

First Posted on: 01 Jul 2021

Updated / Edited on:

**CENTRAL VISTA: MIXED-USE OF AREA DEMOLITION OF ICONIC
STRUCTURES AND MOVE OF ARMED FORCES HEADQUARTERS**

Lutyens Delhi intended to accommodate about a million people now has a population manifold, apart from the vehicles and buildings added to it. As a result, Delhi as a whole has become a tangle of buildings, roads, vehicles and people. That it should have remained an administrative capital was an idea that did not appeal to the senses of anyone, it is obvious.

The new plan for the re-development of the Central Vista Area has been put into action by the Central Government. There is little doubt that changes and improvements are necessary; however, some of the proposed changes reported in the newspapers did not seem logical or necessary and seemed wasteful. Any plan for Delhi must therefore aim at decongestion, de-pollution and improve ease of functioning.

A detailed letter conveying views on these aspects written to the Prime Minister and other officials in May 2020 is reproduced below for reading and views.

By FAX
(26 pp incl this)

IMMEDIATE

To,
The Prime Minister of India.

RE-DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
THE

CENTRAL SECRETARIAT AREA
AND
RELOCATING THE INDIAN ARMY
HEADQUARTERS:
A POLITICAL, STRATEGIC, FUNCTIONAL,
ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC BLUNDER

From,
Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (retired)

Mob No:

Email ID:

Letter No: 31073/Delhi/01/2020 dated 29 May 2020

Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (retired)
Regiment of Artillery

By Fax and Speed Post

IMMEDIATE

Tele:

Res & Fax:

Mob:

Email:

31073/Delhi/01/2020

29 May 2020

To,
Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi,
Prime Minister of India,
7 Lok Kalyan Marg,
New Delhi - 110 011
Fax to: +91 11 2301 6857

CC to: As on pp 16 to 18.

**REDEVELOPING THE CENTRAL SECRETARIAT AREA AND
RE-LOCATING THE INDIAN ARMY HEADQUARTERS:
A POLITICAL, STRATEGIC, FUNCTIONAL, ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC
BLUNDER**

Sir,

Introduction

1. I have the honour to convey the following in grave national interest, as laid out in the remainder of this letter. It is earnestly requested that the contents be examined in detail and 'action taken' for building a future greater and happier nation.
2. The plan for the re-development of the Central Government Area of Raisina Hill and Lutyens Delhi has come as a surprise. There was little by way of public consultation before it was announced. That it was overdue is known, however, public consultation is very necessary for our democracy for such major changes.
3. This letter was complete on 22 Mar 2020 but was held back and revised due to the Covid - 19 pandemic. Under these extreme circumstances, a review was necessary. However, a great deal more thought based on what is discussed below must be undertaken before such major changes are put into effect. A start point will be to examine the principles on which the re-development should be planned.
4. **White Paper.** The Government would be wise to set forth a White Paper outlining the principles and to then seek the comments of the people. The major aspects that must be considered are: -
 - (a) **Design Principles.** Any new construction must follow the principles adopted by the original architects Edwin Lutyens and Henry Baker particularly for one of the most major capitals in the World. That would be essential to prevent the Central Secretariat from becoming an incongruous archipelago of concrete structures and to keep it as one of the World's most imposing and grand Government Areas. If this is not done it will end up as a group of huge grotesque buildings. The new plan for the Central Secretariat appears to be red sandstone buildings with no variety. Too much of the same thing can be overkill. It will be more pleasing and representative of our nation if each building along the Rajpath could be based on the architecture of different regions of India. Please remember that we are a democracy and that must reflect in the theme. The relocation and design of the planned new Army Headquarters also have this lack of sympathy with the existing order and complete negation of rich cultural heritage and any consideration of political, strategic, or functional issues.
 - (b) **Architecture.** In the Raisina Hill Area, the architecture and the building materials to be used should have commonality with the existing theme as of Rashtrapati Bhavan, North

Block and South Block. However, this revivalist theme could end there. The same thing need not be repeated all along Rajpath and elsewhere. Knocking down the National Museum and the new MEA building is wasteful and reminiscent of all past Indian empires, i.e. destroy what is there and rebuild using scarce resources. Both these are magnificent buildings with character and build with national wealth. As stated in the previous paragraph each building on either side of the Rajpath can borrow for its external appearance the architecture of a particular region or culture of India, and we have plenty; Dravidian, Nagara, Buddhist, Kerala, Rajasthan, Maratha, Gujarat, various Western influences, modern, postmodern, Mughal, Indo-Saracenic and many others to choose from, and all these are indigenous. Also, the entrances to these buildings must not open to the Rajpath but the road away from the Rajpath as the existing buildings are now.

(c) Keep Government and Public Areas Separate. The entire area must be maintained as a Central Government Area and not converted to mixed-use with public areas such as museums and other public purpose facilities located within it. Zoning is an important aspect of city layout. **Deliberately planning to have museums in the middle of the Government Area and right in front of the Rashtrapati Bhavan is asking for trouble.** The unwanted traffic and movement of tourists in the middle of the movement of the President, PM, Ministers, and other dignitaries in the Centre of the Government Area and most important part of the Nation is fraught with security issues. Further, a museum will have all kinds of things and people arriving every day. **This is a permanent security hazard and is a readymade arrangement that we are providing for easy espionage and terrorism. There can be nothing more detrimental to security than this.** Further, the area will often have to be shut down for various activities such as visits, parades etc. This will make it unavailable to the public frequently. Also, there is no scope for any expansion around North and South Block. **We already have an isolated space for the Government to work in peace, let us not destroy it by converting it to mixed-use and buy trouble forever.**

(d) Population Density, Space and Future Growth. Both in the Delhi Cantonment and Raisina Hill Complex/Lutyens Delhi, population density and open spaces must be maintained or further improved and not reduced. This can be achieved by better utilisation of available space. The current FSI/FAR and Building Coverage must be bettered so that population density is reduced, and open spaces increased. Further, each building must have scope for further expansion and that expansion should also be considered while arriving at the FSI/FAR and Building Coverage. These figures both current and planned must be revealed in the White Paper.

