



## New Parliament Building For New India

This editorial is based on [‘India’s new Parliament, and why it is needed’](#) which was published in Indian Express on 29/05/2023. It talks about the need of New Parliament building and its features.

**For Prelims:** [Parliament](#), [Central Vista project](#), [Lok Sabha](#), [Rajya Sabha](#), [Sengol](#)

**For Mains:** Need for new parliament building, Symbolism in Elements of Parliament

In a significant milestone during the 75th year of Independence, Prime minister of India unveiled new Parliament building. Designed and constructed by Indians, this architectural marvel encapsulates the culture, pride, and spirit of the entire nation and looks forward to fulfilling the longstanding need of Indian democracy to have more spacious parliament as the number of seats and MPs will increase in the coming time.

The new parliament building, **developed as a part of** [Central Vista Redevelopment project](#), takes care of infrastructural hurdles in parliamentary functioning.

Prime minister inaugurated the parliament and placed **‘Sengol’**, the symbol of power transfer to India from the British.

### What was the Need for the New Parliament Building?

#### ▪ Need of More Space:

- The **existing Parliament building**, erected in 1927, was **never designed to accommodate a bicameral legislature for a fully-fledged democracy**, according to the government data.
  - With the number of [Lok Sabha seats fixed at 545 since the 1971 Census](#)-based delimitation, the building's seating arrangements have become cramped and cumbersome.
  - During joint sessions, the **limited seating capacity** exacerbates the problem. Moreover, the lack of space for movement poses a significant security risk. It is **likely to increase substantially after 2026** as the freeze on total number of seats is only till 2026.

#### ▪ Outgrowing the Heritage:

- The existing Parliament House, commissioned in 1927, is a century-old **Heritage Grade-I building**. With a substantial increase in parliamentary activities and users over the years, the building's age and limited infrastructure **no longer meet the current requirements** in terms of space, amenities, and technology.
  - **Heritage Grade-I comprises buildings and precincts of national or historic importance**, embodying excellence in architectural style, design, technology and

material usage and/or aesthetics.

- They may be **associated with a great historic event, personality, movement or institution**. They have been and are the prime landmarks of the region. **All natural sites shall fall within Grade-I.**

▪ **Infrastructure Distress:**

- Ad hoc constructions and modifications have strained the building's infrastructure. The **addition of essential services like water supply, air conditioning, and CCTV cameras has led to seepage issues**, impacting the building's aesthetics.
- Moreover, **outdated communication structures and inadequate fire safety measures** raise concerns about the safety of occupants.

▪ **Concerns of Structural Safety:**

- **Old parliament was built when Delhi was in Seismic Zone-II**, the current Parliament building **now falls within Seismic Zone-IV**.
- This shift raises significant structural safety concerns, necessitating the construction of a new building that meets modern seismic standards.

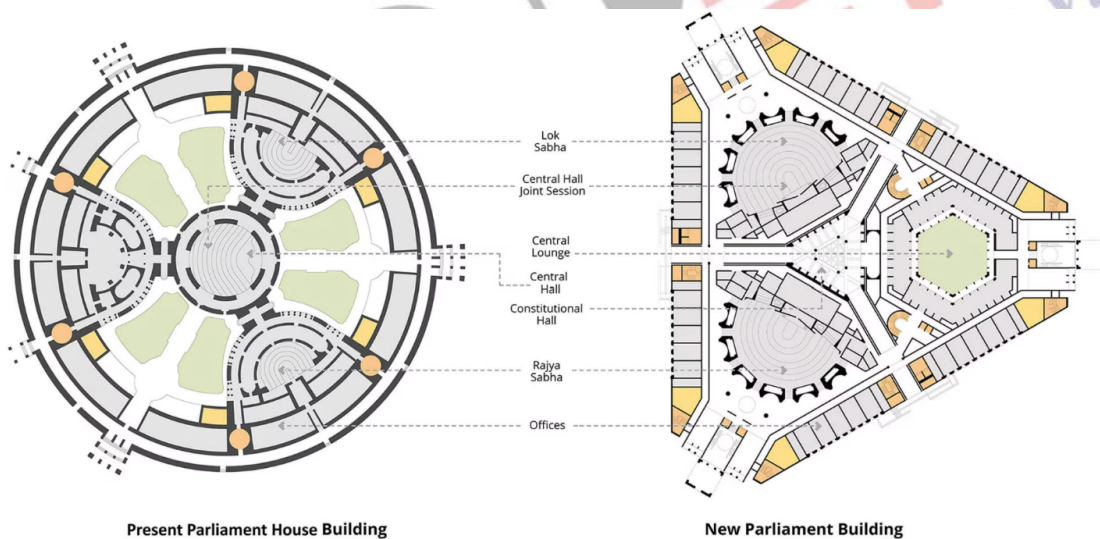
▪ **Inadequate Office Spaces:**

- Over time, the conversion of inner service corridors into offices has resulted in poor-quality workspaces.
- **Sub-partitions further reduce the already limited space**, adversely affecting the productivity and well-being of employees.

## What are the Significant Features of the New Parliament Building?

▪ **Optimum Space Utilization:**

- The new Parliament building, standing alongside the existing one, encompasses a **built-up area of approximately 65,000 sq m. Its triangular shape ensures efficient utilization of space**, accommodating the evolving needs of a growing nation.



▪ **Enhanced Seating Capacity:**

- The new building includes a larger Lok Sabha Hall with a **capacity of up to 888 seats and a larger Rajya Sabha hall with up to 384 seats**.
- **Joint sessions** of Parliament can now accommodate up to **1,272 seats**, facilitating inclusive and robust democratic proceedings.

