



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 112

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DELHI ON A NEW CANVAS

The 'modern' city of Delhi has been captured on new canvas- a DTC bus. And the art works that have emerged on this can depict how the current Delhi, which may call the eight city of Delhi, has developed over the years. This art Endeavour on wheels was started by a group of seven students from Delhi Collage of Arts in association with Delhi government. The students were provided with a DTC bus travel across the seven cities of Delhi. The students were also supposed to paint the stories from each city using the bus as a canvas. The Endeavour was also captured in the form of documentary that was filmed by Gurvinder Kocher and directed by Chandramouli Basu for Midtech.

SOURCE

4th August 2009, Pioneer

SHEILA RELEASES BOOK ON DELHI MASTER PLAN

Chief Minister Shiela Dikshit today released a book on the development of Delhi. The book "Commentary on Master Plan of Delhi 2021" written by a group of editors from Nabhi Publication provides cross references to relevant provisions of master plan at all appropriate places. It also provides reference to various allied Acts, Rules, Regulations, Notifications, etc including Delhi Laws Bill, 2009, DDA Regulations 2006, regulation for regulation of unauthorized Colonies in Delhi, DDA regulations, 2006 and list of Notified Commercial, Mixed use and pedestrian shopping streets. Since the notification of the Master Plan for Delhi, 2021 on 7 Feb 2007, it has been an object of criticism and controversy. The issue of unauthorized constructions and mixed use in existing planned residential areas in an unauthorized manner, causing burden on roads, parking and other public amenities, hence resulting into complete failure of planning process.

SOURCE

4th August 2009, Statesman

MONUMENTS TO HAVE INFO ETCHED IN RED SANDSTONE

Next time you visit one of Delhi's popular monuments, a red signboard will greet you at the entrance, inscribed with the architectural details and historical significance of the structure. To educate tourists about Delhi's past heritage, especially with the Commonwealth

next year. signboards in red sandstone at all 46 monuments selected for a facelift by the Games. Often receiving complaints that not all of Delhi's monuments have proper signboards to serve as tourist information, ASI officials said the new signboards would act as guide maps for visitors. "However, we want to ensure that there is complete uniformity and they should look identical," said ASI director-general K N Shrivastava. The work has been outsourced to some agencies, including INTACH Delhi Chapter, which is currently also working on restoring five ASI-protected tombs in Lodi Garden. Sources said there were three other agencies apart from INTACH working on the project. The new signboards will replace all existing ones. "Typically, red sandstone pattern looks elegant and is also long-lasting as we know from experience. They do not get damaged easily and many historical monuments are also made from red sandstone so it will gel well with the background," said a senior ASI official. Some of the popular monuments that will sport these new cultural signboards are Tughlaqabad Fort, Qutub complex, Purana Qila, Siri Fort wall, Uggar Sain ki Baoli, Delhi Gate, Neela Gumbad, Ferozeshah Kotla, Khooni Darwaaza, Hauz Khas monuments etc.

For the benefit of the lakhs of tourists visiting Delhi during the Games, ASI has also finalised brochures containing details of the 46 selected monuments that will be made available at all protected monuments undergoing a facelift for the Games. These will be given out to tourists for free and their basic objective will be to familiarize foreign visitors with Delhi's history. "In addition, tourist guide books will also be available at ticketed monuments like Humayun's Tomb, Safdarjung Tomb or Red Fort for a nominal price," said an official. These guide books will also be available at book stores, newspaper vendors, airport, ticket counters etc. Audio guide services for the benefit of foreign nationals is already in place at Qutub Minar and officials said they hoped to spread the service to other world heritage sites in coming months. The service is available in five foreign languages.

SOURCE

6th August 2009, Times of India

INDUS SCRIPT MAY SOON GIVE UP ITS SECRETS

Indian and American researchers are close to cracking the code behind the script of the Indus Valley civilization, which flourished on both sides of the India Pakistan border around 4,000 years ago. The script, found as inscriptions on numerous objects dating from that period, has puzzled archaeologists ever since Harappa was discovered in 1922. A study, a joint effort by Mumbai's Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Chennai's Institute of Mathematical Sciences and the University of Washington, was published this week in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. It says there are distinct patterns in the hieroglyphics used by the script, and creates a statistical model for the unknown language.

"The model provides insights into the underlying grammatical structure of the script," said lead author Rajesh Rao, associate professor of computer science, University of Washington. Western archaeologists have often sought to debunk the claim the symbols comprised a script at all. While scholar Natwar Jha, in his book on Indus Valley, claimed the inscriptions found on the artifacts were a form of Vedic Sanskrit, others have maintained it was some kind of Dravidian language. Rao, however, said calculations with the help of mathematical models had shown that the order of the symbols on the artifacts was meaningful for the discovery of an unknown script representing a distinct language.

