



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 116
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HERITAGE FIRST, DEVELOPMENT LATER: MEHRA

Hundred years ago, the British brought in a virtual divide between the 'Old' and the 'New' Delhi when Lutyens designed the present day New Delhi away from Shahjahanabad. The present day rulers -- the Municipal Corporation of Delhi -- might end up doing the same if the proposed traffic management and circulation plan for the upcoming Civic Centre (on the Minto Road) and the New Delhi Railway Station are carried out in its current form, said the Delhi Chapter convener of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) AGK Menon. INTACH has now been asked to carry out the urban design study and suggest alternatives so as to ensure that it will not in any way disturb the heritage fabric of the area. MCD Commissioner K.S. Mehra agreed that INTACH has been asked to carry out the urban design study and suggest alternative plan in about a month. "The idea is not to disturb the heritage but preserve it. The area (Shahjahanabad) is precious for the city in view of its heritage legacy." "INTACH has been asked to study if the urban form of the area vis-à-vis heritage should undergo change or not," Mehra added. Menon said, "There are several heritage monuments lining the roads surrounding the Civic Centre ... Turkman Gate and Ajmeri Gate to name just two.

SOURCE

1st September 2009, Hindustan Times

HOW DRAINS CAN YIELD TWIN GAINS

It could turn out to be the perfect solution for the Yamuna's increasing pollution whilst providing the capital with a sustainable urban development strategy. A group of NGOs under the banner of www.delhinullahs.org has proposed a plan to clean up the city's nullahs: By treating the waste water on site in micro sewage treatment plants (STPs). The waste water would then be reused rather than discarded into the Yamuna. The proposal also aims to use Delhi's neglected nullah network — over 350-km-long — to provide an alternative transport network. Says Manit Rastogi of Morphogenesis, an architectural firm that is promoting the project, "There are various technologies available which can help to clean the nullahs at a low cost. Currently, the nullahs are just unhygienic drains. They smell, breed mosquitoes and pollute the Yamuna. However, this network can be turned into a valuable asset." The process, according to the group, is simple. Clean the nullahs so that sewage is not allowed to pollute Yamuna. This would also provide the city with a transport network, creating walking and cycling paths along the nullahs, giving last mile connectivity to public transport like buses and the Metro. That's not all. With the nullah system being as old as 700 years in some places, many of the wellknown archeological sites are built along the network. The network could thus prove to be a connection between cultural venues, including historical monuments.

But it's easier said than done. Says Anupam Yog of Urban Habitat Forum, an arm of the India Habitat Centre, "There have been several attempts to clean the Yamuna. But this time, we have tried to look at a holistic solution, rather than just aiming for an aesthetic or beautification project." Yog admits that a lot needs to be done before the project can get off the ground. "A physical mapping of the drains, followed by a feasibility report is needed before we can have a detailed project report," adds Yog. That's why the group is hoping that both the government and private enterprises can get together to launch the project. Adds Rastogi, "We have started a public petition as a public outreach programme. Once this is underway, there should be positive response to the project." The advantages are many. As per the proposal, the cleaning of the nullahs is only a part of the plan. Thereafter, native plants can be used to slow the surface run-off and allow storm water to infiltrate back into the ground to recharge the water table. Using a system of organic reedbeds and aerators to clean the sewage entering nullahs, it could dramatically improve public health as well as help replenish aquifers. With 73% of Delhi's STPs functioning below capacity, it's no wonder that NGOs are hoping the project will take off. Interestingly, Delhi is not the only one to redefine city development by transforming the functioning of local drains. The experiment has been carried out successfully in Seoul (Korea), Fuzhou in China as well as Valencia in Spain already.

SOURCE

1st September 2009, Times of India

CLEAN YAMUNA: NGO ON A VIGIL NEAR RIVER BANK

For almost three years, civic agencies in Delhi have not been able to construct 13 enclosures on the Yamuna banks for people to throw in their religious samagri and not pollute the river. On Tuesday, volunteers with Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan (YJA), a Delhi-based NGO, stood vigil at the Nizamuddin Bridge, persuading people to hand over their offerings to them instead, so that they could be disposed off in a proper manner. According to Manoj Misra of YJA, this has been planned as a month-long vigil especially at a time when, due to Diwali and Durga Puja, the river is inundated with idols and religious samagri that ruin the water quality of the Yamuna. We had a test run on Janmashtami and found that people were more than willing to dispose off their puja samagri safely provided an alternative was made available to them. On Tuesday, we started off with 12 volunteers. All kinds of people came to throw material into the river. With a few exceptions, most agreed readily to hand over the material to our volunteers. Around 21 packets were finally collected. One couple had come all the way from Dwarka for making their offering to the river, he said. Misra said: "It is a sad commentary on the lethargy of civic agencies like the MCD where despite a court order directing them to identify locations and make arrangements along the river where people could safely dispose off their puja left overs, no action has yet been taken."

