



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 105

16th June – 22nd June

Editor's Note

In Lutyen's zone, mites attack ageing beauties
Sprucing up Shahjahanabad: Civic body, govt bicker
Trusts sign MoU on Lutyens' Delhi preservation
Visit monuments till late at night
Govt plan to show off historic villages to Games visitors
Plan to preserve Lutyens' bungalow Zone
Move to put LBZ on UNESCO list
Red Fort facelift to begin soon
Postcard from Heritage Cities: wish you were here
World Heritage City still a dream for Delhi
Is this history in the making?
A facelift for Capital's heritage monuments

IN LUTYEN'S ZONE, MITES ATTACK AGEING BEAUTIES

FIFTEEN large trees in the plush New Delhi Municipal Corporation area are under attack from mites, a small parasitic insect. These trees belong to the ficus family, which has peepal and pilkhan as its prominent members. The trees are anywhere between 70-80 years old and have survived the harsh weather of the Capital for decades. However, this time round the ageing beauties have succumbed to mites, which end up building an oblong closed nest-like formation on branches high up the tree, woven with leaves and their own web. These are swarming colonies of mites, which lay thousands of eggs within the safe enclosures using the leaves. If not treated in time, the decreasing foliage (see picture) will be gradually wiped out. "The infection is a little serious this time round. It is a little over week that we discovered the infection during our routine checks," said a Horticulture department official, engaged in the treatment of these trees. Around 15 trees — all Ficus Retusa — are suffering with the same problem. Of these, about six trees are near Janpath-Motilal Nehru Marg roundabout while the rest are near Palika Bazaar in Connaught Place. Director (Horticulture) Subhash Chandra said, "We are spraying insecticides, which would be done from time to time till the infection is fully taken care of." The infected twigs/branches would then be cut/pruned and disposed off in a controlled manner, he added. The infection has also been detected in some Arjun trees apart from these ficus variety trees. Alstonia (Saptarni in Hindi) trees are infected with another kind of infection wherein its leaves coil up at the end. Along with taking care of such infections and other ailments of the trees, the Horticulture department is busy working for its formal launch of the 'Tree Ambulance' — as announced in its annual budget — sometime

SOURCE

16th June 2009, Hindustan Times

SPRUCING UP SHAHJAHANABAD: CIVIC BODY, GOVT BICKER

THE Municipal Corporation of Delhi is angry with the state for 'meddling' into its affairs in the redevelopment of the Shahjahanabad area. It is particularly unhappy with the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRC) — set up by the state government in May 2008 — to restore the area's heritage sites. When SRC members, chaired by Delhi Chief Secretary Rakesh Mehta, met for the first time a few days ago, the civic body got to hear that the corporation's mandate for the restoration of the Shahjahanabad area was all too familiar

displeasure known about this. He said: "This is nothing but interference by the government in the civic body's (MCD) affairs. There is absolutely no need for a separate body to do the same work that the MCD is already doing. This appears to be an attempt by Sheilaji to upstage the MCD." MCD officials reckon that his outburst has a lot to do with Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit's repeated requests to bring the local body under the Delhi Government. It is under the Union Home ministry at present While Sheila Dikshit could not be contacted despite repeated attempts, Delhi Chief Secretary and Chairman of SRC Rakesh Mehta said: "The SRC is just a coordinating body. The local body will continue to do its work but the MCD cannot possibly do the work of power companies. Our mandate is to just bring together the various bodies working in the area and to seek funds for the projects under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission." SRC's Managing Director Savitur Prasad explained the concept in detail. "The SRC is like a holding company. There are many bodies like INTACH, power discoms and other NGOs, besides the MCD, which are working on the restoration of the area. We want to priorities all projects. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between what the MCD is doing and what we intend to do." However, that has failed to placate the MCD which sees the SRC as a rival in its area of jurisdiction. "The MCD has had endless meetings with the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid as well as other concerned officials in the Shahjahanabad area. The SRC, if it wants to exist as a body, should clarify its mandate. With Delhi getting ready to host the Common wealth Games, this is hardly the time to create confusion," Dr Kanwar Sain said Meanwhile, in its first meeting, the SRC identified restoration of havelis in Old Delhi as one of the areas it wants to focus on. Officials who attended the meeting confirmed that while no concrete plans were discussed; it was decided that Paranthewali Gali and Dariba Kalan too will be taken up for restoration by the SRC, which will rope in conservation consultants and NGOs.

