



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 108

7th July-13th July

Editor's Note

Planes put Qutub in danger

INTACH seeks Sonia help on MP's role

Plan to privatize power in Lutyens zone rejected

A historic house of knowledge, trespassed

At Humayun's tomb weight is off

Here's a monument to nature

Music knowks on history's door

Bridge to the past

The abodes of the rich and beautiful

PLANES PUT QUTUB IN DANGER

The Qutub is quaking at the vibrations from the sky the new treat to the tallest tower in Delhi is from planes taking off from and landing at Indira Gandhi International Airport nearby. ASI, in charge of the 12th century monument's upkeep, has written to the Airports Authority of India asking it to immediately change the flight paths that lead to the new third runway. According to ASI, the flights using this runway are flying "dangerously close" to the 234ft-high red sandstone monuments. "We have written to the airports authority explaining how the vibrations of the low flying aircraft could endanger the Qutub, one of the biggest tourist attractions in Delhi," ASI director K.K Muhammed told The Telegraph. The problem is said to have started since September 2008, when the third runway was opened as part of plans to help the airport handle more traffic. One end of the new strip is about 2.5 km closer to the Qutub than the old runways. The ASI had raised similar concerns about plane vibrations to the 10th century temples in Khajuraho, a Unesco world heritage site, a few years back.

SOURCE

6th July 2009, Telegraph

INTACH SEEKS SONIA HELP ON MP'S ROLE

INTACH has requested UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi to involve parliamentarians for heritage conservation programmes. In a letter written to Sonia Gandhi, the organization has called for hosting of an orientation programme for the newly elected Mps promoting the cause. The orientation programme is designed to 'cover aspects related to built and manage natural, cultural and intangible heritage' which will be organized by the INTACH together with the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. Earlier, INTACH and the Lutyens' Trust have signed a memorandum of understanding to preserve the distinct characteristics of buildings in Lutyen's Delhi. The main objective is to get UNESCO to declare the Lutyens' Bungalow Zone in the Capital a world heritage site. The LBZ already features on the list of the world's 100 most endangered sites brought out by the world monument fund in 2001. The Delhi Governments tourism department has concluded a MoU with INTACH in 2008. The MoU, which was signed between the Secretary, government of National Capital Territory of Delhi and INTACH, is considered a very significant step in the beginning of a partnership with the Delhi Government in the field of heritage.

SOURCE

7th July 2009, Pioneer

PLAN TO PRIVATISE POWER IN LUTYENS ZONE REJECTED

In a major decision Delhi Cabinet on Monday rejected a proposal to privatize power distribution in the NDMC areas. The Cabinet decision has come as a jolt to the private distribution company, BSES, which was reportedly lobbying to get distribution licence in the NDMC areas. The Delhi Cabinet in another decision constitute the Delhi Finance Commission also on Monday. Sources said chief minister Sheila Dikshit took the view in the Cabinet meeting that there was no need to privatize the power distribution in the NDMC areas. The Lutyens zone, where the top VIPs of the country, including the Prime Minister reside, along with North and South Avenues and Gole Market areas constitute the NDMC areas. Power distribution in the city was privatized in 2002, which resulted in four players, namely the BSES Rajdhani, BSES Yamuna, NDPL and NDMC, which is the only government body in power distribution.