(e) Strategic and Functional Soundness. Locating of Ministries and Headquarters such as the Army Headquarters which is an integral part of the Central Govt must be functionally and strategically sound. In real estate, it is location, location, location. There is no point in a new grand building if it cannot do the job from where it is located. No time and motion study seems to have been done to understand how ministries, departments and Forces HQs interact and the movements involved while proposing the relocation of the Army Headquarters.

5. **The Concept for the Re-development.** We must lay down a concept for the re-development and it must be discussed threadbare by the people. While the actual design can be

left to architects the concept must be first finalised. **Let us not make the same mistake that Emperor Akbar committed and repeat a Fatehpur Sikri here.**

6. My Locus Standi?

both in Lutyens Delhi and the Cantonment and **have seen how Delhi as a whole has been ruined over the last fifty years due to vested interests and no planning worth the name.** Therefore, the views expressed here may be taken as being based on first-hand knowledge and that this is not a letter intended to merely oppose a plan. On the contrary, I look to a grander plan but developed in a logical manner. However, the plan must take into account the political, strategic, security and functional considerations besides the aesthetic.

7. Resume.

Relocating the Army Headquarters

8. **The Most Important Ministries.** The most important two ministries of the government are the **Ministries of Defence and Home**, with the Ministry of External Affairs and Ministry of Finance following closely. And the Army Headquarters is the major part of the Ministry of Defence. So, there is no contradiction that all these ministries and the Army Headquarters (in fact all Armed Forces HQs) must be co-located.

9. **Political Blunder.** The country exists in its present form protected from all external aggression because there is the Indian Army sworn to the Constitution and the People and Government of the day. **Any Government that separates the Armed Forces from itself is weakening itself and the country. There is also the possibility that the Army begins to think of itself as a separate power centre when away from the Central Government.** These are major political aspects that any Government must consider, and which is one reason why the Army Headquarters was located where it is and has remained there all these years.

10. **Other Major Aspects.** Apart from the political the following major aspects give reasons why this relocation is not desired: -

(a) **The Cantonment is for Fighting Formations, Depots and Hospitals etc.** The Delhi Cantonment is an area where Fighting Formations of the Western Command, Depots, Workshops and Hospitals etc are located and has nothing to do with the Army Headquarters directly. It is strategically undesirable that the Army HQ is co-located with a field force (fighting force).

(b) **Army HQ is part of Central Govt.** The Army Headquarters is part of the Central Government and its presence with the Ministry of Defence and the other Ministries is a mandatory requirement. It has nothing to do directly with the troops in the Cantonment but has everything to do with the Central Government on Raisina Hill.

(c) **Strategic Blunder in the New Army HQ Location.** The new location that has been identified is adjacent to the Village Jharera, close to two major schools, opposite the Headquarters Western Air Command, too close to a large number of Army and Air Force

units, ordnance and ammunition depots, and the huge International Airport whose entire traffic will be moving adjacent to it on a National Highway. All these major establishments being so close to each other is disastrous from a strategic, security and safety point of view. **It will present a large and lucrative target, for terrorism and espionage activities, and in war as well.**

11. **Serious Functional Difficulties.** The proposed new location is completely unsuitable from a functional viewpoint as well. A brief explanation of the major difficulties and serious repercussions that will follow if this relocation is affected are below: -

(a) Impossible to Function Efficiently. The COAS, PSOs, Officers and Staff at the Army Headquarters are required to move frequently to the PMO, other Ministries, Cabinet Secretariat and other Departments and Offices in the Government Area for discussions, decision making and day to day work. How this will happen from the Cantonment is not clear. The functioning will become extremely difficult and many days will be lost in moving even simple cases. Officers will be running up and down in vehicles wasting whole days, time, and fuel on the road, with little time available for actual work. It will be impossible to complete work in time, even considering that digital means of communication will have a greater role in the future.

(b) Three Service Headquarters must be Co-located. The Army, Navy and Air Force Headquarters must be in proximity of each other and the Ministry. It is also desirable to have the Coast Guard, DRDO and DGQA Headquarters also close by. Separating them is not desirable, especially from an operational point of view.

(c) Functioning in Time of Crisis and War. How the Army Headquarters and the Ministries will work together in such situations when separated by 15 Km distance must be appreciated. Even though in future the emphasis will be on communication by digital means but do remember that the first casualty in a war or a crisis in communications. At the highest levels, it is personal contact that matters, for officers to be running to the Raisina Hill from the Cantonment every now and then is not going to work and will become a perpetual problem.

(d) Overcrowding. The Delhi Cantonment is already overcrowded. An addition of another ten thousand or more persons in the Cantonment with their vehicles means halving of the space available and making it impossible for the units in the Cantonment to function and carry out their training and routine tasks. Apart from this the traffic chaos on the already overcrowded roads will rise to an unacceptable level.

(e) Reduction in Training Areas. As most are unaware, with the construction of Manekshaw Centre in the Cantonment, most playgrounds of the Artillery Brigade located in the Cantonment were taken away. So, we have a Brigade without adequate playgrounds or training areas. We will be making the situation worse with this new plan as the new Army Headquarters will be taking away even more areas belonging to the units. This is a major issue that cannot be ignored.

