



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 113

11th August-17th August

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CHILDREN ATTEND FILMMAKING WORKSHOP

INTACH jointly organized a Workshop in New Delhi with PVR Nest and Moser Baer on August 6, 2009 for training cine-artists from 30 from 30 selected schools of Delhi and NCR Region. These schools included public schools, government schools, schools for students with learning disabilities and schools for the socially backward. The programme included training on different aspects of filmmaking covering topics like Movement and Mime by PP Marar, Poetry and Music by Ashish Ghosh; Script writing by Feisal Alkazi; Dance and Drama by Vishwakant Singha and Art and design by Jolly Rohatangi amongst other experts. Over a thousand children in the age group of 10-14 years across Delhi and the NCR region participated in the first phase of the programme, according to Press release.

SOURCE

11th August 2009, Pioneer

There are ample books on monuments in Delhi, home to more than 1200 heritage structures. But a common man finds them either too expensive or too scholarly. Keeping this in mind, the ASI has decided to come up with a coffee table on monuments in Delhi, which will have all such nuggets of information. 'A broad outline has been reached to come up with such a book. We are sure our book will satisfy the needs of the common man', said an ASI officials. The book will have photographs of important monuments, information text and will be bilingual.

SOURCE

11th August 2009, Hindustan Times

DDA PLAN FOR YAMUNA BED: LITTLE CONCRETE, MORE GREENS

THE DDA on Monday approved the zonal plan for construction on the Yamuna riverbed after scrapping a host of proposed projects. Monday's decision was taken at a meeting held in Raj Niwas, three years after DDA had cleared the draft zonal plan. The plan for the area identified as 'O-zone' was approved after introducing amendments that will effectively exclude most attempts to concretize the area. "We made certain amendments following objections and suggestions from public," DDA 's public relations director Neemo

sent for notification to Urban Development Ministry." Lieutenant Governor Tejendra Khanna had issued a moratorium last year on all construction on the riverbed, except Commonwealth Games Village-related projects. In the draft zonal plan, 175 hectares of land south of NH-24 had been set aside for sports facilities -- a cricket stadium and a football stadium among others. DDA also announced that it will divide the area into eight sub-zones on the basis of "recommendation and conclusions arrived at by the statutory plans and studies conducted so far." The effort has found favour with some environmentalists. R K Srinivasan, coordinator of water and waste management unit at the Centre for Science and Environment, said: "DDA had earlier planned a lot of commercial activity in the zone. If they have decided to do away with those plans, then this definitely a great move. We will have to study the revised zonal plan but on the surface it seems they have taken environmental concerns into account." In the meeting, DDA also approved zonal plans for Narela, or Zone P-II: over 50 per cent area in Narela has been identified for residential use, in keeping with DDA's aspiration to convert this belt on the city's outskirts to an important sub-city along the lines for Dwarka.

SOURCE

11 August 2009, Indian Express

KIOSKS OUTSIDE RED FORT TOLD TO SHIFT SHOP

Visitors coming to two World Heritage Sites — Qutub Minar and Red Fort — will be in for a pleasant surprise soon. Encroachments in front of both are being removed. While an unauthorized shop in front of the main entrance of Qutub Minar was razed on Tuesday afternoon, MCD has started shifting all vendors and kiosks from in front of the main boundary wall of Red Fort to a new location. According to senior MCD officials, there are 14 vendors and four kiosks in front of the main Red Fort boundary wall. ASI officials wrote to MCD on July 16 asking them to remove these structures as they not only obstructed the front view of the Mughal citadel but was also coming in way of their conservation plans for Red Fort. Deputy Commissioner (City Zone) Vijay Singh said: "we started removing the vendors on Tuesday and will relocate them in a day or two. The four kiosks, however, will be removed only after August 15 as they are concrete structures and will need to be demolished." The monument and surrounding areas like Lala Lajpat Rai market will be sealed from August 13. Any unfinished work will be resumed only after that. For Qutub Minar, MCD razed a small shop selling camera rolls and cold drinks which was located right in front of the main entrance. According to officials, the shop not only blocked the way to the entrance partially but was also affecting traffic movement especially vehicles coming from Mehrauli-Gurgaon road. It was in violation of ASI guidelines too. Sources said that the shop had been in front of Qutub for several years and there was even a court case about it where the verdict was in favour of ASI. "We had written to MCD several times that this shop was unauthorized. Finally, they cancelled the shop's license three months back and demolished the shop on Tuesday afternoon," said an ASI official.