SOURCE

2nd September 2009, Times of India

ALGAE CHOKE HAUZ KHAS LAKE

THE 13th Century Hauz Khas Lake, which was to be developed as a tourist attraction as per a 2003 High Court order, is dying a slow death. When Newline visited the spot, the water level in the 80,000-square metre lake was low and the water was covered with filamentous algae, which stops other aquatic plants from growing. Worse, the growth of algae may either prevent fish from reaching the mosquito larvae on the surface of the lake or lead to an increase in mosquitoes. The maintenance and restoration of the lake has changed hands several times. Till recently, the lake's restoration was with INTACH and to augment the lake's water supply, treated sewage water from Vasant Kunj was let into the lake. This was, however, stopped after residents complained that the water in the lake had started stinking. Now, the DDA has roped in private contractors to clean the lake, who haven't been able to restore the lake either. In 2003, the High Court ordered that six major

be restored as tourist spots. Six years later, the Hauz Khas Lake is being advertised as a natural tourist spot. The boats at the Hauz Khas Lake, however, lay unused. Labourers who clean the lake daily told Newsline that they have got rashes due to contact with the lake's water. "The lake would stink when water from Vasant Kunj was put in here. Now, the water doesn't stink so much but its levels are certainly low. When we go inside the lake, it irritates the skin," a worker said. Traditionally, the lake was fed by storm water channels from the Aravallis. To restore and to remove the algae, ecologists say, water must be added to the lake. Higher levels of algae indicate an unhealthy aquatic eco-system. "This lake was made by Khilji Sultan Alaudin in 1296 and is part of Delhi's natural heritage. It's unfortunate that though the lake's restoration was started, there is no scientific method of dealing with it. The plans were just abandoned mid way. This is despite the fact that the High Court Monitoring Committee under the Chief Secretary is supposed to look at the restoration and the upkeep of the lakes," said Vinod Jain, a member of NGO Tapas, which is involved in environmental campaigning.

SOURCE

2nd September 2009, Indian Express

REVIVAL OF HAUZ KHAS VILLAGE

Hauz Khas Village is popular with different people for different reasons. Some like it for the antique shops while others like it for the view of the Hauz Khas Lake. When Bistro was open, the rooftop of the restaurant was the most sought after for its view. But one of the major reasons is that Hauz Khas Village is one of the few villages in Delhi that has not succumbed to high rise buildings and is struggling to maintain the village culture blended with modernity. Raj Dhingra and Satinder Singh Sharma have picked up the baton to work towards the revival of the village. Dhingra runs a gym while Sharma has a curio shop in the Village. The revival plan was conceptualized last year and the duo spoke to the then Tourism Minister Renuka Chowdhary. She had even visited the village to chalk out a plan for the redevelopment. Currently, the plan is to change the face of the village so that all shops look similar. The installation of jharokhas has already started in many shops. Some of these jharokhas are 21 years old and the owners had removed them and kept them safely. Some others are restoring the jharokhas that were not removed. The next plan is to prepare the map of the village along with the surrounding areas and make it a part of the Delhi City Guide. The government is open to the proposal of the revival and currently discussions are on with the area MLA Kiran Walia and State Home Minister Ajay Maken. Sharma has already started building a coffee shop on the second floor of his shop and has decorated it with jharokhas, antique furniture and brocade curtains. Hauz Khas Village is still considered to be one of the safest places and the presence of many plants and two parks Deer Park and Rose Garden make it an oxygen-generating zone. Many youngsters who have grown up here have also joined hands. "It is a modern village now and probably the only thing left is the monument of Firoz Shah Tughlaq," reminisces Anuj Behl, a resident.

SOURCE

3rd September 2009, Hindustan Times

CHANDNI CHOWK PLAN SENT TO ARTS COMMISSION

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currently discussions are on with the area MLA Kiran Walia and State Home Minister Ajay Maken. Sharma has already started building a coffee shop on the second floor of his shop and has decorated it with jharokhas, antique furniture and brocade curtains.