(f) Transportation of Staff from the Proposed Location of the Army Headquarters. How are the ten thousand odd people working in the Army Headquarters to come and go from their homes in the suburbs and nearby towns to and from the Cantonment? For the

staff to get to their homes, they first must reach Central Secretariat, or New Delhi Railway Station or Rajiv Chowk Metro Station? How are they going to reach these places on their way to and from the Cantonment?

(g) Road Space and Parking for Additional Vehicles on the Roads. The additional transport necessary to move the staff from the Cantonment in the morning and after office hours in all directions will block the NH8 and other Cantonment Roads leading to massive traffic chaos. Assuming a best-case scenario that all ten thousand personnel move out by buses at 20 persons to a bus (post-Covid-19 criterion) and 50 metres road space to a bus it will be a total of 25 km of road space. In actuality, it will be more as a large number of personal will be using their cars. At peak hours where will this additional 25+ km of road space come from? Also, where is the parking space for these 500 buses in the Cantonment and where is the road space within the Cantonment for its movement. Even if they are fitted in somewhere what happens to the movement and functioning of the Field Army in the Cantonment.

(h) Time for the move of Buses. If each bus takes 30 secs to move out, 500 buses will take 4 hours and 10 mins. Even if divided into three directions which is unlikely, the time taken is too long.

(i) Parade Road is the Main State Entry Road. The Parade Road in the Cantonment is used by the President and other dignitaries for movement to and from the Airport. When such movements take place the work at the Army Headquarters will be impacted. And if this movement is in the morning and evening during office opening and closing hours there will be massive jams for hours on all roads including the inner and outer Ring Roads leading to the Cantonment as they will have to be blocked. And this will be a regular feature.

(j) Hub and Spoke, Space on NH8 and Cantonment Roads. Delhi is designed on a Hub and Spoke arrangement as far as roads and the public transport is organised accordingly. This is another reason why the Army HQ has been located at the Hub, so that movement in and out of people is easy. Therefore, to move it to the end of a spoke would be demolition of another fundamental of planning. Any plan that involves adding traffic on the NH8 will be unworkable.

(k) Road Traffic Interfering with Military Life. The additional road traffic will interfere with life and movement in the Cantonment. It is already a nightmare for units in doing their daily routine activity and training due to the major arterial roads being opened to civilian traffic running through it; made worse after the Cantonment Roads were unwisely opened to civilian traffic in 2017. The Cantonment is the home of the Army Units and civilian traffic cannot be allowed inside it or through it. Proposals to save the Cantonment sent vide Letter No: 31073/Cantt/01/17 dated 03 Sep 2017 to Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways had described the problem, a similar letter was sent to the Army authorities as well with solutions (copies of both letters are attached as Annexure 2 pp 21-23 and Annexure 3 pp 24-26). The situation will become far worse with the new plan.

(l) Mixing Field Formations and Army Headquarters. The Army HQ has a large population of civilian staff, a civilian working style and timings that were created to match the Central Government style of work. Therefore, the needs of the Army Headquarters are completely different from that of troops in the Cantonment who have a military working

and living style, and timings. The Cantonments were specifically created to keep the troops isolated from civilian work and lifestyle. This arrangement must be maintained as this fundamental precept cannot be lost sight of.

(m) Additional Civilians in the Cantonment. The additional civilians of the Army Headquarters will add more complexity to the whole situation, the Cantonment being an area for military units with a military way of life and personnel under the Army Act. Any Army which mixes combatants (those under the Army Act) with civilians have seen their Army having endless troubles. The US Army in the Middle East is an example. The British created Cantonments to keep the Army away from negative and unmilitary influences and the need has not become any less today.

(n) Command Structure. The field force formations and units in the Delhi Cantonment and the Army Headquarters have a different hierarchy and linkages in the chain of command. The Cantonment is under the Administrative Command of General Officer Commanding Headquarters Delhi Area and Headquarters Western Command, while the Army Headquarters and its personnel will not come under this chain of command. This will lead to command, control and discipline issues in the Cantonment, as there will be two Headquarters and personnel under two different command structures mixed up in the same space - the adage that there cannot be two swords in one scabbard couldn't be more apt here. Viewed in the overall scheme of things this may seem a small matter but will be a daily irritant and forever.

12. **Town Planning, Environmental and Infrastructural Issues.** The following aspects are also equally important. Some points are repeated here as they need emphasis: -

(a) Cutting of Trees and Serious Reduction of Green Space. The huge new concrete structure in the Cantonment will have a serious environmental impact. Substantial amounts of green space will be reduced, and a large number of trees will be cut, if it has not already been done. The point is that green space should not be lost. **Tree cutting must be stopped immediately and not allowed to start.**

(b) Will Destroy the Character of the Cantonment. The additional manpower, transport and infrastructural demands on the limited space and resources available, which the Cantonment is hardly equipped to meet, will lead to overcrowding, and destroy the character of the Cantonment. The Delhi Cantonment has taken over a century to become one of the best areas in the country. It is easy to destroy it with a poorly thought out plan.

(c) The NH8 Jaipur Highway. This is the main arterial road from the Cantonment to Raisina Hill and is the only direct connection between the two. This road is already overcrowded with traffic at the best of times. Adding the additional movement of about ten thousand people in the peak hours will make the situation even worse. The Parade Road Junction in front of Manekshaw Centre will become a quagmire of traffic, the Airport Express Metro will get overcrowded and movement back and forth, on the Jaipur Highway will become a nightmare. To solve this problem, more concrete roads will have to be built which will add to further chaos. When things get worse more flyovers will be made! How long can this cycle go on? In 1977 at the Dhaula Kuan there was a nice grassy roundabout with light traffic. In 40 years today, it is a mess of vehicles and concrete. This is neither progress nor development and we are headed for more of this with this new plan.

