



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 115

25th August-31st August

Editor's Note

Four heritage structures get new lease of life for Games

Kids redraw old city

Why do trees die every time it rains? HC asks Delhi, Centre

Inflow to Yamuna to be cleaned up at last

Fish cure: Govt hits on medicine to keep water bodies healthy

Heritage tag for Visva- Bharti?

Heritage, development must go hand in hand: INTACH head

FOUR HERITAGE STRUCTURES GET NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR GAMES

In an attempt to restore its heritage buildings, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has initiated a pilot project. To begin with, the MCD heritage cell has short listed four buildings that will be restored to their original glory and will be used as tourist information centres or restaurants during the Commonwealth Games in 2010. The four heritage buildings are Hindu Rao Hospital, MCD office in Kucha Bagh, two structures — Circular Baradari and Colonnade — inside Old Hindu College complex and a mahal near Jal Vihar in Lajpat Nagar. Said an MCD official: “These buildings have been chosen because they were in a very bad condition. We are working on the conservation plans that should be ready by September. Besides Hindu Rao Hospital — which will be used for official purpose only — we will like to use the other three structures as tourist information centres during the Games or may even convert them into restaurants.” The civic agency hopes to complete conservation work by December 2009. The MCD office in Kucha Bagh was built in the late 19th century. The building has a high central hall flanked by rooms on the sides and a semi-octagonal turret on the north-western corner. Mezzanines have altered the original character of the building. Hindu Rao Hospital was built by Edward Colebrooke, and later altered by William Fraser. It was purchased by Hindu Rao, a Maratha nobleman and the brother-in-law of Maharaja Daulat Rao Scindia of Gwalior, after Fraser was murdered. The MCD hopes to restore the hospital building to its original glory. The Circular Baradari is a garden pavilion that once formed part of James Skinner’s estate in the 19th century. The circular building is said to have been a baradari standing in a pool. Its columns can still be made out, though the spaces between them have been filled. It is being used as a DJB office currently. The Colonnade building, also part of Skinner’s estate, is a single-storey rectangular building which has a great colonnade verandah. The mahal in Lajpat Nagar, said officials, was a small Mughal pavilion. At present, its walls are collapsing. It was earlier used as an MCD office. The gateway of the complex is a large building at the south-end, to which some additions have been made. Said the official: “Since these buildings come under MCD, we thought it would be practical to restore them first. We have been approached by people in Chandni Chowk who own havelis in the Walled City. They want us to take over the maintenance and restoration work of their havelis and we are working out details to see whether this is feasible. Many tour operators have also shown interest in turning havelis into guest houses for the Games.”

SOURCE

25th August 2009, Times of India

KIDS REDRAW OLD CITY

When it comes to a facelift for Old Delhi, the young could well show the way. Class XI students of 15 schools from across the city are at present working on their vision for redeveloping Chandni Chowk. Finding solutions to problems like congestion in the Walled City, the teenagers have proposed underground parking, solar-powered trams, centralised eating areas, ducting of service lines, and conversion of havelis into hotels as the way forward. All this while retaining Chandni Chowk's old-world charm. The 15 schools participating in the Future Cities India 2020 competition have been short listed on the basis of an essay written on redevelopment of Chandni Chowk. The students will now make a 3D concept model and the final presentation will be made in January 2010. Last year's winners — students of Manava Bharati India International School, Panchsheel Park — said they wanted to deal with congestion by providing a separate area for hawkers. Said participant Harsewak Singh: "Our plan will entail a separate eating area so people can land up at one place to enjoy all the delicacies of Old Delhi. We also suggested trams and environment-friendly buses." Each team comprises four students and one teacher. Apeejay School Pitampura wants to solve the haphazard growth of Walled City by dividing it into four zones, each catering to different needs — markets, hotels, trading and residential areas. Said Nehrika Singh: "Our decongestion plans do not allow private vehicles in commercial areas, proposes solar-powered trams, ducting of service lines and tongas with tour guides to show people around." Many of the students have never visited Chandni Chowk but plan to do so soon to get a feel of the place. They have been provided with facts and figures as design criterias for the competition. They have to come up with a list of three activities for social and recreational land use as provided in Master Plan-2021. Kanika Magan from Apeejay School, Noida, said their plan would ensure better infrastructure while giving due importance to heritage. "As far as heritage goes, our plan proposes converting havelis into hotels and the Town Hall into a library," she said. Emphasizing on green buildings in Chandni Chowk were schools like Navy Children School, Chankyapuri and DAV School, Gurgaon. Said Dr Kavita Chauhan, a teacher at Navy Children School: "Solar panels can be put to use in chowk areas so that the area is self-sufficient in power." The competition has been organised by the department of science and technology and Bentley Systems.

