



**INTACH**

**DELHI CHAPTER**

**Weekly News Clippings – 114**

**18<sup>th</sup> August-24<sup>th</sup> August**

## Editor's Note

*Selling bird's nest soup to save this bird: there's a change in law*

*NDMC areas now on 3D GIS map*

*Sheila outlines plan for a green Delhi*

*Unified approach must to save Ridge: CM*

*Red Fort, uninterrupted*

*The lost glory*

*Delhi by cycle*

*Restoring the wonder in red*

*Culture curry to woo tourists*

### **SELLING BIRD'S NEST SOUP TO SAVE THIS BIRD: THERE'S A CHANGE IN LAW**

TO save a bird, its nest will now be sold. In an unusual conservation strategy, the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) has delisted the Edible Nest Swiftlet, a cave-nesting bird found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, from the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA). Reason: local communities which poached the bird's nests -- used in the famous bird's nest soup, a delicacy in Chinese cuisine and thought to be an aphrodisiac -are now being roped in to harvest the nests commercially. This, argues the NBWL, will help to sustain both the communities and the Edible Nest Swiftlet itself. The controlled sale of nests, which are made by the saliva of the Swiftlet, could only have been possible if the bird, accorded highest protection under Schedule One of the WPA, was delisted from the act. At a meeting of the NBWL Standing Committee chaired by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh last month, the bird was delisted for three years. The proposal had been pending with the NBWL for three years. "Conservation strategies need to be flexible. One way of protecting this bird is to allow commercial harvesting of its nest. This means that poaching of the bird's nest, which leads to the death of fledglings, will stop. This is also a strategy of protecting the bird," said Asad Rahmani, an ornithologist and NBWL member. The forest department of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands will create artificial nesting enclosures for the Edible Nest Swiftlet. Members of the local community -- the 'poachers' themselves -are being recruited to guard the nests at two major sites on the islands. "People from the Ranchi community have been involved in the poaching of the nests. Now we are employing the same people to guard the nests in two major caves on the islands. One cave in the northern Andamans has 700 nests; another, on Interview Island, has 300. Nests will be allowed to be taken after strict monitoring, and only after the fledglings have flown," said AK Paul, Conservator of Forests of the Islands. The nests fetch around Rs 1 lakh for a kilogram in the international market, Paul said. There are over 1,000 breeding pairs in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The bird is found across South East Asia. The Edible Nest Swiftlet nests only in caves. A different harvest strategy is to place the eggs of the Edible Nest Swiftlet in the nests of a related bird, the Glossy Swiftlet, which nests in lit areas. This would encourage adult birds to nest in artificial enclosures.

**SOURCE**

**18<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Indian Express**

### **NDMC AREAS NOW ON 3D GIS MAP**

New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has completed GIS mapping of its entire area to effectively provide tourist information along with information on whom all have paid property tax and if any household is carrying out unauthorized construction, etc. The 3D-GIS mapping will also be used to keep tabs on public utility services like roads, streetlights, sanctioning of building plans, etc by simply zooming in on a particular area.

It will even be used to enhance the green cover as information on species of trees planted; their lifespan etc will also be made available using the system. Each tree or potted plant will be numbered by the civic body and if a tree is uprooted during a storm, NDMC will be able to act immediately and take remedial measures. “A 3D-satellite imagery of the NDMC area has been taken on a GIS platform. When we zoom out, tourist information will be provided, but as we begin to zoom in, we will get information about the green areas in a colony, about status of sanctioning of building plans of properties, unauthorised construction — cameras will also be installed for this purpose — and whether a particular property has paid property tax or not etc,” said an NDMC official. This will also help the civic body in increasing its property tax collections. The L-G’s office has been given a presentation of the functioning of the 3D-GIS system. NDMC has been working on this project since the last two years and the entire project is expected to be completed in six month’s time. The GIS system will be used for improving various civic services provided by NDMC by mapping every pipeline, electricity line etc in the area. Said an NDMC official: “If there is a power failure, NDMC will be able to identify the problem immediately using the system. Moreover, we will be able to get the information on when a road was made, the last time it was repaired, the contractor who carried out the job and the cost of the entire process. A general survey is being conducted to gather such information on all our public utility services. The present cost incurred by us is Rs 50 lakh.” NDMC is planning to make the 3D-GIS system partly accessible to the public so that complaints registered by people will also be shown on the system with red and green lights (red signifying complaints that need to be looked into and green showing those complaints that have been addressed). The civic body has appointed a consultant for this project. “By the end of this project, we will get information on every asset such as sub-stations, transformers, signages, manholes, trees etc owned by us. We will be able to do better asset management,” added the official.