SOURCE

7th July 2009, Asian Age

A HISTORIC HOUSE OF KNOWLEDGE, TRESPASSED

The capital's oldest educational institution, the Anglo Arabic School at Ajmeri Gate is fighting for survival. Its opponents are allegedly anti-social elements from adjoining areas. The 300-year-old Madrassa Ghaziuddin Khan, which presents the only chance at acquiring even basic education for lower-middle class residents and women from Muslim households of surrounding areas, has been struggling to maintain decorum in its premises for months. Anti-social elements have allegedly been entering at will, disturbing the peace and indulging in drinking, gambling and other illicit activities within the school's historical premises. "In addition to two schools, a women's polytechnic also functions from the school's campus," said Mobina Aqir, Head Mistress, Model School, Anglo Arabic School complex. "Since the trespassing began, many students have stopped attending classes." The school complex is a relic of the capital's religious and educational legacy and mirrors its turbulent colonial history. "The Anglo-Arabic School has borne witness to Delhi's 300-year-old history since its establishment," said Dr Madhu Prasad, Reader, Zakir Hussain College. "I remember when I was a student at the College myself. It is a pity that the same ground where young poets used to recite verses has become a place for illicit activities," said Tejpal Anand, who passed out from Delhi College in 1946. The school was readying for a new beginning after a 2005 Delhi High Court judgment instructing all encroachments in and around the school compound be removed. However, an independent committee created by the Delhi Waqf Board on July 2, allowing outsiders to visit the shrine 'Hafiz Dargah Sadullah Naqshbandi' as per convenience, has become the latest hurdle in the school's path. "Attempts are being made to trespass upon our property under the pretext of religion. People disturb students while they're attending classes," said Azra Razzack, Secretary, Delhi Education Society (DES). "On many occasions, our female teachers have been harassed by local rowdies." The school's administration is questioning the DWB's authority as far as the maintenance of the three-century-old school complex is concerned, "Since 1951, the DES has been the sole arbiter for the maintenance and preservation of the school's premises. Why did the DWF decide to create this committee without even consulting us?" asked Abdul Malik, Principal, Anglo Arabic School. Chaudhry Matin Ahmed, Spokesperson, DWB said, "The dargah is in the school complex but not a part of it."

SOURCE

8th July 2009, Hindustan Times

AT HUMAYUN'S TOMB WEIGHT IS OFF

In a unique initiative to restore the architectural integrity and historical significance of the 17th century Humayun's Tomb, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) have removed a thick layer of cement concrete from the mausoleum's roof that was putting a pressure of about 10 lakh kg on the structure. According to experts, the British laid the cement concrete on the roof of the monument in 1920s to prevent water seepage. However, the layer blocked water drainage channels leading to heavy rainwater accumulation that caused considerable damage. "Instead of repairing the roof, the British simply added a heavy concrete layer on it. This led to a blockage in water passages. The rainwater accumulated on the roof caused severe damage to stonework in the monument as well as disfigurement of architectural elements," said a senior ASI official. ASI director general K N Shrivastava said: "The extra cement was an unnecessary weight on the structure. Rather than laying this cement, the leakages in the roof-top should have been simply plugged. Removal of the concrete cement is an asset for the tomb." Removal of the lime concrete revealed hidden portions of the monument's roof — steps, octagonal base of the dome, red sandstone plinths of chhatris etc. It also cleared the gutters to allow free passage of rainwater. "The tomb's roof has had several additional layers of lime concrete applied to it in the past century to prevent water ingress. This extra load caused severe stress and water logging with the original drains no longer functional," explained an official. It took around eight months to remove the lime concrete. First, a 30cm-deep cut of about 5mm thickness was applied on a 1m grid. Specially imported tools were used to make 10cm-wide cuts on the roof surface and it took 30 craftsmen to remove the 50cm-thick concrete. The concrete was dropped to the ground on temporary ramps set up at night after visiting hours to avoid inconvenience to tourists. A traditional lime-based roof layer was finally laid out. The focus is to tender a similar treatment to the tomb's first chabutra (plinth). According to AKTC officials, the platform where the tomb stands was originally paved with large blocks of quartzite stone, some of which weighed over a 1,000 kg. "In the 1940s, an uneven settlement in the lower plinth was corrected by covering it with a layer of concrete, but this wasn't how the Mughals intended it to be. Not only did this disfigure the original design but it was historically inappropriate," said an official. Historian Zafar Hasan is said to have described the platform flooring as similar to that of the west gate of Humayun's Tomb. The concrete layer over the flooring will be removed in what is likely to be a long, tedious process. Intach Delhi Chapter convenor AGK Menon, who reviewed the project some time back, said that removal of the concrete layer was critical as the building couldn't be overburdened. "Every time the roof would leak, a layer of concrete was added. Over time, it gained a thickness of about 40cm, posing danger to the structure and obscuring historical levels on the roof. A historical building should remain as authentic as possible," he said. The conservation work at Humayun's Tomb is jointly undertaken by ASI, AKTC, Central CPWD, MCD and Aga Khan Foundation and has been partly funded by Sir Dorabji Tata Trust.