SOURCE

12th August 2009, Times of India

BHALASWA: ONCE THERE WAS A LAKE

AS per DDA, Bhalaswa Lake in North Delhi is an "adventure complex", with water sports facilities like kayaking and boating and a golf course in the vicinity. That's history now. For, one of the city's largest lakes, spanning over half-a-kilometre, has dried up completely. The lake historically fell on the Northern Yamuna floodplain, which was a major source of water, but an embankment created in 1964 cut off supply, say experts. The catchments area has also shrunk after the Bhalaswa landfill site came up. When Newsline visited the spot earlier this year, the lake -- "this is comparable in size to Nainital Lake," says Manu Bhatnagar of INTACH -- supported migratory birds and commercial boating. Now, the scene is markedly different and it may take years for the lake to recover.

Today, there's no moisture left at the bottom, and boats meant for tourists lie unutilized. "The Burari creek gives water to the lake but it is much drier this year," INTACH's Manu Bhatnagar says. "The lake had two arms, and the Bhalaswa landfill took over the northern arm. Since the embankment in 1964, the lake has never filled to its optimum capacity. We had created a management plan for the lake but that was never implemented." Biologist Faiyaz Khudsar says, "Though the lake was not very clean it supported forms of aquatic life. Migratory birds like Grebe and Dapchicks came there in the winters. It also supported various species of fish, the Channa for instance." Khudsar says it is unlikely that the lake will be able to support aquatic populations soon. Environmentalist Vinod Jain, who had moved the High Court to save the city's waterbodies, says, "The Delhi Development Authority classifies Bhalaswa as a 'revived lake' but at the same time refuses to acknowledge its actual size. In an affidavit in 2004, DDA said the lake was 8,000 square metres but after a revision it admitted in 2006 through a separate affidavit that the lake was more than 13,000 square meters."

SOURCE

11th August 2009, Indian Express

COFFEE KIOSK NEAR QUTAB MINAR REMOVED

A coffee kiosk located within the restricted area of Qutub Minar was removed on Tuesday by officials of the MCD in the presence of the Delhi Police as the kiosk was enrichment on the monument. Sources in the ASI said the shop was powerful political connections" and the removal therefore took quite a few years.

SOURCE

12th August 2009, Indian Express

VIEW RED FORT FREELY

Two years after the 361-year-old Red Fort was declared a World heritage site, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has attempted to remove encroachments surrounding the monument. The action was taken after the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) shot off a letter to the civic agency stating that a number of kiosks and tehbazari located on the southwest side of the Red Fort had occupied the pathways illegally, and were obstructing the view of the monument especially at night, when the monument is illuminated. The MCD said ASI had asked them to relocate these kiosks before Independence Day, as they pose a security threat. "We had received a letter from the ASI in July and we have relocated 14 kiosks and tehbazaris from Subhash Marg to Azad Hind Market near the Old recruitment office," said Vijay Singh, MCD deputy commissioner, city zone. The ASI will realign the boundary wall on the southwest side similar to the one on the northwest side of Red Fort to ensure uniformity. ASI will convert the space into a garden. According to the proposed Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan of the ASI, the area around Red Fort will be decongested to allow free movement of tourists. Also on the cards is a bigger underground information centre for the tourists, a ticketing facility, eating joints, shops, waiting lounges and others in place of the existing smaller one. "All proposed facilities have been planned underground so that the view of the Red Fort is not obstructed while easing out traffic in the area," said Abhimanyu Dayal, urban designer and architect who is a part of the Red Fort conservation project.