#### **SOURCE**

**19<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Times of India**

### **SHEILA OUTLINES PLAN FOR A GREEN DELHI**

Noting that the Delhi Government was facing difficulties in protecting the Ridge due to multiplicity of authority, Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit on Tuesday emphasized the need for a unified approach in dealing with the situation. Speaking at the National Conference of Environment and Forest Ministers of states here, Ms. Dikshit underlined the need for having dedicated staff for enforcement of the Environment Protection Act, 1986, so that the provisions could be enforced properly. Lauding the role of the Eco- Task Force in greening the ridge area in Bhatti mMines, the CM said while this appeared to be an impossible task, the Force had made it possible. Stating that the design of the wall had been prepared by the NDMC, she said, it was uniform all over. The CM also informed that nine new city forests would be developed in this financial year and with this the total number of such forests would go up to 41 in 2010.

#### **SOURCE**

**19<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Hindu**

### **UNIFIED APPROACH MUST SAVE RIDGE: CM**

Delhi CM today underlined the importance of a unified approach to protect the Ridge in Delhi as her government faced difficulties due to multiplicity of authorities in the Capital.

Speaking in a national conference of environment and forest ministers of states, she stated that her aim was to make Delhi as one of the greenest capitals of the world. The government was keen to expand its green cover from the existing 20 percent to 30 percent. She lauded the role of Eco Task Force of Delhi government in greening the Ridge area in Bhatti Mines. It was an impossible task which had been made possible by the Eco Task Force. The protection of the Ridge was a challenge in itself. It required a unified approach as different agencies had been working without any coordination. The city government decided to construct a high wall around the Ridge right from Pusa Road up to Dhaula Kuan to overcome problem of encroachment and accumulation of debris.

**SOURCE**

**19<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Tribune**

**RED FORT, UNINTERRUPTED**

Tourists and other visitors to the Chnadni Chowk area can now look forward to an unhindered view of the Red Fort, one of three monuments in the national capital listed as World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is possible, thanks to a sustained action by the MCD which has removed all bazari kioska lining the northwest side of the Red Fort. 15 such kiosks, were removed on Wednesday in presence of MCD and ASI officials.

**SOURCE**

**20<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Hindustan Times**

**THE LOST GLORY**

Delhi is home to some of the finest monuments in the world and several of them have been recognized as world heritage sites by the UNESCO. These monuments are a reflection of the grandeur and cultural vibrancy of Delhi's bygone past. That said, there are still a lot of historical monuments in the city that are lying in a deplorable state, despite the fact that their maintenance and protection has come under the purview of law. Delhi's famous Agrasen ki Baoli represents one such sordid tale of apathy and indifference. Once known for its grandeur and majestic aesthetics, this medieval era monument- located in the heart of Connaught Place at the Hailey Lane- is now a neglected site. Just one look at the Baoli and one can see that total absence of cleanliness here as it is littered by polythene bags, liquor packs, plastic bottles and other waste material. Residents living in the nearby area say that this ancient well was full of water till some years back, but due to lack of maintenance today, it has degenerated completely. Though, after a long delay the restoration and conservation work has been recently started by the ASI. The question that now remains to be answered is, will the structure regain its lost glory?