(d) No Breathing Space. The area selected is restricted from all sides leaving no space for any further expansion or escape. In the event of a mobilisation (movement of fighting formations for war or exercises), there will be utter chaos between moving formations and routine movement of the Army Headquarters. Thereafter the immense volume of traffic from depots and hospitals during a war will add to further and prolonged chaos.

(e) Manekshaw Centre. The creation of the Manekshaw Centre in the Cantonment was itself a huge blunder and should have been a lesson. It is a facility meant primarily for the Army Headquarters and should therefore have been built close to it in the Government Area and not in the Cantonment. It was built on the training area of the troops and has used up more than eight football/hockey fields and training areas of the units in the Cantonment. It drastically reduced the availability of training areas and playgrounds available for troops. Further, the activities in the Centre interfere with the work of the fighting formations. These open grounds were also a reserve in times of war and natural calamities. Now the new Army Headquarter is poised to make things much worse with far more area being diverted for uses other than what it is meant for.

(f) Movement of Staff including Civilians. How Officers, Soldiers and Civilian Staff will get in and out of the area and come from their homes or get back home from Delhi Cantonment is not clear. At the current location of Sena Bhavan and South Block, there is the Rajiv Chowk Metro Junction, the Central Secretariat Bus Terminal, and New Delhi Railway Station, all nearby. And all that is needed now are minor improvements to ease movement to these places. On the contrary, what is now proposed will lead to a massive muddle and more complex solutions.

(g) Security Issues Related to Permanent Civilian Staff. The civilians in the Army Headquarters are more or less permanent, while military personnel are on a tenure basis not exceeding three years. It is my first-hand experience that several civilian staff have their own or family businesses and other interests in Delhi. Fortunately, where the Army HQ is now located there are no markets or other business areas nearby. On the other hand, the new location is surrounded by civilian areas. The Jharera Village, Sadar Bazar and civil residential areas, Gopinath Bazar/Shastri Bazar are all nearby. The presence of these major markets and civilian population areas so close to the location now selected is a recipe for disaster. There will be a regular movement to these places and soon the staff will develop interests here, and many of these interests can and will turn into undesirable activities that will be detrimental to work, and worse, it will be a permanent feature. Further, many will even take up accommodation in these places. Overall, this does not augur well at all. This is not an indictment of civilian staff; it is how human nature and society works.

13. The Constitution and the Armed Forces. The Forces are the defenders of the Constitution, the People, and the Government. While this is the fact; it should also be seen to be so. The Army and Navy Flags flying from South Block along with the Tricolour outside the PMs Office is an important reminder to the people that they are safe and in good hands (The CDS and Air Force Flag should also come here). It is also a source of pride for the people of India. It reminds everyone that the Nation is protected from any misadventure both from within the country and outside. Removing these Flags from there can be sent very wrong signals. For the Forces too, the feeling that they are the pride of the country has a great deal to do with their morale and quality of work.

14. The Armed Forces and How they Perceive Themselves. Please remember that Republic exists because of the Forces and the Forces alone in the ultimate scheme of things. Also, the country is held together because of it, despite all the political shenanigans and internal security issues. It might be well to remember that the British in India were only about 70,000 in number, but they ruled India using Indians as troops for 200 years. They also ruled the entire World and how did they manage that? They succeeded for they understood the importance of the Forces, how to use them, how to treat them and how to project them. If the Forces are treated with respect and given their place of honour, and pride of place, the country will get back more than what it expects. However, there is no need for any mollycoddling whatsoever. **Please note that the successive depredations and downgrading of the Forces (on paper) have not affected their morale yet. And that is because they know the Country exists because of them. Side-track them from this perception and you will surely be sowing the seeds of decay of the Republic. Nothing more suicidal for a Nation than an indifferent Army or the Forces. Remember the Armed Forces are not a police force in olive greens.**

15. Brush All Troubles Under the Carpet. At the face of it, it would seem that all space-related troubles will be resolved if the Army HQ is moved out from the Raisina Hill Area. Many Army Officers would also be imagining that they will be able to work better when away from the bureaucracy. Both these perceptions if they exist are misplaced. As we have seen there is no bigger political folly than this.

16. Summary of Key Aspects. To summarise the key issues that go strongly against the plan to move the Army HQ to the Cantonment are that it is: -

- (a) A major political folly.
- (b) Strategically unsound.
- (c) Functionally impractical.
- (d) Mixing up of troops and civilians is undesired.
- (e) Leading to excessive overcrowding of the already-stretched Delhi Cantonment.
- (f) The planned destruction of the character of Delhi Cantonment.
- (g) A recipe for movement problems, traffic congestion and other major town planning difficulties.
- (h) A serious security hazard due to villages, residential areas and markets close by, and a readymade recipe for espionage and terrorism.
- (i) Leading to a change in the Army's perception of itself and how the Nation sees it and its consequent impact on the Republic.

17. The New Location - Seriously Flawed. Thus relocating the Army Headquarters to such a restricted area as the Cantonment in the proximity of a large number of other vulnerable areas is **a serious error from a Political, Strategic, Security, Space, Mobility, Functional and**

Population Density point of view, even if it has had the approval or acquiescence of the Forces. This is not a simple case of finding an open ground and building a structure. It would be apparent that the whole plan has not been viewed in a holistic light and therefore **needs a complete review.**

18. **To move the Army Headquarters to the Cantonment is, therefore, a seriously unwise idea and must be immediately reversed.** A minor inconvenience of reviewing and reversing the plan today will save significant effort later and stop a serious blunder. Let not personalities, vested temporary interests and ego come in the way.