SOURCE

27th August 2009, Times of India

WHY DO TREES DIE EVERY TIME IT RAINS? HC ASKS DELHI, CENTRE

Why does every storm that hits the Capital uproot the city's green cover? Why isn't the government doing anything to save the trees? Is urbanization taking place at the cost of ecology? These were the questions raised by a public interest litigation (PIL) heard in Delhi High Court on Wednesday. Nearly 100 trees perished in the rainstorm, which lashed Delhi last Friday. Earlier rainstorms have wrecked similar havoc. The PIL, filed by lawyers Sugriva Dubey and Namita Roy, was based on reports in HT's August 23 edition, titled 'Friday's storm took down 98 Delhi trees' and 'Concrete killing trees: says experts.' A Bench of Chief Justice A.P. Shah and Justice Manmohan issued a notice in this regard to the Delhi Government and Centre. They have been asked to reply by October 7. The PIL blamed concretization up to the trunk of trees on footpaths and roads for the green damage. It said the concrete base led to weakening of trees as there is no space for the plants to suck air and water. Roots are destroyed because they get little space to grow and anchor the tree. "The trees fall because there is an imbalance between the root structure and the crown," the HT report had quoted Prabhakar Rao, member of Kalpavriksh, an environmental action group. "Because of rampant concretization, roots of old trees have become weak and even if a mild storm hits..they bend and fall," Prabhakar had said. "Concrete pavements are preventing adequate supply of water needed for the growth of roots," said Usha Rao, Head of Botany dept, Delhi University. Rao said construction -- be it Metro, BRT, or flyovers and underpasses -puts pressure on the binding of the soil.

SOURCE

27th August 2009, Hindustan Times

INFLOW TO YAMUNA TO BE CLEANED UP AT LAST

AFTER waiting for the nod from the Ministry of Urban Development for over a year now, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has finally received the technical go-ahead for its ambitious plan of resuscitating the Yamuna's 22-km stretch in Delhi by constructing interceptor sewers. While the total construction cost of the project has been pegged at Rs 1,800 crore, the agency plans to finance Rs 600 crore through funding from the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The DJB is also negotiating with the Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited (HUDCO) for a loan of Rs 800 crore. The remaining Rs 400 crore for the project will be funded by the Delhi government. According to sources, the Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation of the Ministry of Urban Development, the highest technical body in the country, has given approval to the Delhi Jal Board to go ahead with the Interceptor Sewage Project. The DJB will now seek approval from the Expenditure Finance Committee of the Union Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Urban Development Secretary M Ramachandran told Newslite: "It is a very large scale project. The technical committee, CPHEO, has approved it, but the project will require a final sanction from the Union Cabinet." While sources said construction work on the project is likely to begin by the end of this year, its completion will take the agency at least four years. The DJB's Chief Executive Officer Ramesh Negi said: "The Delhi government has given a green signal and the CPHEO has approved the project. At the earliest, work on it should begin by December after the requisite approvals." Once the construction costs are dealt with, however, the DJB will need another Rs 600 crore for the operation and maintenance of the project for 10 years. Delhi, on an average, extracts 240 million gallons per day (MGD) from the Yamuna for its fresh water needs and releases 950 MGD. According to the DJB, the interceptor sewer project is an integrated approach towards zero sewage flow in the drains and ultimately the river. The laying of interceptor sewers includes tapping the minor drains carrying sewage into three of the major drains--Najafgarh, Supplementary and Shahdara -- and conveying the same to the nearest treatment plant to ensure that only treated sewage is discharged. The project aims to lay 60 kms of sewers parallel to these three drains to tap 135 minor drains.

SOURCE

31st August 2009, Indian Express

FISH CURE: GOVT HITS ON MEDICINE TO KEEP WATER BODIES HEALTHY

AFTER having revived 152 water bodies in the rural districts of the city, the Delhi government is now looking at keeping them 'alive' by introducing fish in them. Officials of the Flood and Irrigation department said the water bodies are located in areas like Nangloi and Najafgarh in Southwest and West districts of the Capital. "To keep the water clean, there has to be regular supply of oxygen in it. This is possible only if there is life in and around the water body, which is why we are now planning to introduce fish in these rejuvenated ponds," said a senior official from the Flood and Irrigation department of Delhi government. To this end, the government is now planning to write to the Department of Fisheries at the Centre. With the rains playing spoilsport this year, officials said water level in the ponds is lower than usual. "We've asked them to advise us, it should be done by next year," the official added. The Forest department has already been asked to plant saplings to create a green cover around the water bodies, the official added. The contractor hired by the department is supposed to dig out the water body from scratch if needed with the help of the dimensions (boundary and depth) specified in the revenue records. "We'll concretize the boundary of the water body and open channels for water in the fields to flow into the water body to recharge it," the official said. Apart from re-charging groundwater, the water bodies are already functioning as bathing areas for cattle and irrigation of fields, officials said.

SOURCE

31st August 2009, Indian Express

HERITAGE TAG FOR VISVA - BHARATI?

As Rabindranath Tagore's sesquicentennial year approaches in 2011, the government has decided to nominate Santiniketan as its entry for Unesco's world heritage site status next year. The verdant Visva-Bharati campus was founded and nurtured by three generations of the Tagore family. An ASI official said the initiative was timed to coincide with Tagore's 150th birth anniversary.

SOURCE

30th August 2009, Times of India

HERITAGE, DEVELOPMENT MUST GO HAND IN HAND: INTACH HEAD

With development in full swing in India, the Government is spending huge amounts of money for development of cities in the country. But in this developmental process the need for preservation of heritage sites and buildings is being largely ignored. Drawing the attention of the government and the common government and the common people towards this issue, SK Misra, chairman of the INTACH addressed a press conference on Friday. Misra emphasized on this issue and said, "Development needs and preservation of heritage sites should go hand by hand and this can be done by choosing simple alternative routes." Addressing the media, AGK Menon said, "INTACH is doing its best to draw the attention of the government towards the preservation of the heritage sites and we are going to have a seminar on heritage and Urban Renewal in Jodhpur from September 3-5 where experts from many foreign countries are coming to share their experience and ideas about preserving such sites."

SOURCE

29th August 2009, Times of India

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