SOURCE

16th June 2009, Indian Express

TRUSTS SIGN MOU ON LUTYENS' DELHI PRESERVATION

THE Lutyens' Bungalow Zone is all set to get a facelift with the Indian Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a heritage conservation body, and the Lutyens' Trust signing a MoU to jointly conserve tangible heritage in the area. The MoU was finally signed late last month, nearly eight years after the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone was listed as one of the world's most endangered heritage sites by the World Monument Fund, an international heritage conservation and awareness body. INTACH had prepared a charter the following year on how Lutyens' Delhi was seriously threatened by development but no further action was taken thereafter "Both INTACH and the Lutyens' Trust wish to jointly work towards preserving the garden city character and key buildings of Lutyens' Delhi," an official statement from INTACH stated. "The foremost goal of this joint venture will be to get the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in due course of time." As a first step towards this, INTACH will undertake a detailed study and present it to the Ministry of Culture for consideration. The two bodies will, however, work together as an "informal joint venture and contribute time and expertise at their own expense". "A coordinating committee of ten members from each organization will meet once a year to guide the work and take strategic decisions," an INTACH official said "Though this venture might not guarantee the protection of the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone, it should significantly impede the pressure for high rise buildings and other untoward developments, which in recent years, have impacted the setting of Lutyens' Delhi in spite of the zone having been declared a protected zone under the Delhi Masterplan," the official said Apart from getting the World Heritage status, the main objectives of the venture will be to lobby for the preservation and maintenance of key buildings by Edwin Lutyens, Herbert Baker and their contemporaries; to increase awareness about the heritage of Lutyens' Delhi and the threats it faces; and to consider the possibility of adapting the existing buildings within the zone for a new cultural complex for the benefit of the public.

SOURCE

18th June 2009, Indian Express

VISIT MONUMENTS TILL LATE AT NIGHT

In a bid to make Delhi's monuments more accessible to people, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is planning to keep 10 selected monuments open for the public from early morning to late night. At present, monuments are open from sunrise to sunset, with timings varying in summer and winters. However, the move is subject to infrastructure requirements. A proposal in this regard has been sent to the ministry of culture. Said ASI director general K N Shrivastava: "This is a bid to let people become more familiar with monuments. Many people have sent us requests saying that sites like Red Fort and Purana Qila which have vast grounds should be kept open for longer to help morning walkers or those into recreational activities like yoga." ASI is also eager to promote these sites for more cultural events. In summer, ASI-protected monuments are open from 10am to 6.30pm, while in winters the sites are open only from 10am to 5.30pm for visitors. Monuments which are proposed to be opened from dawn to late night are Purana Qila, Safdarjung Tomb, Qutab Minar complex, Red Fort, Bara Bateshewala complex, Shalimar Bagh, Sher Shah Gate (opposite Purana Qila), Qila Rai Pithora conservation centre complex, Tughlaqabad Fort and children's heritage museum at Siri Fort. The proposal has met with enthusiasm from Delhiites. Architect Piyush Jain, a history buff, said: "Normally people are not able to enjoy the grounds of monuments because timings are limited. You are not allowed to enter early in the morning or late evening, which is such a waste. If these monuments are opened for longer hours, one will have a better understanding of them which will also help in their protection in the long run." Senior ASI officials, however, said while they were much in favour of keeping monuments open longer, they had to address security concerns also. "We will need to set up more benches in sites like Tughlaqabad for visitors as well as canteens and toilet requirements if people stay there for longer durations. But security is the most important factor. Extra guards will be needed to ensure people don't deface the historical buildings," said a senior ASI official.

SOURCE

18th June 2009, Times of India

GOVT PLANS TO SHOW OFF HISTORIC VILLAGE TO GAMES VISITORS

Delhi Government is preparing tourism policy to develop villages and water bodies of historical importance with an aim to showcase the city's heritage to visitors arriving for the Commonwealth Games slated to be held here next year. Replying during Question Hour in the Delhi Assembly, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit said that old haveli and structures of historical importance, besides water bodies in the villages will be developed, for which a policy is being formulated. She also said that the guest houses being constructed in the villages might be covered under the government's Bread and Breakfast scheme to meet the housing shortage during the mega event. However, presently such paying guests are not getting any incentives under the government's tourism policy," she added. The Chief Minister also said that soon a shopping arcade on the lines of Dilli Haat in Defence colony in South Delhi and Pitam Pura in West Delhi will be constructed for the residence of East Delhi.

SOURCE

18th June 2009, Pioneer

PLAN TO PRESERVE LUTYENS' BUNGALOW ZONE

The INTACH has joined hands with the Lutyens Trust of England for preservation and conservation of the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone. New Delhi was conceived in 1911 when the decision was taken to transfer the capital city of India from Calcutta to Delhi. The principle architects of New Delhi were Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, who designed the principal buildings. Originally planned as a garden city, the city has come under enormous pressure of development in recent decades while its population has soared. In 2001, the Lutyens Bungalow Zone was put on the list of the world's 100 most endangered sites by the World Monument Fund. In 2002, INTACH published a charter on Lutyens' Delhi describing how seriously

Lutyen's Delhi is threatened by development. The objectives of the joint venture would be to determine the territorial extent of Lutyens' Delhi, to work towards the LBZ being declared a world Heritage site by Unesco, to keep a brief on plans and developments in or directly affecting the setting of Lutyens' Delhi.