North and South Block are Seat of Government - Cannot be Museums

19. **The Seat of Government.** North and South Block are two grand buildings that are the seat of power of the Government of India. There does not seem to be any logic for turning them into Museums. There is a view that the imposing North and South Block signify something authoritarian and undemocratic. It must be mentioned here that this was an idea expressed by Edwin Lutyens in relation to the Viceroys House (now Rashtrapati Bhavan) in contrast to what Henry Baker thought. The Viceroys House was then set back so that it does not look imposing and is not visible from the Kingsway (now Rajpath). This view of Lutyens had nothing to do with North and South Blocks. Even if someone has attributed the same to the North and South Block today, the buildings are not going away, irrespective of what is inside. **And the beauty of the buildings is that it represents a benign but firm India and there is nothing undemocratic about it.**

20. **Relic of the British Empire.** There is also a view that they are relics of a previous empire. But that is true of everything in Delhi and the World. We must build on the good things leftover from the past and forget the bad. If we destroy everything connected to the past there will be little in the World.

21. **Major Aspects.** The following major aspects will highlight why the plan to convert North and South Blocks to a museum is seriously unwise: -

(a) **Shortage of Space.** Firstly, there is an acute shortage of space for the offices in this Central Secretariat Area and converting the North and South Block into museums will further reduce the available space.

(b) **Government Area and not Public Place.** Secondly, Raisina Hill is a Government Area while Museums are public places. It is not desirable that public facilities where large numbers of people move around are located in the heart of the Government Area. Museums should be where people can access them with ease and spend time.

(c) **Serious Security Hazard.** The movement of a large number of tourists from all over the World into Raisina Hill on a regular and routine basis is not desired at all. Other than tourists, a large amount of material and personnel for regular exhibitions and other purposes will be moving in and out of the museums. And this will be a permanent feature. **Such activity is completely undesirable in a highly sensitive area and is a readymade mechanism to develop espionage and terrorism right into the centre of the Government Area. It is handing over the seat of the Indian Government to anyone who wants to have a go at it.**

(d) **Memorials and Museums in Lutyens Delhi.** Thirdly, there are too many museums and memorials in Lutyens Delhi, the Teen Murti Bhavan, Indira Gandhi Memorial, the National Museum, and others. Government buildings should not be converted to museums and memorials as a rule. The existing ones should also be restored to their former status and the buildings reused for Government purposes. There is no building more suitable than the Teen Murti for the PMs Residence.

(e) **Move Museums and Memorials Outside Government Area.** Fourthly, all the existing museums and memorials should be brought together and located where people can visit them easily. **The Rajghat-Red Fort Area is one such Area where the Museums can be located.** This is a place where people can offer their respects to our respected founding fathers and former leaders and see the history of the country as well. This whole area can be developed into a site displaying the history of India from time immemorial.

22. **Tourism to Central Secretariat Area.** Tourism to the Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Central Secretariat Area can continue as hitherto fore, where people are already being taken around in buses and driving through with halts.

23. Locating museums where the seat of power ought to be, will be a metaphor telling the people that we have handed over the Nation to the dead and gone and we have moved out; now only they can help you. **There cannot be a more damaging message to the Nation than this.**

24. **The idea of converting North and South Blocks as museums should be dropped immediately and a comprehensive plan for relocating all museums to the Rajghat-Red Fort Area considered.**

PMs Residence and Office

25. The PMs residence should be away from his place of work. Mixing up work and home will ensure that neither gets the desired attention. When working, one works, when off work, one should be off except for things that cannot wait. A residence is a private place for family and private events, and it is obvious that all private activity must be away from official areas. It also does not make sense to have a residence constructed in the middle of the offices as in the new plan.

26. The Teen Murti House was the PMs House and it could be restored as such. It has the ideal space, the necessary grandeur and is worthy of a PM. Any additional space required can always be added. If a smaller independent house is required as a personal space that can also be added. This was an idea of Pandit Nehru as well.

27. The PMs primary office must remain in the South Block, with the PMO co-located.

Recommendations

28. Having examined all the issues involved and seen the obvious lacunae in the re-development plan and keeping the functional, strategic, security, space, movement, and environmental aspects in mind the following is a summary of the recommendations that must be implemented: -

- (a) **North and South Block - Seat of Power.** The North and South Block must remain the seat of power, with the Home and Finance Ministries in the North Block and the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence and Ministry of External Affairs in the South Block. The Ministry of External Affairs could also move to its new office opposite the National Museum on Janpath. The important Directorates of the Army, Navy and Air Force must be accommodated in the South Block with the Ministry of Defence. The remainder is to be located as explained in Sub-Para 28 (d) below.
- (b) **All Forces HQs in Government Area.** The DMA/CDS, IDS, Army, Naval and Air Force Headquarters must be close to the seat of the Government and along with the Ministry of Defence in the Central Secretariat Area. This aspect is most important as the security of the country in the future will depend on how the work of the Forces is integrated with the Central Government. This aspect has not received the attention it should have while the new plan was evolved.
- (c) **Dept of Military Affairs/CDS, HQ IDS.** All these need to be combined for better efficiency and decision making. Creating too many unnecessary chains doing similar work is a source of indecision and confusion both now and in War. This is a separate aspect and will be discussed in another letter. However, all these must be in the Central Government Area and not near the International Airport as the HQ IDS is proposed to be.
- (d) **Armed Forces Area.** All the elements of Armed Forces HQs not in the South Block including the DMA, CDS, IDS, the Army, Navy, Air Force HQs should be located in the general area occupied by the Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence offices as of now. The DGAFMS, Coast Guard, DGQA, DRDO, and other departments of the MOD not in South Block should also be relocated in this area. Detailed planning for re-location and redesign of the areas must be done holistically for a logical and functional layout.
- (e) **Spill Over of Departments if Any.** Those departments of the Army Navy and Air Force, DGAFMS, DRDO, DGQA, Dept of Standardisation, DGQA and DRDO etc and any other part of the Ministry of Defence whose work is not directly connected with the Central Government (if there are any such) should be moved to another complex, maybe in RK Puram if necessary. But they should not be moved to the Cantonment in any case whatsoever.
- (f) **Cantonment for the Field Force Etc.** The Delhi Cantonment must be retained as a place exclusively for the Field Force, Depots, Hospitals etc. No part of the Army Headquarters should be allowed here.
- (g) **Red Tape and Bureaucracy.** By better space management, location of offices and cutting down of infructuous work both in the Forces HQs and the Ministries, work and space required will be reduced. We have to upgrade our Whitehall System. And work can easily reduce by 80 per cent with a change in the way work is done.
- (h) **Non-Government Agencies.** The non-Governmental agencies and establishments must be moved out of the Central Government Area.