▪ **State-of-the-Art Facilities:**

- A state-of-the-art **Constitutional Hall** serves as the heart of Indian democracy, placing citizens at the center of governance.
- The building also offers **ultra-modern office spaces** equipped with **cutting-edge communication technology**, promoting efficiency and security.

▪ **Commitment to Sustainability:**

- The new Sansad Bhavan stands as a **"Platinum-rated Green Building,"** reflecting India's

dedication to environmental sustainability.

- **Cultural Integration:**

- The new Parliament building seamlessly integrates the vibrance and diversity of modern India, **incorporating regional arts, crafts, and cultural elements.**

- **Inclusivity for All:**

- Recognizing the importance of accessibility, the **new Parliament building prioritizes divyang (differently-abled) individuals.**
- It ensures that **people with disabilities can move freely within the premises,** fostering inclusivity and equal participation.

- **Galleries and Exhibitions:**

- The public entrances lead to three galleries - the **Sangeet Gallery** which exhibits dance, song, and musical traditions of India; the **Sthapthya Gallery** depicts the architectural heritage of the country, and the **Shilp Gallery** showcases distinct handicraft traditions of different states.

- **Enhanced Facilities and Access:**

- The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha chambers boast a **digitised voting system, well-engineered acoustics,** and state-of-the-art **audiovisual systems** to ensure effective legislative proceedings.
- The **Ministers' chambers can be accessed through corridors running parallel to the triangular boundary of the building.**

- **Symbolic Design:**

- **The Lok Sabha hall's interior, inspired by India's national bird, the peacock, and the Rajya Sabha hall, representing the lotus, India's national flower, embody the rich symbolism of the nation.**
- **Installation of Sengol,** the symbol of power transfer, is symbolic tribute to power transfer to India.

## What is its Overarching Central Vista Redevelopment Project?

- The Central Vista Redevelopment Project is a project that **aims to revamp the Central Vista, India's central administrative area located near Raisina Hill, New Delhi.**
- The area was **originally designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker** during British colonial rule and was retained by Government of India after independence. The **redevelopment of the project is being overseen by Ar. Bimal Patel.**
- Central Vista of New Delhi **houses Rashtrapati Bhawan, Parliament House, North and South Block, India Gate, National Archives among others.**
- In December **1911, King George V** made an announcement in **Delhi Durbar** (a grand assembly) to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi.
- The redevelopment project includes:
  - Constructing **a triangular Parliament building** next to the existing one.
  - Constructing **Common Central Secretariat.**
  - **Revamping** of the 3-km-long **Rajpath ([Kartavya Path](#))** — from Rashtrapati Bhavan to India Gate.
    - **North and South Block** to be repurposed as **museums.**

## What is the Historical Significance of Sengol?

- **Chola Period:**

- The Sengol is derived from the **Tamil word "Semmai" which means "Righteousness".**
- It was **made of gold** and was **carried by emperors during ceremonial occasions** to represent their authority in [Chola empire](#) And was handed over from one king to another as a mark of succession and legitimacy.
  - The Cholas ruled over parts of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, and Sri Lanka from the 9th to 13th century CE.
- The **ceremony was usually performed by a high priest** or a guru who blessed the new king and conferred him with the Sengol.

- **Before Independence:**

- Before Independence there was a question that, **'What is the ceremony that should be followed to symbolise transfer of power from British?'**

- **C. Rajagopalachari suggested Chola ritual of handing over 'Sengol'** as suitable ceremony for power transfer as it would reflect India's ancient civilisation and culture, as well as its unity in diversity.
- The Sengol was **presented to PM Nehru by Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam** (a 500-year-old Saivaite monastery) on August 14, 1947.
- A golden sceptre was **crafted by Vummidi Bangaru Chetty**, a famous jeweller in Madras (now Chennai).
- The **Nandi, with its unyielding gaze as the beholder of "Nyaya"**, is hand-carved at the top.
- **Post Independence:**
  - After receiving the **Sengol sceptre in 1947**, Nehru kept it at his residence in Delhi for some time before donating it to Anand Bhavan Museum in Allahabad (Prayagraj).
    - It **remained at Anand Bhavan Museum for over seven decades**.
  - In **2021-22**, when the **Central Vista redevelopment project was underway**, the government decided to **revive this historical event and install the Sengol sceptre in the new Parliament building**.
    - It has been placed near the Speaker's seat in the new Parliament building, accompanied by a **plaque that will explain its history and meaning**.
  - The installation of Sengol in the new Parliament building is not just a **symbolic gesture but also a meaningful message**.
    - It signifies that **India's democracy is rooted in its ancient traditions and values** and that it is **inclusive and respectful of its diversity and plurality**.

## How did the Old Parliament Building Come into Being?

- The old parliament building's **construction began in 1921 and was completed in 1927** and was **designed by the architects Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker**.
- The building was originally called **the Council House** and housed the Imperial Legislative Council, the legislature of British India.
- The parliament building's **circular shape was inspired by the Colosseum**, the Roman historical monument.
- A few **Indian elements, such as jaalis and chhatris**, were added to the design.

## Conclusion

India's new Parliament building is a state-of-the-art facility that showcases India's rich cultural heritage while providing modern amenities for effective legislative proceedings. The government plans to use both the buildings in conjunction for smooth functioning of parliamentary affairs.

It not only reflects India's cultural diversity but also paves the way for an inclusive and efficient democratic process. As the nation embarks on this new chapter, the new Parliament building becomes a beacon of hope and unity, inspiring generations to come.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

The new parliament building, developed as a part of Central Vista Redevelopment project, takes care of infrastructural hurdles in parliamentary functioning. Discuss.