SOURCE

7th September 2009, Hindustan Times

CONGESTED CHANDNI CHOWK TO GET ITS OWN BRT

The bus rapid transport (BRT) corridor may be leading to traffic snarls in south Delhi, but the Delhi government has similar plans for the Walled City. The Chandni Chowk redevelopment plan entails a dedicated bus corridor as part of the traffic circulation plan for decongesting the area. MCD will be the executing agency “One part of the central verge will be dedicated to special buses — similar to the open-air buses in Pragati Maidan — while the other side will be for private vehicles to move out of Chandni Chowk. A detailed project report of the plan has been submitted to Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) for approval,” said MCD’s deputy commissioner city zone, Vijay Singh. Singh said this dedicated corridor is being built to encourage use of public transport within Chandni Chowk. The dedicated bus corridor will run from Red Fort to Fatehpuri Masjid on one side of the central verge and just like the BRT, there will be busstops in the middle of the corridor. On the other side of the central verge will be a one-way 3.5m-wide motor lane for private vehicles to ply on. Private vehicles entering from Delhi Gate and S P Mukherjee Marg will have to park in Parade Ground and Gandhi Maidan respectively and take the bus inside Chandni Chowk or walk inside. These vehicles will then exit from the Walled City via Town Hall, H C Sen or Church Mission Road and will take the motor lane. The idea of using trams as a mode of transport in Chandni Chowk has been put on hold. Said Singh: “Special emphasis has been laid on pedestrian walkways. A space of 6 meters has been dedicated on both sides on the road for footpaths. The cost of re-laying of the main Chandni Chowk road along with other roads in the Walled City and carrying out ducting of service lines is Rs 45 crore approximately. We will build centralised plazas around Fatehpuri Masjid, Town Hall and Lajpat Rai Market which will serve as open public spaces.” There are plans of reviving water canals and other water bodies that once existed in Chandni Chowk. The plan also includes streetscaping work and facade improvement of government buildings. Shopkeepers will be encouraged to restore the facades of their properties. Said a resident of the area: “The idea of having a dedicated bus corridor in Chandni Chowk will lead to chaos. What will happen to other modes of public transport, such as cycle-rickshaws and auto rickshaws? Not everyone wants to use the bus. By shrinking lane space for other vehicles you are just adding to traffic problems.”

SOURCE

7th September 2009, Times of India

GOVT. HELPLINE FAILS TO STEM CAPITAL’S TREE-FELLING SPREE

The government may be trying to extend its green cover in the city but the existing greens seem to be in trouble. Residents claim that despite the setting up of a tree helpline, no action is generally taken on complaints made. At times, even the complaint number is not given. Incidentally, the Delhi Tree Protection Act says that no trees can be cut or pruned without permission from the forest department of the Delhi government. The idea behind tree helpline, which was set up by the Delhi government three years ago, was to involve citizens in protection of trees. However, residents claim that despite repeated complaints to the helpline to report “merciless” pruning of trees in the Rohini area, the forest department has not initiated any action. Upset by the inaction of the department, Sanjiv Kumar, a resident of sector 9, Rohini, says he’s even shot off a letter to the environment secretary. “Over the past few weeks, trees in the Rohini area have been pruned and even cut without the requisite permission. Repeated complaints to the tree helpline have not rescued the trees from their fate,” says Kumar. Kumar, in fact, says that “hacking” of trees indiscriminately has been happening for some time now, with no response from the forest department. “Not only written complaints but even pictures of the felled trees have been provided. But no action taken,” adds the resident. Residents in the area allege that the unconcern shown by the local authorities has resulted in several trees falling

“The roots are left exposed during all the road digging and other civic works that happen here. We’ve called the tree helpline to register complaints but nothing has been done about the trees. As a result, even as small storm makes these trees topple over,” added Parul Chhabbra, a resident. Adds Kumar, “We’ve obviously no complaints about pruning. But this is killing the greens, and the tree helpline should be more accessible to residents.” Government authorities claim that the helpline has been registering calls, with no complaints coming in about complaint number not being provided. However, they do admit that lack of adequate manpower means that not all calls are attended immediately. “Permission for pruning and cutting trees has to be taken from us. But it is not possible for us to attend to every complaint that we receive. We don’t even have the required manpower,” said a senior forest department official.

SOURCE

7th September 2009, Times of India

OF A CHURCH, A MOSQUE AND HISTORY

Church Mission Road, which stretches from St. Stephen’s church right up to its junction with Old Delhi railway station road is a name which few remember. It’s all part of the overcrowded Fatehpuri area now. Yet at one time it was a landmark of the church of England Mission, “which owes its origin to the zeal of congregation of St James’ Church, who raised between 1850 and 1858 the large sum of Rs.30000 for the society for the propagation of Faith.” The society made a further grant of Rs.80000 in February 1854 when it sent the Rev Jakson and the Rev Hubbard. But even before their arrival, Chimman Lal, Assistant Surgeon, and Master Ramchandrar, Professor of Mathematics in Delhi College and tutor to the Maharaja of Patiala, had become Christians. Along with Dr. Chimman Lal, the Rev Hubbard, D.E Sandays and Lewis Roch were also killed in 1857 but the Rev Jackson escaped as he had moved out of Delhi then due to ill health. After two years the Mission, which had been in limbo because of the Sepoy Uprising, restarted its work with the arrival of the Rev T Skelton of Queen’s College, Cambridge. It was in 1860-61 that the foundation of St Stephen’s Church was laid by Dr. Cotton, Bishop of Calcutta, but the church opened for worship only in 1867.

SOURCE

7th September 2009, Hindu

Should you have any comments or suggestions, you could reach us at

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