- (i) **Public Services.** Those departments of the Government which provide services to the people must be moved out of the Central Secretariat and located where people can access them easily without interfering with the movement and work of the Central Government.
- (j) **Teen Murti - restore as PMs House.** The Teen Murti House must be restored as the Prime Ministers House with renovation and additions, as necessary. There is no need for a new set of structures.
- (k) **Red Fort - Rajghat Complex.** The contents of the Teen Murti House and other museums or memorials such as the Indira Gandhi Memorial and other places of public interest should all be put together close to Rajghat where the public can visit them and at the same time and pay homage to all our past leaders. The Red Fort complex can be incorporated into this plan along with the development of Chandni Chowk and the Yamuna waterfront. The simple rule is, keep tradition and history separate from work.
- (l) **Yamuna Waterfront.** The original plan of Edwin Lutyens for the Yamuna waterfront, which was abandoned then due to fund constraints then, should also be taken into consideration.
- (m) **Ministry Offices on Rajpath and around India Gate.** All the important Ministries can be fitted into these areas. New buildings can replace the old barracks. The existing iconic structures can be revamped such as the National Museum building, but they need not be demolished. The planned new sandstone monstrosities should be replaced by pleasant buildings each with the architecture of a region with entrance and exits away from the Rajpath as of now. The beauty of the Rajpath is the tree line on either side. It should not be destroyed.
- (n) **Underground Communication System.** All these buildings on either side of the Rajpath including the North Block and South Block with an extension to the Rashtrapati Bhavan can be connected by an underground system consisting of a two-way circular railway, roadway for electric vehicles and footpath linking all offices including the bifurcated ministry offices with access control for each office. The necessity and feasibility can be examined.
- (o) **Underground Communication System Extension for MOD and Forces HQ.** A similar system for movement between offices of the MOD and Forces HQs and linked to the main system with controlled access is necessary. It can be linked to the above system if that is created.
- (p) **FSI/FAR and Building Coverage.** All these benchmarks in the Central Secretariat and Lutyens Delhi must be improved to reduce congestion and population density while increasing green areas and open spaces. Building Coverage is especially important for the open green and spacious feel while reducing heat from concrete.
- (q) **Not a Thoroughfare.** The entire Central Secretariat, Government and India Gate Area must not be a thoroughfare for traffic passing through. The routing of traffic and relocation of commercial areas must be investigated. It should be necessary only for driving tours and those who have work to enter this area.

(r) **Wartime Offices.** The need for integrating all this to wartime offices should be considered as well. This is necessary to ensure a seamless transition when necessary.

(s) **Delhi as an Administrative City State.** In the next ten years, Delhi must be depopulated and de-industrialised and be converted into an Administrative and Business City for which a larger long-term plan is required.

29. **Holistic View and Legacy.** It is a must that we look at this re-development in a holistic manner as above to leave a great legacy. The entire plan, therefore, needs an overhaul based on a logical concept that supports governance and heralds a powerful nation and not just a splatter of buildings built wherever space is found.

Conclusion

30. When a city or even a small home is re-developed one of the basic considerations is that one cannot make fundamental changes in its original layout without major modifications. And such major changes always have major repercussions. For instance, while redoing a home one cannot move the sitting room to where the kitchen is and vice versa. If it is to be done, one will have to re-do the plumbing, the sewage lines, windows and reallocate space by breaking walls and so on. And even if all this is done, one will still be looking into the neighbour's kitchen from the new sitting room.

31. The same principle applies here, the original plan was to keep the Ministries at one place and the Field Formations, Depots and Hospitals etc at another. Removing this clear distinction is a fundamental blunder and that will lead to a disaster in the next five years.

32. From the arguments ante, it will be apparent that the Army Headquarters and the rest of the Armed Forces Headquarters must be close to the Central Government Area and cannot be in the Cantonment. And that the Cantonment is best left to the troops. The source of the idea to relocate the Army Headquarters may have originated from the Army. But that does not negate the total folly and the lack of perception.

33. Overall, the plan for relocating the Army Headquarters and mixed-use of the Central Secretariat is disastrous from a security perspective. Further, it does not follow any principles of hierarchy, zoning, inter-relationships of the headquarters with working partners, space management, movement management, population density considerations, impact on other establishments, strategic considerations etc. This proposed development must also be dovetailed into the plan for Delhi as a State. Here too what are the concepts on which Delhi is proposed to be developed? That is a matter for another discussion.

Covid - 19 - Not the Time for Fundamental Changes

34. As stated at the beginning the Corona Virus Pandemic has changed the way the World will function, and how exactly that will be is yet to be seen. What is clear however is that this is not the time to make any fundamental changes, but to watch and see how the World Order settles down.

35. There will be profound changes in our way of life. And city planning, layout, architecture, design, and everything else will be impacted and it is necessary to incorporate the new paradigms into our plans for the future and count our pennies now and see where it is spent best at the right time.

Jai Hind!

