandemic, the project must be deferred as the country can't afford it at this time.**

Source: IE