SOURCE

12th August 2009, Hindustan Times

QUTUB MINAR GETS A FACELIFT

The Municipa Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Tuesday got rid of an unauthorized kiosk, an eyesore bang in front of the Qutb Minar. The kiosk -- falling within the prohibited area (100 metres) of the heritage monument -- operated in front of the main entrance of Qutb Minar complex for several years, allegedly with political support, sources said. It sold bottled water, photo film, chocolates, biscuits and snacks. Till four years ago, there were many such small shops in the vicinity. Barring the kiosk dismantled by the MCD with heavy police presence, the

MCD to remove all encroachments around Qutb Minar. ASI Delhi Circle Chief K.K. Muhammed said: "With great difficulty, MCD officials have been able to remove the encroachment with the help of police." But with the kiosk gone, tourists would face problems as a similar authorized kiosk near the ticket window across the road is yet to start functioning.

SOURCE

12th August 2009, Hindustan Times

13 STRUCTURES NOTIFIED BY ARCHAEOLOGY DEPT

The Delhi government's department of archaeology has notified 13 more historical buildings in the city for protection. This is the second list of unprotected monuments to be notified by the state government, taking the total number of state-protected monuments to 33. The government is planning to bring a total of 92 unprotected structures under its umbrella in the coming months to showcase them during the Commonwealth Games. Earlier, the state department of archaeology had just six monuments under its protection including the northern, southern and central gateways of Badarpur and three kos minars. According to heritage experts, this number was appalling considering there were over 1,200 heritage buildings listed in the capital and just 173 were protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). It took the government 15 years after the first notification to wake up and bring more buildings under its purview. The structures identified for protection are Haji Langa's Tomb, RK Puram; Domed building, RK Puram Sector IV; Tomb of Shaikh Ziyauddin, Kalu Sarai near Azad Apartment; Tomb (Gumti), Humayunpur Village; Baradari Mosque, Sadhna Enclave; Tomb, Sadhna Enclave; Munda Gumbad, district Park Hauz Khas; Tomb of Shaikh Usman Saiyah, Khirki Village; Tomb, Greater Kailash I; Tomb of Sheikh Salahuddin Darwesh, Sheikh Sarai Village and two other unidentified tombs in Sheikh Sarai Village as well as Majilis Khana, Sheikh Sarai. According to an agreement with INTACH Delhi Chapter, these monuments will now be conserved and then each will boast an official board declaring its protected status. "Increasing awareness about heritage is very critical. We want to showcase as many heritage structures, apart from the better known and popular monuments, for visitors. We will also utilise the space around the monuments situated at strategic locations for purposes like illumination," said a senior official for the state department of archaeology. Senior officials that the list of 92 monuments has been prepared as per their size, significance and location. Among the latest to be notified, the 14 century tomb of Shaikh Usman Saiyah in the heart of Khirki Village often loses out to its more famous neighbour — Khirki Masjid. Experts said there was a threat of demolition to this building owing to new structures all around it. Shaikh Usman Saiyah was a contemporary of Roshan Chiragh in Delhi. Another Tughlaq-period structure is Haji Langa's tomb in RK Puram which has shown signs of serious deterioration in recent years