Yours faithfully,

Sd-

Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (Retired)

Annexures

Annexure 1 - [REDACTED]

Annexure 2 - Copy of letter addressed to Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways titled Proposals to save the Cantonment sent vide Letter No: 31073/Cantt/01/17 dated 03 Sep 2017 (pp 21 to 24).

Annexure 3 - Copy of letter addressed to GOC Delhi Area with copies to the COAS and E-in-C sent vide Letter No 31073/Cantt/02/17dated 3 Sep 2017 (pp 25-26).

Copy to: -

Shri Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister of India, Ministry of Defence, South Block, New Delhi - 110 011	
Shri Amit Shah, Home Minister of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, North Block, New Delhi - 110 001	
Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways,	

Transport Bhawan, 1, Parliament Street, New Delhi-110 001	
Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Minister of State (IC) for Housing and Urban Affairs, Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi - 110 011	
Shri Surendra Sompalle, Chairperson, Town and Country Planning Organisation, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, E Block - Vikas Bhavan, ITO, IP Estate, New Delhi, Delhi 110 002	
General [REDACTED] Chief of Defence Staff, Department of Military Affairs, South Block, New Delhi - 110 011	
General [REDACTED] Chief of the Army Staff, Integrated Headquarter of the Ministry of Defence (Army), South Block, DHQ PO, New Delhi - 110 011	

Admiral [REDACTED], Chief of the Naval Staff, Integrated Headquarter of the Ministry of Defence (Navy), South Block, DHQ PO, New Delhi - 110 011	

<p>Air Chief Marshal [REDACTED], Chief of the Air Staff, Integrated Headquarter of the Ministry of Defence (Air Force), Vayu Bhavan, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New Delhi - 110 106</p>	
<p>Lt Gen [REDACTED] Engineer-in-Chief, Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army), Kashmir House, New Delhi- 110011</p>	
<p>Lt Gen [REDACTED] Quarter Master General QMG Branch Integrated HQ of MoD (Army) DHQ PO, New Delhi-110011</p>	
<p>Lt Gen [REDACTED] General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, HQ Western Command, Chandimandir Cantonment, Panchkula 134 107 Haryana</p>	
<p>Lt Gen [REDACTED] General Officer Commanding, Headquarters Delhi Area, Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi 110 010</p>	

Annexure 1
(Refers to Para 7 on p 4)

[REDACTED]

Annexure 2
(Refers to Sub-para 12(g) on p 6)

-----Copy-----

Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (retired)
Regiment of Artillery

SPEED POST

Tele:
Res & Fax:
Mob:
Email:



31073/Cantt/01/17

03 Sep 2017

To,
Shri Nitin Gadkari,
Minister for Road Transport and Highways,
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways,
Transport Bhawan,
1, Parliament Street,
New Delhi-110001

**DELHI CANTONMENT: A QUAGMIRE OF THOROUGHFARES
HAVE TO ISOLATE IT FROM TRAFFIC PASSING THROUGH**

Sir,

1. This has reference to the news item in the TOI Gurgaon of 13 Aug 17 page 2 titled, '*By Apr 2019, Signal Free Ride to IGI Airport*' (copy attached).
2. The plan reported in the newspaper prepared by the Highways Ministry and NHAI have numerous Flyovers and Underpasses to resolve the traffic problem in the Cantonment Area.
3. **However, the real issue is that the Cantonment is being used by a large amount of traffic that is merely passing through.** The Cariappa Marg runs right through the Cantonment as does Parade Road and Thimayya Marg. These were internal Cantonment Roads; till development on the Western and South Western side of the Cantonment happened. These roads have now become major thoroughfares carrying traffic from one side of the Cantonment to the other.
4. **Cantonments were created to keep the Forces isolated so that they can train and be prepared for their tasks without external distractions. The increasing thoroughfare traffic through Delhi Cantonment has destroyed this to a large extent.**

5. Today it is not possible to use even the internal roads of the Cantonment for military activity. In the next few years matters will get worse as traffic volume passing through will continue to increase.

6. It is therefore suggested that the Cantonment should be isolated from general traffic and not used as a thoroughfare. Solutions to provide a seamless alternate routing to those who wish to go from one side to the other can be worked out and some have been suggested to the General Officer Commanding Delhi Area. **A great deal of money can be saved if the current plan is held in abeyance till this matter is resolved.**

7. These are preliminary thoughts; a detailed study and discussion will be required for which authorities will have to be involved.

Yours faithfully,

-----sd-----

Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (retd)

Enclosures:

Brief Information on author of the letter (Not included now. See at p 14.)
News Item in TOI of 13 Aug 17

Copy to:

**The Chief of the Army Staff,
South Block,
Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army),
New Delhi- 110011**

**The Engineer-in-Chief,
Kashmir House,
Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army),
New Delhi- 110011**

**The General Officer Commanding,
Delhi Area,
Headquarters Delhi Area,
New Delhi 110 010**

NEWS ITEM IN TIMES OF INDIA GURGAON EDITION 13 AUG 2017 p

2

By April 2019, signal-free ride to IGI airport

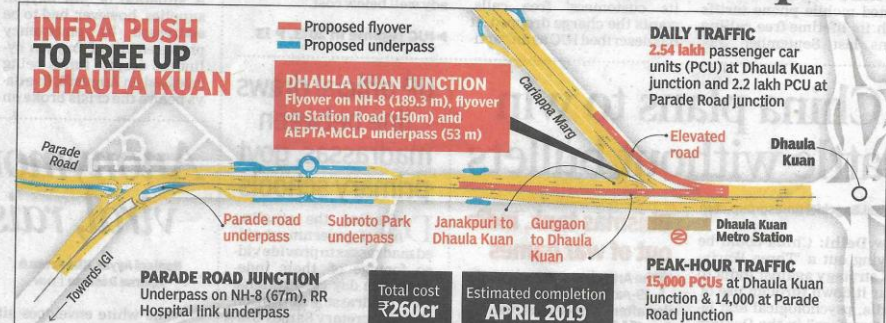
Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: By April 2019, the drive to Indira Gandhi International airport will be seamless. Highways minister Nitin Gadkari will lay the foundation for building two flyovers, underpasses and foot over bridges on Monday to make the stretch traffic-signal free.