SOURCE

18th June 2009, *Asian age*

MOVE TO PUT LBZ ON UNESCO LIST

The century old Lutyen's Bungalow Zone spread on the Raisina Hill may soon be declared a world heritage site. The Lutyen's Trust in collaboration with the INTACH is working towards this plan. According to INTACH, a committee of 20 members has been formed to work on the plan that will involve preparation and presentation of a detailed case on the matter to the Ministry of Culture who would then forward it to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Members of the Lutyen's Trust said that the UNESCO application will be forwarded by mid 2011. According to Martin Lutyens, Chairman of the Lutyen's trust, preservation and maintenance of key buildings by Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker, the principal architects of New Delhi that conceived in 1911. It can be noted that the LBZ was put on the list of world's 100 most endangered sites by the World Monument Fund in year 2001. A year later in 2002, INTACH published a charter on Lutyen's Delhi describing how seriously it was threatened by development.

SOURCE

18th June 2009, *Pioneer*

RED FORT FACELIFT TO BEGIN SOON

The ASI is soon to implement a comprehensive conservation management plan for Red Fort. Five buildings within the premises have been identified where the work will begin shortly. "Naubat Khana, Diwan-e-aam, Rang Mahal, Lahori Gate and Chhata Bazar have been identified where the facelift will be carried out in the first phase," an ASI official said. In Naubat Khana, the Army built some toilets that will be demolished. In Diwan-e-aam too Army built a structure that is not aesthetically appealing. Also, the Army did whitewash, spoiling the original structure. As conservation work has been done carefully, the process will be slow and spread over ten years. The work in the whole area of 120 acres has been divided into three phases. Moreover, after getting enlisted as a World Heritage monument, the Red Fort has to match the prescribed standards.

SOURCE

21st June 2009, *Asian Age*

POSTCARD FROM HERITAGE CITIES: WISH YOU WERE HERE

Historical monuments exist in almost every Indian town but not a single Indian city can boast of world heritage status. Yet, Italy, a sliver of a country less than one-tenth the size of India, has nearly 25 'world heritage' cities. Things could change for the better. The Indian capital is trying hard for the coveted status. A recent proposal for a heritage route — from the Red Fort to Humayun's Tomb and linking some 30 monuments along the way — is part of this. But, even as we consider the possibility of India having its first world heritage city, it may be worth asking why our heritage-rich cities are not on Unesco's at least 200-strong list? Heritage conservation experts say a major roadblock all these years has been the refusal to see cities as part of our heritage. Monuments have always been at the centre of conservation efforts but cities — the repositories of tangible and intangible heritage — have never been considered in this way. Therefore, cities such as Agra, Varanasi, Jaipur, Hyderabad, Vrindavan and Mathura remain chaotic cultural dead zones. A G K Menon, convenor of the Delhi chapter of the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (Intach) laments "the total lack of will and respect for our heritage. And to top it, rampant corruption makes it impossible to get anything done". Menon drove Intach to prepare the heritage route proposal.

conservation, development and history — are dealt with together. At present, each is looked at separately with hardly any interaction between those handling each issue. Conservation architect Abha Narain Lambah says, “We don’t see urban planners in dialogue with archaeologists or conservation experts. There is no larger city plan, like it is in Rome.” The Italian capital has preserved its historic city centre and maintained all the other monuments scattered around. This is how, says Menon, Rome has built a “heritage-oriented cognitive image”. For Delhi to get world heritage status from Unesco, the Central government would have to prove it is serious about protecting historical monuments and demonstrate the steps it has taken to preserve them. Also, it has to prove that Delhi is of universal significance. “It is a tough fight as only one site can apply for the inscription once in two years. And with so many countries vying for the status, the government has to have a strong case,” says Sandhya Bordewekar, founder-trustee of Heritage Trust, a NGO that is battling to preserve our heritage.

The fact that the government has never asked Unesco to list an Indian city as “world heritage” indicates our lack of seriousness about heritage. “We have never received any proposal,” says a Unesco official. Hard though it may be to acquire heritage city status, it is harder still to maintain it. Unesco is clear that once a city gets the status, the integrity and authenticity of the place has to be maintained. Lambah says, “If the government doesn’t follow Unesco guidelines, the city may lose its status or be put on the endangered list.” The ‘world heritage’ tag brings with it access to funds, international technical expertise on preservation and better management, and most importantly, an increase in tourist numbers. A ‘world heritage’ city is listed as such with tour operators. Cambodia is a good example. Its GDP is heavily reliant on heritage tourism. Across the world, heritage tourism is growing and heritage cities like Italy, Spain, the UK and France have benefited. Were Delhi to get world heritage status, tourists would be less likely to use it as a stopover. “Tourists would then want to spend a few days exploring all the historical sites. Imagine what that would do to the economy of the city,” says Menon.