SOURCE

14th August 2009, Times of India

TIME TRAVEL IN CHANDNI CHOWK

It is pleasant to be in Chandni Chowk, to sweep the eyes 360 degrees in this in-your-face "Secular India" theme park -- temples, mosques, church and gurdwara. To see masked Jains, kirpan (dagger)-wielding Sikhs, saffron-robed sadhus and bearded mullahs carrying on with their spiritual pursuits. To look at sari-clad -- and burqa-clad -- women were strolling along with sunken-cheeked Bihari labourers and foreign tourists wearing, well, not much. It is also pleasant to spot the occasional first-world Delhiites, the Khan Market types, making an excursion to their idea of 'Old Delhi', armed with mineral water bottles, hand sanitisers and shades. But the most pleasant thing is to smell that sweet pungent mix of sewage, sweat, dung, jalebis (a sweetmeat), bhallas (a snack) and genda phool (marigold flowers). The walk begins right where the proposed tram service would start -the Red Fort stop. Look to your left. This red-coloured building is Digambar Jain Mandir, famous for its birds' hospital. A bhikshu (disciple) is sleeping under a Heritage Building status slab. Not far away Western backpackers

They leave the road just in time to let the green-coloured Chandni Chowk bus shuttle rumble by. It is choked with the `natives' going to Ballimaran, to Nai Sadak, to Katra Neel, to Fatehpuri. A sprightly Namdhari Sikh is hanging on to the door. On the right stands what used to be Fort View Hotel -- yellowed but still majestic. It's now home to a Sony showroom, a cinema called Moti (showing a Bhojpuri film), and Café Coffee Day. One backpacker, following my gaze, looks up at the building, and then hurriedly flips through his copy of Lucy Peck's Delhi - A Thousand Years of Building. Just then appears a red capped boy, belonging to a tribe of earcleaners from Turkman Gate, and offers to de-wax the backpacker's ears. To break the language barrier, he takes out a needle, inserts it into his right ear and brings it out from his right nostril. Looking at the horrified tourist, I feel bad for travellers who come to Chandni Chowk to sketch the pattern of the haveli jaalis (meshes of houses) or to study the British influence on Mughal architecture. At the end of this walk, they may remember nothing but the grey sky above, the jostling crowd beneath, and perhaps the golden arches of McDonald's. Yes, it too is here giving an interesting perspective to the Red Fort skyline. Sadly, amidst such mumbo-jumbo, it is easy to miss two stately sights -the Baptist Church and the State Bank of India building. But of course you can't miss the Seesganj Gurdwara. This would be a crowded tram-stop for sure. And not just because of the pilgrims. Look, girls are running down from Teg Bahadur Khalsa Girls Senior Secondary School, next to the gurdwara. Laughter, shrieks, catfights. Chaos multiplied ten times. The golgappa waala (snack-seller) is shouting. So is the pineapple waala. Talking of food, Chandni Chowk's `Old, Famous Jalebi walla' is just a few steps away. The entry to paratha waali galli, too, is somewhere around. Haldiram's is on the other side of the road. Since I belong to the Choko La tribe, unaffected by laddoos (a sweetmeat) and dahi bhallas (a snack), I keep walking straight, past stores selling Chinese toys, bras, saris, footmats, goggles, belts, burqas, chappals(slippers), watches, and even swimming costumes! Nai Sadak, now. The Town Hall building on the right, flecked with hundreds of masakalis (pigeons), is looking very London-ish. Not surprising since it came up just a few years after the 1857 mutiny. For that Piccadilly Circus touch, there are benches and stylish lampposts, on the little avenue on the left. However, bent on quickly finishing this long walk, I'm not feeling obliged to ooh and aah at the claustrophobic histories and monuments lining both sides of Chandni Chowk. The weather-beaten Lala Channamal ki Haveli is left behind without so much of a salam-namaste (greeting). Amritsari Lassi Waala is coming up now. Next is Fatehpuri Masjid.