SOURCE

6th August 2009, Hindustan Times

LATE PM'S GREEN ABODE

Late Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar's abode of peace in the Aravali Hills could soon be an eco-tourism hotspot. Spread over 588 acres, the Bharat Yatra Kendra (BYK) in Bhondsi village is a 10-minute drive from the city. Haryana's forest and tourism departments are planning to develop Bhondsi Ashram, as locals call it, into a tourist destination. Apart from the late PM's house, the place is also home to hundreds of bird

This place was very close to the heart of the former prime minister, who developed the place. The story of BYK dates to 1983 when then MP Chandra Shekhar set out on a 4,260-kmlong padayatra (foot march) from Kanyakumari to New Delhi. Subsequently he set up BYK on 33 acres of a total 52 acres the village panchayat had gifted. Later, the panchayat provided over 500 acres for plantation. In 1999, lawyer B.L. Wadehra moved the Supreme Court alleging misuse of the land by the BYK. In 2001, the apex court ordered Haryana government to take possession of the entire land gifted by the panchayat. At the instance of the late PM, the court declared the entire land a reserved forest for 15 years, in 2004. However, the forest department took possession of the land from the village panchayat only recently. The panchayat had been maintaining the land after the apex court's orders. "Since 2002, we have been maintaining the greenery and infrastructure the BYK had developed. The panchayat has also been bearing the total monthly expense of Rs 2 lakh to pay salaries of the people deployed for maintaining the place," said Ajay Radhav, Bhondsi sarpanch. Haryana chief conservator of forests Som Shekhar too visited the place recently on the directions of forests and environment minister Kiran Chaudhary. The state has also proposed to set up an ecology development board to promote such places as eco-tourism spots.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Hindustan Times

NOW, DELHI TO COUNT ITS TREES

For the first time ever, Delhi is going to have a tree census. It will not just estimate how many trees the city — which takes pride on its greenery — has, but will also list their species and spatial distribution patterns. This will help in quantifying the greening efforts during successive censuses, and also be an accurate indicator of climate change patterns that affect tree behaviour significantly. Delhi Parks and Gardens Society has already initiated the process of starting a tree census. There are an estimated 250 species of trees in the city, but there has never been an official attempt to catalogue or count them. There have, however, been individual efforts to systematize knowledge about the trees of Delhi and to list their diversity. According to some of these accounts, many native trees have actually become extinct because of introduction of colonizers and also the changing climate. Says S D Singh, chief executive officer of the recently formed society: "Tree census is a mandatory requirement of the Delhi Tree Preservation Act. But such an initiative has never been taken on a citywide scale. There are, however, individual parks and gardens where trees have been counted and catalogued. We are compiling all such figures and will also look at the city as a whole. The census will give us an idea about the number of trees and whether it makes sense to plant more. It will also be an estimation of the resources at our disposal. Most importantly, it would be a very reliable indicator of climate change." The effect of climate on trees has essentially been the story of the greening of Delhi since the very beginning. Keen on avenues that will remain green all the year round, the British, after shifting the capital to Delhi in 1911, decided to exclude the regular avenue trees like mango and amaltas from its list just because they were deciduous. The otherwise meticulous planners that they were, they made the grave mistake of not understanding that trees are deciduous or evergreen depending on their habitat and not by nature. Explaining the overwhelming role habitat plays on the nature of trees, Singh said: "There are times when you see trees which usually spread wide, clustering together in one place — something which is apparently completely at odds with their usual behaviour. This often happens when too much concretization has happened. There was far more rain earlier and the winter was longer and more bitter. This has meant that many trees could not adjust and died out," he said. The commonest trees of Delhi include ashok, neem, amaltas, jamun, semul, siris and gulmohur. But one tree which cannot be excluded in any discussion about the trees of Delhi is actually an import. The central American mesquite — locally called vilaiti keekar to distinguish it from the babool — has emerged as the principal occupant of the ridge because of its fierce colonizing ability, killing off in the process many of the native trees like kala siris, kulu and salai.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Times of India

HOARDINGS OBSTRUCT LAL QILA VIEW

This Independence Day, spectators will be greeted at the historic Red Fort, also known as Lal Qila, by huge hoardings apart from the usual pomp and show associated with the occasion. In utter violation to heritage rules, two big hoardings and several smaller ones are on display along the boundary of the fort. The large hoardings of a private hospital and an insurance company have been erected with the permission of the MCD and are present there for more than a year now. K K Mohammad, superintending archaeologist of the ASI Delhi circle said that it was morally incorrect on the part of the civic body to allow such hoardings in front of the Red Fort.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Pioneer