SOURCE

9th June 2009, Times of India

HERE'S A MONUMENT TO NATURE

Get ready for a world-class nursery and ecology park in the heart of the city. Sunder Nursery, virtually next door to Humayun's Tomb, is being revamped by Central Public Works Department (CPWD) and Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). Once complete, it will be Delhi's first arboretum with over 300 varieties of trees. The project will be formally announced on July 12, CPWD's 155th Foundation Day. Authorities said it was the first partnership of its kind in India aimed at developing an urban park where both ecological and heritage resources will be showcased. There are 140 species of trees in the nursery at present and some like Pink Cedar, *Atalantia*, Khasi and West Indian Elm are the only specimens that can be found in Delhi. Sunder Nursery is also home to over 75 species of birds. "We're bringing back all the native tree species we can think of that have deserted Delhi in the last few centuries," added sources.

There are also nine Mughal era monuments, three of which are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), within the nursery premises. They are also being restored. At Sunder Nursery, about nine acres of nursery beds have been prepared and a 2-km-long peripheral road is nearing completion. “The present entrance will be only for pedestrians with vehicles being limited to the peripheral road in the future,” said an official. Landscape architect M Shaheer and environmentalist Pradip Krishen are part of the team that finalised the landscape plans. “This project will restore Sunder Nursery’s position as the foremost ecological resource for Delhi and create a magnificent new urban park that showcases Delhi’s flora, bird life and Mughal heritage. We hope the new developments will attract more visitors, thereby increasing revenue, which can then be ploughed back into maintenance of the nursery,” said D S Sachdeva, director-general, CPWD. Added Krishen, author of *Trees of Delhi* and a AKTC consultant: “A portion of Sunder Nursery is going to become a miniature landscape that exhibits Delhi’s native microhabitats — imagine a tiny set of rocky hillocks that mimic the Delhi Ridge, and an adjoining “wilderness” that features a miniature riverine system filled with plants and trees that you might have seen in the Yamuna khadar 200 years ago.” According to historians, Sunder Nursery stands on the historic Grand Trunk Road, between Purana Qila and Humayun’s Tomb. The nursery was established by the British to experiment with trees that had been proposed to be planted in the new British capital being built in Delhi. It became a CPWD nursery in 1945. The three project zones of Humayun’s Tomb, Nizamuddin Basti and Sunder Nursery will be connected with walking trails. In addition, nursery related structures such as mist chambers, tissue culture lab, glass houses and a training centre are going to be built within the nursery with adequate facilities to train CPWD gardeners who visit Sunder Nursery each year for training. Specialized spaces are being created for hosting flower shows.

SOURCE

10th July 2009, Times of India

MUSIC KNOCKS ON HISTORY’S DOOR

A musical extravaganza is soon going to hit the Capital, but with a difference. The ASI is planning to open 10 heritage sites- Purana Qila, Tughlaqabad Fort, Sher Shah Gate, children’s heritage museum at Siri Fort, Shalimar Bagh, Qutub Minar complex, Red Fort, Bara Bateshewala complex, Qila Rail Pithora convocation centre complex, Safdarjung Tomb- for cultural shows. The aim is to collect revenue, but the ASI is also looking forward to promoting the sites and giving the audience a taste of old-world charm. Dr. K. K. Muhammed, superintendent, ASI, adds that the archeological sites were very popular some years back, but gradually they have lost their charm and this move is an effort to re-establish their appeal. The sites would primarily hold classical music and dance concerts as they are sync with our culture and history. The move has made musicians in the city happy, but they also have certain doubts. Poet and filmmaker Muzaffar Ali, who earlier organized the Sufi festival Jahan-e-khusro at Purana Qila, says that it’s a good idea to promote heritage sites through cultural events, but only if the programmes suit the venue.