SOURCE

15th August 2009, Hindustan Times

ASI TO BUILT NEW WALL AT AGRASEN KI BAOLI

Days after Hindustan Times carried a report `Wall collapse hits heritage site', the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has stepped up plans to renovate a neglected portion of the heritage monument. The report was published on August 1, a day after renovations at the ancient Agrasen ki Baoli at Hailey Road in central Delhi turned awry when a dilapidated colony wall -- owned and maintained by DLF -- adjacent to the monument suddenly gave way and damaged vehicles parked below. Portions of the monument, being refurbished, exerted pressure on the dilapidated colony wall -- weakened by moisture and lack of maintenance -- leading to its collapse. Three workers were injured and two cars damaged in the incident. The 14th century monument was being renovated as per the ASI's plans to conserve the Capital's centrally protected monuments by July 2010. Two weeks after the incident, both the agencies involved in the incident have reached a decision. "DLF has consented to have the old, dilapidated wall demolished and agreed to let the ASI build a new wall -- which will be an extension of the monument -- in its place," said superintendent archaeologist K.K. Muhammad. "The wall will be of the same height as the old colony wall," he added. The ASI intends to complete renovation work on the said portion of the monument within a month.

SOURCE

16th August 2009, Hindustan Times

FACELIFT PLAN IN MOTION, I-DAY VENUE SET TO ADD ZEST NEXT YEAR ONWARDS YEAR

THE RED FORT is expected to be a THE RED FORT is expected to be a slightly more gracious, a little more done-up host to the Independence Day next year. Venue of the Prime Minister's address to the nation on the day, the 17th Century citadel of Emperor Shah Jahan is awaiting a comprehensive facelift, which the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) says will begin soon. And parts of the restoration work, ASI officials said, will be done by next year. The fort has undergone some changes since Independence Day celebrations last year, with minor conservation work done at barracks B1 and B2, vacated by the Army in December 2003. But work is expected to gather pace, now that the Supreme Court has approved the comprehensive conservation management plan (CCMP) -- ASI is working on budget estimates and a complete project execution plan. The conservation management plan apart, ASI has also worked out a visitor-facilitation plan to make the heritage structure easily accessible during next year's Commonwealth Games. ASI needed the apex court's nod to undertake any conservation or restoration work after a Public Interest Litigation was filed in 2002 opposing ASI's conservation techniques at the fort. Heritage conservation agency Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative (CRCI) then prepared the CCMP. "Now that the CCMP has got a nod from the expert committee, and the Supreme Court has given a go-ahead, the plan is all set for implementation," ASI director-general K N Shrivastava said. Besides the two barracks, ASI has also streamlined the parking lot by shifting it towards Delhi Gate. "The new parking lot can accommodate 300 four-wheelers and will be opened in a month's time," ASI's superintending archaeologist (Delhi circle) K K Mohammad said. Shrivastava said ASI has to keep UNESCO updated on any work undertaken at Red Fort since it is a world heritage site. "We submitted a copy of the plan to UNESCO earlier this year." Shrivastava said the entire project will span over a period of 10 years -- it will be implemented in three phases. CRCI director Gurmeet Rai said Naubad Khana, Diwan-e-Khas, Moti Masjid and the Hamam has been included in the first phase since they need "urgent attention". He said, "The ground level of the entire fort has gone up over the years, thereby choking the drainage system and also resulting in seepages." Shrivastava said project estimates have not been worked out as the cost of raw materials will vary over time.

