PCSMANTRA.COM

Central Secretariat Library: Relocation Is Also a Preservation Question

News context: 2026-11-17 | **Publication:** 17 November 2026
Mains: GS-I: Culture and heritage; GS-II: Public institutions
Prelims: concepts and statement-based practice



Original symbolic illustration: pcsmantra.com

Related reading: The Arunachal Pradesh Tour of the Buddha's Sacred Relics (Piprahwa Remains): Arrival in Tawang From 31 October

Why in the News

A 17 November 2026 news report citing PTI, says the Union government has allotted space in a government office building in Netaji Nagar for the Central Secretariat Library. It also reports that on 16 November the Supreme Court raised concerns about preservation arrangements and directed that the books not be shifted until the next hearing, reported as 20 November. The signed judicial order was not obtained for this article. The court developments are therefore attributed news reporting, not an independently verified account of the order.

Official institutional facts

The library's website dates its establishment to 1891, when the Imperial Secretariat Library was founded in Calcutta. It moved to Delhi with the transfer of the capital and has occupied G-Wing of Shastri Bhawan since 1969. It is under the Ministry of Culture. Its collection comprises about 850,000 print and non-print volumes. The website describes it as the second-largest Central Government library after the National Library in Kolkata. It also operates a textbook library in R.K. Puram.

Why a new address is not the whole answer

Allotting space is an administrative step. It does not, by itself, establish that arrangements for packing, cataloguing, transport, storage and reader access are complete. The mains issue is wider than a choice between an old building and a new one. It concerns continuity of access, the integrity of the collection and responsibility for any loss or damage.

A preservation plan can be assessed through a consignment inventory, separate handling of fragile material, suitable storage, damage reporting and alternative reader services. These are analytical criteria proposed here, not a list of verified court directions. Digitisation can improve access but does not replace protection of physical originals.

Examination distinctions

1891 is the foundation year; 1969 marks the library's occupancy of Shastri Bhawan. Space being allotted is not the same as relocation being completed. A reported interim pause on moving books is also not a permanent prohibition on redevelopment.

Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1. Consider the following statements about the Central Secretariat Library:

Statement 1: It was established in 1891.

Statement 2: It is under the Ministry of Culture.

Statement 3: It has occupied Shastri Bhawan since 1891.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 1 and 3 only

(c) 2 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

▼ **Answer and Explanation**

Correct answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct. It was founded in Calcutta in 1891.

Statement 2 is correct. It is under the Ministry of Culture.

Statement 3 is incorrect. Its occupancy of Shastri Bhawan dates to 1969, not its foundation.

Question 2. Consider the following statements about library preservation:

Statement 1: Digitisation can improve access for readers.

Statement 2: Digitisation eliminates the need to protect the physical originals.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 only

PCSMANTRA.COM

(b) 2 only

(c) Both 1 and 2

(d) Neither 1 nor 2

▼ **Answer and Explanation**

Correct answer: (a)

Statement 1 is correct. Digital copies can support remote access and search.

Statement 2 is incorrect. Physical originals and fragile material still require protection.

Mains Practice Question

How should the relocation of a public library balance infrastructure renewal with documentary heritage preservation? (150 words) (10 marks)

Answer Outline

Introduction: Present the library as an institution of public knowledge and heritage.

Main Body: Discuss relocation needs, fragile material, inventories, safe storage, alternative access and responsibility.

Conclusion: Connect renewal to preservation and continuity of reader services.

PCSMANTRA.COM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Which ministry oversees the library?

The Ministry of Culture.

Have all the books reached Netaji Nagar?

The available report does not establish this. It reports a pause on shifting books until the next hearing.

Was the original court order examined?

No. Judicial developments rely on the attributed news report; institutional facts come from the library's own website.

Sources

- csl.nic.in
- www.indiatoday.in