YET ANOTHER PLAN TO INFUSE LIFE INTO THE YAMUNA

AFTER spending crores of rupees on cleansing the Yamuna passing through Delhi, the government on Thursday launched yet another programme of public awareness involving schoolchildren and NGOs. The idea, officials say, is to reach out to and involve the citizens of Delhi in the cleaning the Yamuna. "For any mass awareness campaign to be successful, active public engagement and partnership is a must," Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit said at the launch of Aao Yamuna Mein Jaan Dalein (Let's save the Yamuna) programme. The Delhi Jal Board also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Science Centre at Pragati Maidan for the development of a water and wastewater museum on the Centre's promise to sensitise visitors on the need for water conservation. Spread over an area of 200 sq mtr, the museum will be set up on the premises of the NSC which attracts 4,50,000 visitors annually. Delhi Jal Board CEO Ramesh Negi said that highlighting the initiatives of the DJB under the Yamuna Action Plan, YAP- I and YAP-II, the museum will serve as a knowledge centre for education, awareness and entertainment of citizens. Dikshit called upon the people of Delhi to feel responsible for cleaning the river and support government initiatives in doing the same. While referring to the several steps and the crores of rupees spent by the government to clean the river in the past, Negi said: "Unless people change their habits, all efforts will remain futile." He stressed while it was the responsibility of the government to provide technical assistance and infrastructure, it was important for the people to contribute towards saving the river from disappearing. "People must stop throwing waste and prayer items in the river," Negi said. As part of its outreach programme, the DJB has partnered with six NGOs from the six identified zones of Delhi. The recently-concluded survey by NGOs indicates the prevalence of a "not my problem" attitude in a substantial percentage of target groups across all categories. Dwelling upon the findings of the survey, DJB spokesperson Sanjam Chima said: "More than 78 per cent of people living in unauthorized colonies and JJ clusters dump solid waste in the open. In 97 per cent of the cases, sewers or drains are blocked with garbage or plastic." According to the survey, in Najafgarh alone, the availability of water through the pipelines is almost 100 per cent, whereas over 90 per cent of the population does not avail the sewerage connections. In the trans-Yamuna area, the figure stands at 52 per cent.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Indian Express

DJB TO SET UP WASTE WATER MUSEUM TO SAVE YAMUNA

Delhi Jal Board in the collaboration with NSC will develop a water and waste water museum to educate children about water conservation and increasing pollution in the Yamuna. The MoU of the Project was signed on the occasion of public outreach campaign 'Aao Yamuna mei Jaan Daalein' of Yamuna Action Plan-II in the presence of Delhi Chief Minister and Chairperson of DJB Sheila Dikshit on Thursday. Dikshit emphasized the need to water conservation and making Yamuna pollution free. The CM also released posters, calendars.

Pragati Maidan on over 200 sqm area with 30 items related to water conservation and pollution in the river Yamuna. The Centre receives an average footfall of 4.5 lakh per annum. The cost of development of the museum will be bore by DJB and NSC will provide space and management.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Pioneer

MONUMENTS GONE MISSING

It is hard to believe that 35 national monuments, including tombs, temples, and cemeteries, protected by ASI have gone missing, as the Union Ministry of Culture has acknowledged. The irony is that the maximum number of missing monuments is from Delhi where the ASI is headquartered. In 2006, 11 of the 157 national monuments in Delhi, declared protected until 1950, were reported missing; and this number has since gone up to 12. it is not as though there is a problem of plenty: for an ancient historical civilization, India has an abysmally low stock of monuments designated as nationally important. To lose dozens from this stock is unacceptable. It does not augur well for the conservation movement in general and especially the ASI, which, paradoxically, has done a commendable job of developing good conservation practices. Financial assistance for heritage protection needs to be increased but that is not the main issue. The ASI has spread itself thin and a severe shortage of technical personnel has hamstrung the conservation efforts. This problem must be overcome as a top priority. Secondly, more micro-circles must be set up to manage smaller areas more effectively. The ASI also needs to rethink its 'fence and forget' approach.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Hindu

ANOTHER BID TO CLEAN, SAVE YAMUNA

Continuing its efforts backed by aid money to clean the Yamuna, the Delhi Jal Board on Thursday initiated another plan to try and save the dying river. This time round the Board has roped in six non-government agencies to involve the masses in the cleaning operation. The Board has also signed a memorandum of understanding with the National Science Centre, Delhi, for development of a water museum. CM Sheila Dikshit, who addressed the launch of the public outreach programme "Aao Jamuna Mein Jaan Daalein" under the Yamuna Action Plan –II, said the masses, especially children, were an important stakeholder in the plan to clean and save the river. As a part of its outreach programme, the Jal Board has partnered with six NGOs from the six identified zones of Delhi. The NGOs have been roped in to counter public indifference towards the river and its cleaning.