SOURCE

21st June 2009, Times of India

WORLD HERITAGE CITY STATUS STILL A DREAM FOR DELHI

As the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO meets for its 33rd session at Seville in Spain to declare the World Heritage Sites for the year, India may once again miss out on having city of the list. Though senior officials in the ASI will attend the meet in Spain along with officials of the Ministry of Culture, they are sceptical about the prospects of Delhi getting World Heritage status, though heritage conservation bodies like the INTACH have been working towards this end. “We had signed a MoU with the Delhi government to flesh out eight heritage routes across the city last August and if the heritage structures and precincts get connected through the Heritage Circuit we will be a step closer to the World Heritage City status,” said AGK Menon, convenor of Delhi Chapter, INTACH. With the World Monument Fund sponsoring the detailed documentation of the project, the plan details and maps are ready. However, their implementation has been difficult as the routes fall under various civic bodies like DDA, MCD and PWD.

SOURCE

22nd June 2009, Indian Express

IS THIS STORY IN THE MAKING?

SURVIVED the British cannon balls but is falling to encroachment. Kashmere fate complex — with the gate and the city wall — that demarcated the threshold of Mughal capital of Shahjahanabad, was declared a heritage site in 2007. The structure, because of neglect on the part of the Archeological Survey of India, is now a crumbling structure awaiting total collapse. A characteristic blue board on the side facing Ritz Cinema announces the special status of the Mughal-era monument. A minute’s walk from the green, renovated and locked remains of the Kashmere Gate premises is enough to dispel the notion of a protected well maintained monument. The most glaring example of the neglect is a 12-feet-wide breach in the heritage wall, which is wide enough for a truck to pass.

Commuters who use the stretch often say it was crack in the wall that gradually turned into a huge gap over decades. “Some 30 years ago, it was a small gap. It might become big enough to let a container truck pass in some more time,” said Pranav Sachdeva (21), a student of B Com (Pass) at Delhi University’s School of Correspondence, who uses the road frequently. The passage has now become a part of the road, covered by tar with every road repair work. On the Nicholson Road side, the wall’s arcs serve as bins to burn garbage, urinals, kiosks selling refreshments and paan and as storage space by rag pickers. There is a car park on the side of the Mori Gate bus terminus and the cars are parked so close to the wall that a little mistake in reversing can damage it. “A little mistake while reversing the car into a slot and yet another chunk would break” said Geet Singh Bedi, a Nicholson Road resident. “Why do the authorities allow a parking lot so close to a heritage wall?” Assuring that the ASI would take up the matter with the Municipal Corporation of Delhi after a visit to the area, Superintendent Archaeologist K.K.Muhammed said: “We will do all we can to conserve and reconstruct them.” MCD Director (Press and Information) Deep Mathur said, “The parking in the area is authorized, but the contractor tends to occupy more space than he is entitled to.” The MCD has charged him Rs 25,000 fine for the first offence and Rs 30,000 for the second offence. “The process has been initiated to cancel the contract for violation of the terms and conditions,” Mathur said.

SOURCE

22nd June 2009, Hindustan Times

A FACELIFT FOR CAPITAL’S HERITAGE MONUMENT

As the Capital gears up for the Commonwealth Games, a host of cultural activities are being planned in the run-up and during the much awaited event. Giving a facelift to the cities many monuments is an important part of the ongoing preparations, Delhi chapter of INTACH convenor A.G.K Menon say: “A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Archaeology Department, the Delhi Government and INTACH to protect 250 monuments in the Capital. Of these, we aim to protect 92 monuments before the start of the Games.” “some of the monuments will require a lot of work and the entire process of conservation is an elaborate one”, he adds. Illumination of the Safdarjung Tomb has already been done in the run-up to the Games. Secretary in the Delhi Government’s Department of Art, Culture and Language, Rina Ray, say: “We have plans to conduct heritage walks in the city. We may have air- conditioned hop-on hop-off bus services which will ferry tourists to heritage areas in the city. Red Fort, central Delhi, Qutub Minar, Purana Qila, Humayun’s Tomb and Safdarjung Tomb are expected to be part of the heritage route.” there are also plans to put up integrated signboards across the city, particularly near heritage sites. Exhibitions, workshops, theatres and musical events will also be held.

SOURCE

22nd June 2009, Hindu

Should you have any comments or suggestions, you could reach us at

INTACH Delhi Chapter

71, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi – 110003

Tel : 2463 2267, 2463 2269 Ext. 105

Email : feedback@intachdelhichapter.org