SOURCE

10th July 2009, Asian Age

BRIDGE TO THE PAST

The bridge Feroz Shah Tughlaq (1309-1388) built on the Yamuna at Wazirabad has been in use for over six centuries. The Yamuna no longer flows below it. Instead, filth and overgrown shrubs lie below. But the bridge still looks sturdy. With its arches, colonnades and screened windows, the bridge was an engineering marvel when it was built in the 14th century. With the Delhi Government building an ambitious overpass at Wazirabad—and that too a bit too close to the heritage structure—it’s not only the bridge but also the adjoining tomb of Sufi saint Shah Alam, a medieval mosque and a gallery for women devotees that are under threat. At half-an-hour drive from the Wazirabad Bridge, lies the Begumpur Bridge, just outside the Nizamuddin

Railway Station. Hidden behind grilled barricades and shacks covered with blue plastic sheets, Barapula, is barely two kilometres away from Humayun's tomb. With 11 arched openings, 12 piers, each of which is surmounted by a two-metre-high minar, the bridge is about 15 metres wide and 195 metres long. An inscription dates the structure to 1621, built by Mihr Banu Agha, the chief eunuch of Jahangir's court. The repair and beautification plans of the nearby heritage structures at Humayun's tomb and Nizamuddin's dargah have obviously skipped Barapula, but photographs taken by W. Caney in 1870 and available with the ASI show Barapula as an impressive structure sloping over a curvy river, with masonry walls protecting its sides. The bridge once connected Delhi to the road that led to Agra. Last month as heavy vehicular traffic damaged the Mangi Bridge, connecting Red Fort with an older Salimgarh fortress, scraping the surface of the structure, the Archaeological Survey of India announced its plans of repair. The British-era bridge that was once a link to a bridge built by Jahangir in 1626—long before the Red Fort was constructed—is but a representative of the city's bridges, some of which have just disappeared. Jahangir's bridge is one such example. The Mughal emperor had constructed it to access Salimgarh from Yamuna bank, past the dilapidated Afghan fort which stood at the site now occupied by the Red Fort. The bridges in the city also tell the story of a 'shifting' Yamuna and its now non-existent tributaries—like the remains of a 15th century bridge in Khizrabad near New Friends Colony that covers a drain or the bridge in Kotla Mubarakpura spanning over filthy nullah. Up north in the city, Pul Bangash has lent its name to a Metro Station. Old timers say there was a stream below the Pul till 1947. The rundown bridge itself fast disappearing under heavy traffic flow and a crowded masala market. Of the bridges built by the British, the Lothian Bridge—Delhi's first railway bridge that was named after Lt. Col. Lothian Kerr-Scott of the Royal Engineers and built in 1867—and the Minto Bridge of the Northern Railway that was built in 1933, have survived to an extent in the original shapes. To see the city's best-kept and most attractive bridge, one has to make a trip to the Lodi Gardens. The Athpula at one end of the garden dates back to Akbar time. The 16th century Bridge with seven arches has eight piers and thus the name Athpula. The bridge once spanned a tributary of the Yamuna. The span of the arches decrease from the centre to the bank and the top is paved with grey stones. Standing on this bridge amid the green expanse of the Lodi Gardens, one is assured that at least we haven't burnt our bridges with the past.

SOURCE

12th July 2009, Indian Express

THE ABODES OF THE RICH AND BEAUTIFUL

It is known as the haveli in Kutchi Tihar, but now only the gate is a reminder of its pre-partition past and its link with old Delhi havelis. It probably came under Evacuee Property in 1947 and was occupied by refugees. Later modern-style apartments were built to accommodate several families, mainly tenants who are blissfully unaware of their abode's colourful past. And colourful it must have been when Delhi was not such a congested city and people liked to live at leisure. The latest to rent an apartment in it is a family, whose daughter likes to spend much of her time to spend much of her time on the terrace on the pretext of drying clothes though the real reason is that it gives a good bird's eye-view of the surrounding area, with Deen Dayal Hospital in the distance, flanked by the big MTNL building. Closer is the dargah of Pir Baba, where devotees congregate on Thursdays to make vows and offer prayers to the saint, Pir Nasir Hussain sahib. He is venerated by all communities and no wonder there is a regular mela at the shrine. As one enters the haveli one feels like stepping into the past for the Deori has a ramshackle appearance, with a dingy ceiling lighted by a single bulb that hangs in the centre like a relic of days gone by when electricity was comparatively new to the Capital. Evening comes early. And that's the time when the bulb lights up the way for women venturing out to buy milk and vegetables, children coming back from the park and fathers returning from work. They pass this way as though entering the portals of yesterday, to emerge into a courtyard, on one side of which is stairways leading to the rooms above.

SOURCE

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