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Seva Teertha — India's New Integrated PMO Complex and the PM RAHAT Scheme

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WHY IN NEWS

India inaugurated the **Seva Teertha** — an integrated complex housing the Prime Minister's Office, the National Security Council Secretariat, and the Cabinet Secretariat — ending over eight decades of India's post-independence governance being conducted from **South Block**, a British-era colonial building. The first policy decision from the new complex was the **PM RAHAT Scheme** for road accident victims.

WHAT IS SEVA TEERTHA?

Seva Teertha (meaning "Pilgrimage of Service") is a new integrated administrative complex that houses three of India's most critical executive offices under one roof:

| Building | Occupant | Previous Location |
|----------------|--|----------------------------|
| Seva Teertha-1 | Prime Minister's Office (PMO) | South Block (1947–2026) |
| Seva Teertha-2 | National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) | South Block |
| Seva Teertha-3 | Cabinet Secretariat | Rashtrapati Bhavan Complex |

The complex is part of the broader **Central Vista Redevelopment Project** — a Rs 20,000 crore+ project to redevelop the central spine of New Delhi, which also includes the new Parliament building (inaugurated May 2023).

DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

Architect: Dr. **Bimal Patel** — the same architect who designed the new Parliament building and multiple other Central Vista structures.

Architectural influences:

Chalukyan stone screen-work (11th–13th century Deccan tradition) — latticed screens used as external cladding, allowing natural ventilation and diffused light

Dome design inspired by **Buddhist stupa** form — a deliberate indigenisation of architectural grammar replacing British imperial classicism

“**India House**” — a dedicated conference and summit facility within the complex for international bilateral and multilateral meetings

Sustainability: 4-star green building rating under the **Ministry of Environment’s green building standards** (Bureau of Energy Efficiency rating system). Features include passive cooling, natural lighting, rainwater harvesting, and energy-efficient systems.

Inscription: “Nagrik Devo Bhava” — Citizens are God — prominently placed at the entrance, reflecting a shift from colonial paternalism to citizen-centric governance philosophy.

SYMBOLIC AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

South Block was built in the 1930s as part of Herbert Baker’s New Delhi design for British imperial administration. It housed the offices of the Viceroy’s military and foreign affairs secretariats. Post-independence, South Block became home to the PMO and the Ministry of External Affairs — continuing in a building designed for colonial rule.

The transition from South Block to Seva Teertha is being presented as a symbolic end to what the government calls “colonial governance architecture” — not merely a change of address but a reorientation of how the state conceptualises its relationship with citizens (Nagrik Devo Bhava versus the colonial “ruler-subject” architecture).

North and South Blocks are now to be converted into the “**Yuge Yugeen Bharat**” **National Museum** (India Across the Ages), approved by the Union Cabinet simultaneously. The museum will trace India’s civilisational continuity from ancient history through the freedom movement to post-independence development.

PM RAHAT SCHEME — FIRST DECISION FROM SEVA TEERTHA

The **PM RAHAT** (Rashtriya Arogya Hetu Aarthik Tatparta — National Emergency Health Financial Preparedness) Scheme was the first policy decision signed from the new Seva Teertha complex.

Key features:

Assured cashless hospitalisation: Up to **Rs 1.5 lakh** for road accident victims

Time window: Available within the **first 7 days** of the accident

Coverage: Any victim — regardless of their ability to pay, their insurance status, or whether they were at fault

Implementation: Designated empanelled hospitals provide treatment; reimbursement from a central corpus

Problem it addresses: India has one of the world’s highest road accident fatality rates — approximately **1.68 lakh deaths per year** (MoRTH 2024). A major reason victims do not reach hospitals in time is the “**good Samaritan problem**” and the inability of victims (or bystanders who bring them) to provide upfront payment. The PM RAHAT scheme removes the financial barrier in the critical first 7 days.

Related law: The **Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019** already provides for cashless treatment for accident victims under the **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund** administered by the Ministry of Road Transport. PM RAHAT builds on this framework with explicit financial limits and operational clarity.

PMO — FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURE

The **Prime Minister’s Office (PMO)** is a critical executive institution that does NOT appear in the Constitution — its existence is based on executive instructions and convention:

Not a ministry: The PMO is not a “ministry” under the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules — it functions as a coordinating, policy-directing, and monitoring office

Principal Secretary to PM: The most senior official in the PMO is the Principal Secretary (or Principal Private Secretary), currently a senior IAS/IFS officer

Functions: Policy coordination across ministries, monitoring implementation of PM’s agenda, international liaison, intelligence briefings, and security management (through NSA)

NSC Secretariat (NSCS): Provides support to the National Security Council, chaired by the PM, comprising the NSA (National Security Advisor), heads of service chiefs, and key cabinet ministers (External Affairs, Home, Defence, Finance)

UPSC RELEVANCE

*Seva Teertha (location, architect, buildings), PM RAHAT Scheme (coverage, amount, window), Nagrik Devo Bhava, Bimal Patel, South Block history, Yuge Yugeen Bharat Museum, Central Vista Project. **Mains GS-2:** Role of PMO in Indian executive structure; constitutional vs. non-constitutional executive bodies; Central Vista controversy (heritage vs. modernity); PM RAHAT and road safety governance.*

★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
SEVA TEERTHA — CORE DATA:

Three occupants: PMO (ST-1) + NSCS (ST-2) + Cabinet Secretariat (ST-3)

Architect: **Dr. Bimal Patel**

Green rating: **4-star** (Ministry of Environment standards)

Inscription: **“Nagrik Devo Bhava”**

Features: India House (summits), Chalukyan screen-work, stupa-dome

Inauguration context: 95th anniversary of New Delhi (Feb 13, 1931 original inauguration)

PM RAHAT SCHEME:

Cashless hospitalisation: **Rs 1.5 lakh maximum**

Window: **First 7 days** of road accident

Target: Removes financial barrier to emergency treatment for accident victims

Related: Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019, Motor Vehicle Accident Fund

YUGE YUGEN BHARAT NATIONAL MUSEUM:

Location: **North Block + South Block** (after Seva Teertha shift)

Meaning: India Across the Ages

Covers: Civilisational history → freedom struggle → post-independence development

PMO STRUCTURE:

Not a ministry under Allocation of Business Rules

Non-constitutional body (no Article defines it)

Principal Secretary/NSA as key functionaries

NSC: Chaired by PM; members include NSA, service chiefs, key cabinet ministers

OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

Central Vista Redevelopment: includes new Parliament (inaugurated May 2023), new PM residence (7 Lok Kalyan Marg), Kartavya Path redevelopment, Seva Teertha

India road accident deaths: ~1.68 lakh/year (MoRTH 2024) — among world’s highest

South Block: Built 1930s; designed by Herbert Baker; housed PMO and MEA post-1947

Bimal Patel: Architect + urban planner; Professor at CEPT University, Ahmedabad; also designed HCP Design & Project Management Pvt Ltd projects

Sources: Drishti IAS, PIB

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