



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

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Editor's Note

A greener Delhi

Lal mahal under siege again

Hanuman mandir facelift to finish by September

Delhi pushes for Heritage City status

Capital pushes for Heritage City status

For a monumental effort, ASI gets some private help

A GREENER DELHI

Amidst the much talked about infrastructural makeover of the city, Delhi is quietly gearing up for greener days ahead. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has planned that the national capital region will get four new biodiversity parks at the Northern Ridge, Tilpath valley, Yamuna riverfront and Neela Hauz. The recently convened meeting of the executive committee on biodiversity parks proved to be defining moment as the landscape unit of the DDA presented the action plan of the mega project. Besides developing new parks, DDA plans to improve the existing two – Yamuna and Aravali biodiversity parks. According to Neemo Dhar, Director, Public Relations, DDA, “the objective is to recreate the eco-system and revive the biotic heritage that existed prior to the urbanization of the city, so that the city can cope up with the ill effects of pollution.” Work on the project has begun in parts.

SOURCE

11th June 2009, Hindustan Times

LAL MAHAL UNDER SIEGE AGAIN

After a big hue and cry over demolition of the 13th century Lal Mahal in Nizamuddin last year, it appears that construction work is being undertaken at the site on the sly. On a recent visit, Times City found a bamboo scaffolding has been erected where the tehkhana (basement) was located. Locals said work is usually undertaken at night and sometimes early in the morning. The nature of work couldn't be ascertained as access is strictly controlled and the view blocked with shutters from all sides. Any effort to find out more is met with hostility.

The site had been sealed by the MCD last October and any construction activity was prohibited without its sanction. The land also falls in a zone declared prohibited for this by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), as it is less than 20 metres away from a centrally-protected monument, Barah Khamba. According to sources, when the demolition of Lal Mahal was discovered by the authorities last year, the tehkhana on which the original structure stood had managed to survive. However, sources claimed, that it had now been destroyed. No government agency has been able to hold anyone accountable for destruction of the heritage structure till date. Sources said private builders wanted to build a multi storey building, similar to the other buildings in the vicinity. “It is appalling that despite the site being sealed by MCD and its proximity to a protected monument, construction work can still go on there and all the agencies concerned remain oblivious. The heritage conservation committee also visited the site a few months back but no action seems to have been taken,” said a source.

MCD's deputy commissioner, city zone, Vijay Singh was not available for comment. A senior ASI official, meanwhile, said they were not aware of any construction work going on at the Lal Mahal ruins. "We will look into this. No construction is allowed without our approval under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958. Since ASI cannot take action on its own, we will have to file a police complaint in this regard," said a senior ASI official. The structure, which was the first Islamic palace in India dating to 1240 AD and the first building to have used the true arch in tehkhanas as seen in archival pictures, was found partially demolished on October 30 last year. The prominent chhatris and red standstone platform bore the brunt first. Oral history mentions that traveler Ibn Batuta stayed at Lal Mahal during his visit to Delhi during Mohammad Tughlaq's reign.

It was considered worthy of protection in 1910 by ASI; its historical, archaeological and architectural value has significantly increased over the last century, as stated by historian Zafar Hasan in a report. The unique architectural style for a palace building comprises of a central domed chamber with attached pavilions in each of the four directions and outer decorative canopies with the entire structure sitting on an underground tehkhana (basement chambers to be used in the summer months).