**SOURCE**

**21<sup>st</sup> August 2009, Times of India**

**DELHI BY CYCLE**

It is 7.30 am. A group of six people -- all tourists and all clad in shorts and T-shirt -- is ready to set out for Old Delhi on a cycle. Jack Leenaars, a Dutch national, is their tour guide. The lanky 34-year-old runs a cycle tour to go around Old Delhi called Delhibycycle. The tour starts everyday at 7.30 a.m. from the Ajmeri Gate side of New Delhi Railway Station when traffic is thin on the streets. Leenaars sets out with a group of foreign tourists and whoever is keen to experience the Walled City on a cycle. The itinerary includes a visit to Chandni Chowk, cycling through the myriad bylanes of the locality, a morning treat at a street teashop in Civil Lines and breakfast at the famous Karim's restaurant. "I have been a cycle enthusiast since my childhood. I believe that cycle is the best way to explore a city, especially a place like Old Delhi," says Leenaars, who has an intimate knowledge of Old Delhi's lanes and its landmarks. "It allows you to soak in the myriad sights and sounds and you can cover a lot of distance in a couple of hours." He hit upon the idea to start a cycle tour for Old Delhi earlier this year. So far, he has taken about 300 people on cycle rides in old Delhi. Leenaars, whose tours are more about

"I feel Delhiites do not know their city well. Many of them join the tour to explore the city in a different way," he says. "They get to know aspects of the city that they had not known earlier." Lalita de Goederen, who has been part of the Leenaars' tour, says: "I have been to the Walled City on rickshaws, but exploring it on cycle is like taking a fascinating journey into the past. I think not much has changed in the Walled City in the last 100 years." Leenaars' trip costs Rs 1150 per head. Another group of enthusiasts who call themselves the Delhi Cycling Club also organises heritage bicycle rides to various parts of the Capital, including Shahjahanabad and Lutyens' Delhi. But unlike Leenaars' tour, which is about the street experience, the club's tours are about exploring monuments across the city. Volunteers trained as heritage tourism guides from the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, Delhi, accompany the cyclists to explain the history, architecture and significance of these monuments. The tour covers around 18 km in 3 hours. "About 100 people join us on these heritage rides. They talk, share information about monuments and have lots of fun," says Rajendra Verma, the coordinator of Delhi Cycling Club, which has about 600 members. "Cycle rides are the best way to explore a place like Shahjahanabad where every street has something of heritage value. It is also the best way to conserve monuments," he says. Aditya Sharma (35), an advocate, loves to explore the monuments on a cycle. "The best thing about exploring the city on a cycle is that you get to explore the city at a unique pace, neither too slow, nor too fast. I have explored almost all the monuments by cycle," says Sharma. Delhi Metro's cycle rental facility at Patel Chowk Metro Station, which was started in February this year, is also pretty popular among tourists. They hire cycles to explore sites like the India Gate, Jantar Mantar and Rashtrapati Bhawan. "On an average our cycles do 30 trips every day. Most people who take the cycles on rent are tourists, including foreigners," says Anuj Dayal, chief public relations officer of the DMRC. "Many tourists even book these cycles in advance."

#### **SOURCE**

**23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009, Hindustan Times**

#### **RESTORING THE WONDER IN RED**

As you walk past the shops at Chhatta Bazaar, Red Fort, sunlight streams in from its intricately designed sandstone arches, lighting up the pathway. As you walk further, the bazaar opens up to a chowk, with a channel of water cutting across it. A few steps ahead is the two-storey structure of Naubat Khana, where drummers greet you with their ceremonial music. If you had lived in the 17th century, this is how you would have been welcomed into Shah Jahan's court at Lal Qila, the seat of power from where he ruled over Shahjahanabad. Today this fort retains little of its former architectural splendour. A recently conceived conservation plan aims at restoring this icon of India's freedom to its former glory. "This is not just any historical building. The story of India's freedom struggle is embedded in every stone that makes this fort," says Gurmeet Rai, the conservation architect who headed the team of architects, civil engineers, public health engineers, electrical engineers and surveyors for drawing up the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP). Rai--who has worked extensively to restore architectural monuments in Punjab, like submitting a plan for the Darbar Sahib restoration and the Golden Temple--worked on the CCMP for a year. "For a year, I did not do anything else," says Rai, who worked on the plan from March 2006 to May 2007. As part of the decade-long conservation project that has been divided into various stages, Rai is anxious about the first phase, which includes all the five buildings along the Central Axis corridor--Lahore Gate, Chhatta Bazaar, Naubat Khana, Rang Mahal and Mumtaaz Mahal. "These buildings have undergone years of change and are in various stages of neglect. We suggested the changes based on archival maps of the fort since 1850 and overlapped it with contemporary maps of the area to evaluate the change," says Rai. The Diwan-i-Aam, she explains, was one of the most important structures on the Central Axis. "It was where the emperor addressed his people. I have pictures from the British period showing carpeted floors and awnings like in Jodhaa Akbar, under the sculpted arches. This building was a textiled structure and had a luxurious set-up," she says, adding, "The lawns were never part of the original Mughal design."

