

Statement of the Indian History Congress, 11th January, 2021

DANGER TO HERITAGE SITES FROM CENTRAL VISTA PROJECT

The Indian History Congress, in line with its anxiety for the protection of heritage sites, is deeply concerned with the possible effects of the Central Vista Redevelopment Project (CVRP) on the cultural and ecological landscape of our national capital. Delhi's Central Vista houses some of the most remarkable structures and buildings that hold prime historical importance and reflect the heritage and grandeur of our nation. It is also a matter of concern for the History Congress as a body of concerned citizens that the costly project is being undertaken when India is facing a severe crisis from the pandemic, along with the prevailing desperate poverty intensified by unemployment.

What has also raised much concern is the lack of transparency involved in the way the project has been forced through. Surely, all interests concerned, notably architects, archaeologists and conservationists, should have been given full opportunity to study and evaluate the project. But this has not at all been the case.

The Indian History Congress particularly regrets the failure to procure approval from the Heritage Conservation Committee, which seems to have been by passed through the setting up of the Central Vista Committee, which appears to have failed to consider the complexity of the issues related to heritage, conservation and proper urban development.

The Indian History Congress feels the gravest concern on account of the fact that IGNCA, National Archives, and the National Museum, which are institutions of great academic and cultural significance, would lose their well-established premises, which are heritage sites in themselves, and would also undoubtedly cease to function for quite some time. This means that researchers will be denied, for varying periods, all access to the documents and artifacts held by these institutions. It will be quite a blow to historical research.

We urge that it is still not too late to reconsider the implications of the project and find an alternative scheme that does not destroy so much of our heritage. Even the colonial Government in building New Delhi had paid some attention to the protection of earlier cultural structures. We today ought to be no worse, even if we cannot be much better.