SOURCE

15th August 2009, Indian Express

ONCE A GATEWAY TO DELHI, IT NOW STANDS ON SHAKY GROUND

Shedding their 'chalta hai' tag, Delhiites are finally showing concern for the capital's rich heritage. Incensed at the dilapidated state of a Mughal period structure and mindless digging around it, a citizens' group filed an RTI plea to expose the silent collusion between two government agencies — the MCD and ASI. Hurt by the massive destruction caused by heavy digging near Tripolia Gateways, an 18th century protected monument in north Delhi, the residents' welfare association (RWA) of Maharana Pratap Bagh filed an RTI plea with the two bodies. And immediately it triggered a blame game. While the Archaeological Survey of India admitted that it has not given permission to MCD for digging — for a stormwater drainage system — so close to Tripolia, the civic body maintains that the drainage work was demanded by the ASI. It goes on to say that it does not require an NOC for the digging. However, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, clearly states that no construction work or digging is allowed within 100 metres of a protected monument. In the case of Tripolia Gateways, a 25-foot deep pit has been dug up less than five feet from the structure. "The drain is being constructed without permission from ASI and we fail to understand how this was allowed in the first place. Not only has the drainage work damaged the foundation of the Tripolia Gateways monument, it has also affected water supply to our colonies," said RWA president Saurabh Gandhi. And the anger is not only about the digging work. Residents are also appalled at the monumental neglect. Heavy vehicles causing damage to the surface of the arched openings and locals dirtying the area are some of the concerns ASI has never addressed, allege residents. "That's why we have filed another RTI plea to find out exactly how much work ASI has done to conserve the structure in the past five years and how much money was spent on it. Estimates are often drawn but we have not seen any repair work in the last few years," said Anil Chandi, general secretary of the RWA.

On August 12, the RWA received a reply to its RTI query from ASI where the monument caretaker said that Tripolia Gateways was under close scrutiny and a notice had been sent to MCD on May 29 this year, asking them to stop the digging work. The reply also said that various letters had been written to the traffic police to divert traffic from the gateway so they could carry out essential repairs. Amid allegations of gross negligence, ASI and MCD are busy passing the buck to each other. An MCD spokesperson said that the agency had received a request from ASI to lower the level of road under the Gateways to ensure vehicles carrying goods do not damage the monument's arched openings. "It was accordingly decided to bring down the level of road by 1.5 metres and necessitated certain structural changes. MCD was also required to lay down box stormwater drain in the vicinity, ensuring proper synchronization with the reduced road level," said a senior MCD official. Admitting that they had asked MCD to lower the road level around Tripolia, senior ASI officials said that they did not give the civic body permission for any digging in the vicinity of Tripolia. An official said: "Any kind of work around the protected monument should have been done in consultation with us but this did not happen. We will now assess the damage done to the foundation and take appropriate action if required." When asked why ASI ignored the issue for almost three months now, the official said: "being a government department, we can't just lodge an FIR against a civic agency. But now we will take up the issue with them at the earliest. We need the cooperation from a number of agencies, including PWD and traffic police. We have written letters for this also."

SOURCE

17th August 2009, Times of India

TREE THAT VANISHED FROM RIDGE READY TO TAKE ROOT AGAIN

A VALUABLE, though sticky, component of the Indian deciduous forests -- the Karaya gum tree -- is marking a return to Delhi. *Sterculia Urens*, a tree with crimson fruit, producing economically valuable gum used in making chewing gum and medicines, became extinct from the Delhi Ridge generations ago. After successfully fostering saplings brought in from Madhya Pradesh at the Yamuna (Wazirabad) and Aravalli (Vasant Kunj) Biodiversity parks, the Delhi government is now introducing the white-barked Karaya gum tree in the Delhi Ridge. And with welcome rains, the saplings have already been procured and plantation will be done as soon as possible. The Karaya gum tree is heavily used across states like Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and on the Aravalli belt. Gum and resin are extracted for commercial purposes. In Delhi, however, the tree is believed to have disappeared during the British times. The slow growing tree also lost out due to an invasive species, *Prosopis Juliflora*, introduced by the British. "The Delhi University conducted a study on the status of the tree in various states in 1997," said Dr Rajesh Tandon, Associate Professor Delhi University's Botany Department. In Delhi, the tree may have disappeared around the time *Prosopis Juliflora* was introduced. This tree changed the nature of the soil and prevented native trees from growing. "The rains will greatly help in establishing the Karaya gum tree. Planting the tree would mean a return to the native ecosystems on the Aravallis," says C R Babu, from the Centre of Management of Degraded Ecosystems, who has devised the Ridge Action Plan.

SOURCE

17th August 2009, Indian Express

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