SOURCE

14th June 2009, Times of India

HANUMAN MANDIR FACELIFT TO FINISH BY SEPTEMBER

Though originally scheduled to be complete by December last year, the newly redeveloped Hanuman Mandir on Baba Kharak Singh Marg here is yet to see the light of the day with several delays bogging down the project since its inception. However, the renovated temple complex which will now be rechristened as the "Hanuman Mandir Vatika" is expected to be unveiled by September this year with digging and construction work well under way at the temple premises. Undertaken by the NDMC, the project envisages redevelopment of the present temple complex and construction of a modern two-level plaza at its front replete with walkways and ramps to separate the main temple area with the rest of the surroundings. According to the NDMC, which approved the project in October 2007, it was the long dragging case in the Delhi High Court filed by one of the tender applicants which put the project in a legal limbo for over four months. Furthermore, bringing members of main stakeholder, Hanumanji Maharaj Mandir Trust on board for the project also contributed to the delay. Meanwhile, certain members of the Trust have alleged that the civic body is "not serious" about redeveloping the complex in time.

SOURCE

15th June 2009, Hindu

DELHI PUSHES FOR HERITAGE CITY STATUS

A new heritage tourism route linking at least 30 big and small historical monuments in this capital city is in the works. It is the first step to help Delhi bag UNESCO World Heritage City status. INTACH the country's leading non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of heritage- last week completed a blueprint of the route between the Red Fort and Humayun's Tomb along the busy Mathura Road. The onuments along the route can be accessed by a special hop-on-hop-off heritage bust and cycles from the Cycle Society. The pilot project has been funded by the World Monument Fund, which has pitched in with \$200,000 as a start-up grant. The project divides Delhi into seven heritage precincts between the ridge and the river. The intach report has been sent to the Delhi government for implementation. Intach had signed a heritage pact with the government of Delhi in 2008 for sustainable development of the Capital's cultural heritage that will help it become a World Heritage City. Intach also plans to set up audio-visual interpretation centres at the archaeological sites along the routes to "enhance the visitors' knowledge of the monument", set up a women's museum at Qudsia Palace in Qudsiabagh near Kashmere Gate and chronicle the oral history of the capital based on the memories of

SOURCE

15th June 2009, The Tribune

CAPITAL PUSHES FOR HERITAGE CITY STATUS

A new heritage tourism route linking at least 30 big and small historical monuments in this capital city is in the works. It is the first step to help Delhi bag Unesco World Heritage City status. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (Intach) - the country's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation of heritage — last week completed a blueprint of the route between the Red Fort and Humayun's tomb along the busy Mathura Road.

SOURCE

15th June 2009, Times of India

FOR A MONUMENTAL EFFORT, ASI GETS SOME PRIVATE HELP

AS the Commonwealth Games approach, the inaction in Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) over conservation and restoration is being replaced by fast-paced Public Private Partnership projects. The ASI has been awarding an increasing number of projects to private players, pumping in specialized expertise as well as funds. For the first time, it has joined hands with the Indian Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), which will spruce up three tombs in the Lodhi Gardens, which are protected monuments under ASI jurisdiction. "As of now, we are working on the Lodhi Gardens tombs. The Athpullah Bridge and Sikander Lodhi's tomb will be taken up later," said AGK Menon, convenor of Delhi chapter, INTACH. The INTACH will provide technical knowhow and carry out the conservation work. The Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) is funding the project. "Rs 1 crore has been diverted through the National Culture Fund to the ASI by SAIL to invest on this project," Menon told the Newline. Work on Ugrasen ki Baoli, too might begin soon. The city-base Agarwal Society has volunteere to fund a part of the project and MoU will be signed within a few days. "The ASI was working on project to salvage the baoli and had prepared an estimate. Though the funding from the Society is no sufficient for the entire project, w will award a part of it to them, said a senior ASI official. "The Agarwal Society is emotionally attached to the baoli a wanted to help by funding it. We are expecting to receive Rs 3 lakh, he said. "The ASI will be executing the project." Another private player, the Ag Khan Trust for Culture, has bee working for the ASI for long. Following the restoration of the Humayun's Tomb gardens, the Trust is working on a comprehensive project in Nizamuddin. The ASI has also been engaging several conservation architects for expert advice and technica knowhow. The Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative, a private body working on heritage conservation, has been engaged to develop the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the World Heritage Site of Red Fort

SOURCE

15th June 2009, Indian Express

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