

The Honourable Nirmala Sitharaman
Minister of State for Commerce and Industry
Ministry of Commerce and Industry
Government of India
Udyog Bhawan
New Delhi 110107

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Environment
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Dear Madam Minister,

We, Professor Regine Leibinger and Professor Matthias Ballestrem, in our positions as Professors of Architecture at the Technical University of Berlin took great pleasure to welcome one of India's most renowned engineers and designers Mr. Mahendra Raj for a lecture in October of 2016. Therefore I write now, distraught, in order to defend vehemently the critical integrity of Mr. Raj's masterworks the Hall of Nations as well as the Nehru Pavilion at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi against potential demolition.

To say that these buildings are landmarks would be an understatement. As the largest concrete space frame structure in the world and first of its kind, the Hall of Nations is a singular piece of engineering. It has been studied and exhibited across the globe at museums such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris and the National gallery of Modern Art. These monumental works demonstrate the epitome of technical craft and potential of their era, not just in India but within the international community as well. Today we could never effectively replicate the handcrafted techniques, the precision of simple and economic material construction, or the efficiency and exactness of engineering to build such a structure. It is imperative to then understand that this building could only have been built during its time and where it stands, among a complex of other hugely important works, which includes the Nehru Memorial.

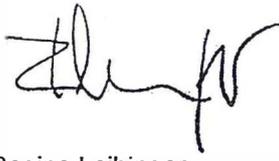
The Hall of Nations Complex is a marker of excellence in India's architectural, engineering, and cultural history and its demolition would be an outright tragedy. These structures continue to inspire students and practitioners in the design and

engineering professions across the world and must be preserved as part of an international architectural heritage.

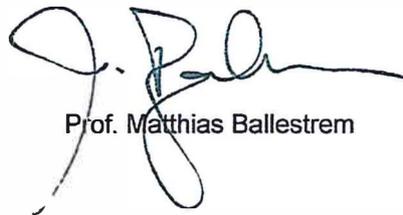
We recommend a different approach to the redevelopment of the Hall of Nations Complex, one that preserves these iconic structures. Structurally, these buildings are neither damaged, nor compromised, and could readily be adapted to service new and exciting programs. In our experience, modernization today no longer consists of building new, it means preserving and sustaining, hybridizing. Therefore we encourage the Government to reconsider its plans for demolition. As an alternative, we strongly advise organizing design competitions to fully explore the potential of new systems and technologies, new facilities in a redeveloped plan for the Pragati Maidan which specifically preserves these seminal works of India's architectural heritage.

It is for these reasons that we at the Technical University of Berlin strongly recommend the preservation of the Hall of Nations, the Halls of Industries, and the Nehru Pavilion.

Yours sincerely



Prof. Regine Leibinger



Prof. Matthias Ballestrem