They were colonial introductions. The area in front of Diwan-i-Aam was a dry chowk where people gathered to listen to Shah Jahan's speeches." While her team could not undertake any excavation at the fort premises, she believes that a scientific excavation will reveal rows of arched cubicles along the edges of the lawns of Diwan-i-Aam. "If possible, the lawns in front of Diwan-i-Aam should be paved with flagstone," she says. The gardens behind the Diwan-i-Aam and the ones at Hayat-baksh will be built along the lines of the Mughal layout, which had jasmine, rose, fruit-based plants and other indigenous varieties. "The fort needs to reposition itself in modern India. It should be available to archaeologists who want to conduct research on the fort and India's history. It should be a hub of modern cultural studies," Rai says. While it may take time before work gets underway, Rai—who is now working on the restoration of the Ellora caves and Gobindgarh Fort, Amritsar—is hopeful.

**SOURCE**

**23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009, Indian Express**

**CULTURE CURRY TO WOO TOURISTS**

Imagine Delhi's very own Fashion Street, on an avenue leading from Lodhi Colony to India Habitat Centre. Or a heritage walk through the monuments of Mehrauli and Hauz Khas. Flea markets that will be a tourist's delight and the best of Indian art, not in the galleries, but out on the streets for all to admire. If all goes according to plan, Delhi government will create 15 active cultural zones in the capital to bring alive the variety the city has to offer during the fortnight that will mark the 2010 Commonwealth Games. Anywhere between 80,000 and 1,00,000 visitors are expected to descend on the capital during the Games slated for October next year. Adding to the crowd will be around 10,000 players, coordinators and officers who will make the capital their home between October 3 and October 15, 2010. To bring alive the culture of the capital, Delhi government is now busy exploring ways of presenting the city to the visitors. It proposes to divide Delhi into active cultural zones. Each zone will be profiled in a unique manner highlighting heritage, greens, games venues and tourist spots. The 15 cultural zones across the city will include North Campus, the stretch from Chandni Chowk to Red Fort and Fatehpuri Masjid, Connaught Place, Lodhi Garden to Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Hauz Khas, Siri Fort, Mehrauli, Shanti Path, the area between Delhi Secretariat and Old Yamuna Bridge, Ridge Road, Delhi Cantonment and Punjabi Bagh. A zone around Akshardham and India Gate is also proposed. The location of the Games venues, places of historical importance, locations of tourist interest, availability of ample open space for setting up installations, proximity to existing and upcoming Metro stations and area of maximum movement envisaged during the Games are some of factors being taken into consideration while drawing up the cultural zones. The common uniting factors that will make each zone culturally appealing would include performing arts shows, food courts, flea markets, exhibitions and art installations. The cultural zones will be presented in the form of active street life. For instance, Delhi Secretariat to Yamuna Bridge is being considered as one contiguous cultural zone. The various components which make it eligible for the profile include the presence of the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, Yamuna Velodrome, Ambedkar Stadium, Gandhi Darshan, the ghats, a portion of the Red Fort and the old bridge in the vicinity. The green avenues between Lodhi Garden and Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium is being projected as another zone showcasing the Safdarjung Tomb, Lodhi Gardens, the urban architectural delights that are India Habitat Centre and India International Centre and the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium which will host the opening and closing ceremonies. A temporary Fashion Street may be a part of the cultural theme. An interesting zone being considered that may put West Delhi on the cultural map for the first time is likely to stretch from Shivaji Place to Punjabi Bagh Club. Moving beyond the posh south and heritage loaded Central Delhi, this zone is being seen as an attempt to project the variety in the capital. This zone includes important malls and cineplexes, the Chattrapati Shivaji Park and Shivaji Place.

**SOURCE**

**24<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Times of India**

**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](mailto:feedback@intachdelhichapter.org)**