Officials of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) said the work will start in October and will be completed in 18 months. "Since we have got the requisite land and NHAI bears the full cost of the works, there is no question of the project getting delayed. Our effort will be to complete work before deadline," an official said.

The proposal to build flyovers and underpasses was mooted by Gadkari after he was caught in a two hour long traffic jam on the Delhi-Gurgaon stretch in December 2015.

Gadkari had pursued the defence ministry to hand over



land on this stretch for building the structures and widening and had held several meetings. "Ministry of defence has agreed to transfer 13 acres of land to NHAI. For junction improvement, part of land is also required from police station," an official statement from NHAI said.

The first bottleneck on this stretch is junction of Station

Road with NH-8 in front of Airport Express Metro station. This junction will become signal free. "A flyover is proposed to be constructed on right carriageway - for traffic from Gurgaon to Delhi. At this junction, provision for U-turn of traffic is also being provided. Further, two foot over bridges with escalators will be constructed for facilitating pe-

destrians," NHAI said.

On the Station Road, a vehicular underpass will be built for facilitating smooth movement of defence personnel. Similarly, the stretch from Dhaula Kuan junction to Parade Road will be widened to ensure minimum four lanes on either side for through traffic. Near junctions, additional structures will be provided.

There will also be a vehicular underpass for connecting defence establishments on either side.

At Parade Road junction, the curve will be improved by widening the road for smooth turning of traffic towards airport and Gurgaon. At this junction, a vehicular underpass will be built for direct access to Parade Road.

-----End of Copy-----

Annexure 3
(Refers to Sub-para 12(g) on p 6)

-----Copy-----

Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (retired)
Regiment of Artillery

Tele:

Res & Fax:

Mob:

Email:

SPEED POST

31073/Cantt/02/17

03 Sep 2017

To,
The General Officer Commanding,
Delhi Area,
Headquarters Delhi Area,
New Delhi 110 010

**DELHI CANTONMENT: A QUAGMIRE OF THOROUGHFARES -
HAVE TO ISOLATE IT FROM TRAFFIC PASSING THROUGH**

Sir,

1. This has reference to the news item in the TOI Gurgaon of 13 Aug 17 page 2 titled, '*By Apr 2019, Signal Free Ride to IGI Airport*' (copy attached).
2. The plan reported in the newspaper prepared by the Highways Ministry and NHAI has numerous Flyovers and Underpasses to resolve the traffic problem in the Cantonment Area. This plan however considers only the convenience of the traffic passing through the Cantonment.
3. **The real issue is that the Cantonment is being used by a large amount of traffic for merely passing through.** The Cariappa Marg runs right through the Cantonment as does Parade Road and Thimayya Marg. These were internal Cantonment Roads; till development on the Western and South Western side of the Cantonment happened. These roads have now become major thoroughfares carrying traffic from one side of the Cantonment to the other.
4. **Heavy civilian traffic passing right through the Cantonment using the Cantonment roads as mere thoroughfares upsets routine military activity and is a security issue as well.** Already several roundabouts have been removed and replaced by traffic lights; even then the waiting time at places like Kirby Place Jn and the Jn next to EME Mess are exceptionally long.

5. Today it is not possible to use even the internal roads of the Cantonment for military activity. In 1977 my unit would once a month run from Sadar Bazar up to Dhaula Kuan Junction for morning PT. Today no such thing is possible. In the next few years, matters will get worse as traffic volume passing through will continue to increase.

6. **Cantonments were created to keep the Forces isolated so that they can train and be prepared for their tasks without external distractions.** The increasing thoroughfare traffic has destroyed this possibility to a large extent. **It is therefore suggested that the Cantonment should be isolated from general traffic and not used as a thoroughfare.**

7. The solution is to provide a seamless alternate routing to those who wish to go from one side to the other. A few suggestions for re-routing traffic passing through are as follows: -

(a) Firstly, Thimayya Marg, Cariappa Marg, Parade Road and other roads should be closed to traffic passing through, at both ends.

(b) Secondly, traffic from Dhaula Kuan to Janakpuri and Tilak Nagar and vice-versa can be re-routed via the Ring Road and picked up from Brar Square on Ring Road by an elevated road or tunnel and taken to Tilak Marg and Pankha Road. This will ease the traffic at Cariappa Marg – NH8 Junction at Dhaula Kuan also.

(c) Thirdly, traffic from the IGI Airport Terminal 1 to the Janakpuri side should be diverted via a new road to be built on the Western Side of the Railway Line.

(d) Fourthly, the DSOI Entrance on NH8 should be closed and a new one on Cariappa Marg should be created about 100m from NH8, or even have a combined new entrance for the AEPTA and DSOI on Cariappa Marg. An internal road from DSOI to the new entrance of DSOI can be built along the South-Eastern Wall of DSOI.

8. **These are some preliminary thoughts; a detailed study and discussion will be required for which authorities will have to be involved. It is Now or Never!**

Yours faithfully,

-----sd-----

Colonel Prem Kumar Nair (retd)

Enclosures: (not attached now)

Brief Information on author of the letter (p14).

News Item in TOI of 13 Aug 17 (same as on p 21).

Copy to:

The Chief of the Army Staff,

South Block,

Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army),

New Delhi- 110011

The Engineer-in-Chief,

Kashmir House,
Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army),
New Delhi- 110011

-----End of Copy-----