SOURCE

7th August 2009, Hindu

POLICE KEEP DEVOTEES FROM OFFERING PRAYERS AT MONUMENTS

No prayers were held at any Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) protected monuments on Friday after a stern warning from Home Minister P. Chidambaram prompted heavy security by police and paramilitary force at several monuments in Mehrauli. Since morning, personnel from Delhi police, ITBP, BSF and the Sashatra Seema Bal were spread in large numbers around the protected monuments in the area -- Qutub Minar Complex, Rajao Ki Baoli, Jamali Kamali monument and Mandi Masjid -- all of which have been witnessing attempts of forced entry to offer prayers. Around 1.15 p.m., a group of 60-70 persons reached the main gate of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park to reach Jamali Kamali monument, but were stopped by the police. However, unlike last Friday -- when after police stopped a similar group's entry, it had started praying on the busy Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road -- this time the police allowed them to offer namaz at the main gate of the park. "The prayers were offered in a peaceful way and there was no tension," said a senior police official present at the spot. The ASI officials breathed easy after 2 p.m. when the people who had come to offer prayers at a small mosque near the eastern gate of Qutub Minar and the Jamali Kamali monument left peacefully. Some

On August 1, the Home Minister had announced that the government would not allow prayers in monuments protected by the heritage agency except in 12 structures.

SOURCE

8th August 2009, Hindustan Times

MEANDERING THROUGH HISTORY ON A WEEKEND

It must have taken the Mughal kings more than two hours from the heart of the city to reach the 17th century Badal Ki Sarai, the first halt when they headed north. But circa 2009 on a Saturday, 20 heritage lovers reached the spot in less than half an hour from the Patel Chowk Metro station. A two-minute walk away from the Adarsh Nagar metro station, this was the first monument on the route of the '1857 Mutiny Walk' for places accessible by Delhi Metro. Conceived and conducted by conservationist Surekha Narain, the walk winds, literally, through Delhi's heritage. "It was at Badal ki Sarai on June 8, 1857 that British troops defeated the rebel sepoys, which proved to be the turning point for the rulers after the Mutiny," said Narain. Near the Vishwavidyalaya metro station is the Flagstaff Tower, situated on the highest point on the Northern Ridge and built in 1828. The joy of the walkers at finding themselves immersed in history was palpable. Clicking to her heart's content, 64 year-old Jamuna Rajan, accompanied by her husband M Rajan (70), said, "I will send these photos to my grandchildren residing in the US." "We must thank the ASI for keeping these monuments open for us. And I must say, they have maintained the place in good condition," Narain said. After covering the Chauburja Mosque--which once had four domes, out of which only one remains today--and the Pir Ghais, a monument built in 1373 by Firoz Shah Tughlaq as a hunting lodge and an observatory, the group reached a 14th century baoli (stepwell) right next to the equally historic Hindu Rao Hospital. ASI is currently carrying out the conservation work for the baoli. The rebuilt Hindu Rao Hospital was once the Maratha chawni (Maratha camp) which later became headquarters of a British regiment in 1857. Last on the route was the Mutiny Memorial, erected in memory of British soldiers killed and missing during the 1857 battle. The Indian government put up a plaque in 1972 honouring those martyrs who rose against the British during the Mutiny. The group then headed to the last stop--Pul Bangash metro station.

SOURCE

10th August 2009, Hindustan Times

1857 IS NOW JUST A TRAIN RIDE AWAY

A German national, a commercial pilot, a retired couple, an MNC executive. Everyday problems apart, this motley group shares a common concern — Delhi's heritage. And that concern saw them coming out on Saturday afternoon to walk along the paved paths of the Northern Ridge, retracing the footsteps of those who took part in the 1857 uprising. Successfully bridging the gap between history and modern technology, a heritage walk organized by conservationist Surekha Narain brought alive the 1857 mutiny for Delhiites as they followed the new Metro line to Jehangirpuri. Rather than using private vehicles or autorickshaws, the walkers used the Metro instead to move from one heritage monument to another, which were once considered inaccessible but were now just a few steps away from a Metro station. "Everyone goes to Red Fort or Purana Qila, but it's these lesser known monuments in Delhi that showcase the real heritage of the capital. Very few people go to these monuments because of either ignorance or because they are considered inaccessible. But after realizing that so many monuments are just walking distance from Metro stations, more people seem to be interested in visiting them," said Narain. The story of 1857 can be relived through this walk and most of the monuments are being renovated by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for the Commonwealth Games next year. M Rajan and his wife Jamna are frequent travellers ever since Rajan retired from UNICEF almost 10 years ago. The couple commute between Chennai and Delhi frequently. "We appreciate history and like to travel a lot. Recently, we went to Ireland and saw many historic castles there," said Jamna. For German national Katharina Von Maltzan, who has been in India for three months, this was a unique opportunity to see more of the city that is to be her home for the next few years. Nivedita Bhasin, a pilot with Air India added: "I have been to the popular tourist spots but there are so many unknown historical sites that I wanted to learn more about."

SOURCE

10th August 2009, Times of India

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