



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 117
8th September-14th September

Editor's Note

Nod for Jama Masjid beautification plan

Jama Masjid facelift approved

Dr Karan Singh launches journal

Memorabilia raises prices

Governor plans green banks to save Yamuna

L-G promises 'green Yamuna'

Ram lila at Red Fort permitted due to 'pressure'

NOD FOR JAMA MASJID BEAUTIFICATION PLAN

The MCD on Monday informed the Delhi High Court that its plan for beautification of Jama Masjid has been approved by the Delhi Urban Arts Commission and the same had been forwarded to the civic body's standing committee. The MCD counsel told the Division Bench headed by Justice Mukul Mudgal that the Corporation would start work for beautification of the mosque and its adjacent area soon after the committee cleared the plan. The Bench was hearing a PIL filed by Varun Goswami seeking direction to MCD.

SOURCE

8th September 2009, Hindu

JAMA MASJID FACELIFT APPROVED

Decks have finally been cleared for the redevelopment of the historic Jama Masjid. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) on Monday informed the Delhi High Court that they have secured the requisite clearance from the Delhi Urban Arts Commission and Archeological Survey of India. Work could not begin earlier due to the delay in getting the nod from these agencies. The court had approved all plans and estimated cost for the work, way back on Oct 6, 2006. Apart from restoration and beautification of the 17th century Mughal monument, the restoration plan included constructing a huge basement-level mall in the forecourt of the mosque with provision for 3,000 shops and a three-level underground parking beneath it. Much of that original plan has been done away with as both DUAC and ASI insisted on minimum intervention in the sensitive zone to preserve its historical glory. According to sources, the DUAC has approved the overall plan based on the condition that MCD come back to them to get separate clearances for each component of the plan. Several rounds of checks and modifications were necessitated as PIL petitioner lawyer Usha Kumar, representing the non-profit Heritage and Cultural Forum, argued that the MCD "was now only concerned about the surroundings and commercialization of the mosque while the main task entrusted to them was to restore the mughal monument." Another petitioner Varun Goswami had argued that there was already a plan approved by the court in October 2006. "But the MCD came up with a drastically altered plan with 3,000 shops without the approval of the court which means it is completely illegal."

SOURCE

8th September 2009, Hindustan Times

DR. KARAN SINGH LAUNCHES JOURNAL

Dr. Karan Singh, President, Indian Council of Cultural Relations, on Monday, released a journal titled Journal of Heritage Studies. The journal has been edited by Neena Ranjan, former Secretary, Ministry of Culture, government of India, now a life member of INTACH. SK Misra Chairman, INTACH, was also present on the occasion of the release of the first volume of the journal. Singh appreciated the work being done by the INTACH in bridging the gap between various authorities and working together the restoring the cultural heritage, according to INTACH.

SOURCE

10th September 2009, Pioneer

GUIDELINES IN PLACE FOR CONSERVATION OF LUTYENS' DELHI

In a major step to retain the heritage of the Edwin Lutyens-designed North and South Blocks in the heart of the capital, the government on Thursday laid down guidelines for carrying out repairs on the imposing secretariat buildings. "Buildings of North and South Block are valuable heritage structures and need to be conserved in their original form and shape to the extent possible," Information and Broadcasting minister Ambika Soni said, adding that the cabinet had decided that henceforth, repairs of the two buildings would be conducted after approval by a special committee set up for the purpose. "The cabinet approved that, in future, all addition alteration work including repair work involving changes in the original specifications of these buildings will be carried out only after consulting the special advisory committee on conservation and protection of North/South Block constituted for the purpose," she said. Soni was briefing reporters after a cabinet meeting presided over by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The North and South Blocks flank Rajpath, the imposing boulevard that begins from the Rashtrapati Bhawan presidential palace and runs 3km to the India Gate war memorial to the Unknown Soldier. South Block, which lies to the right of Rashtrapati Bhawan, is home to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the ministries of defence and external affairs. North Block, to the left of the presidential palace, hosts the home and finance ministries. The advisory committee is chaired by the additional director general (Architecture) of the CPWD and includes representative from the Archaeological Survey of India and the chief architect of the CPWD. "In order to maintain consistency in all future work, it is necessary to lay down clear technical guidelines to ensure that such heritage buildings are provided with modern amenities to meet the present day requirements, like climate control and other facilities, without adversely affecting the heritage character and architecture of these buildings," Soni explained.

SOURCE

11th September 2009, Times of India

MEMORABILIA RAISES PRICES

An advisory panel has said that India need not bid for every piece of Gandhi memorabilia as the father of the nation was not an Indian monopoly. Government has often received urgent messages from embassy personnel in various nations urging that some way be found to buy Gandhi's memorabilia. Since there is no provision for the government to do so directly, it has had to call on public-spirited businessmen. There has also been a feeling that such sentiments are subtly manipulated to increase the price of items. It has been pointed out that often the articles in question have not belonged to Indians for decades any way. Tara Gandhi Bhattacharjee, along with former director of the National Gandhi Museum Y P Anand, the Museum's current director Varsha Das and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library director Mridula Mukherjee are part of the advisory committee. The bronze statue of a seated Buddhist deity presented by Gandhi to his Irish friend Emma Harke passed off rather uneventfully at a Bonhams' sale.

SOURCE

NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR CONNAUGHT PLACE

The Rs 700 crore plan approved by the New Delhi Municipal Corporation to renovate Connaught Place by July 2010 for the Commonwealth Games will shift the spotlight again not only on this 20th Century mart but also on the neighbouring Hanuman Mandir and Gole Market which too will be redeveloped. Named after the Duke of the Connaught, it was designed by Robert Russell and despite the coming of the Metro has retained its original look over the past nearly 70 years though renamed after Rajeev Gandhi- with Connaught Circus being named after his mother. Before it was built, people from the walled city, Nizamuddin and Mehrauli used to come here for partridge shooting, for it was a wilderness with a profusion of babool trees. Another famous resident of Connaught Place was Mir Mustaq Ahmed, the freedom fighter who became the first Chief Executive Councilor of Delhi. Not far from CP lived the poet and writer Hasrat Mohini, whose ghazal 'Chupke Chupke' has been made famous by Ghulam Ali and in Marina Hotel lodged Even Charlton, noted editor of The Statesman. Because of intense commercial activity and the consequent congestion, many old residents of CP have moved else where and those who remain have been witness to the degeneration of this once fashionable mart. The NDMC's ambitious plan should give it a new lease of life and stop the rot that set in after partition.

SOURCE

10th September 2009, Statesman

GOVERNOR PLANS GREEN BANKS TO SAVE YAMUNA

Go green is the word from Lieutenant Governor Tejendra Khanna on saving Yamuna River. He said trees would be planted and parks would be developed on the banks. "The PM has constituted a committee for revival of the river under my chairmanship," said Khanna. He was speaking at a function organized by the MCD and Asian Centre for Organization, Research & Development under Yamuna Action Plan.

SOURCE

13th September 2009, Hindustan Times

L-G PROMISES 'GREEN YAMUNA'

Harping on the need to restore the Yamuna to its original glory, Delhi Lieutenant Governor Tejinder Khanna on Saturday said not the river will be made pollution free but also its banks enriched with greenery. The Prime Minister has constituted a committee for revival of river Yamuna under his Chairmanship, Khanna said at a musical show and human chain organized here to raise public awareness for a clean Yamuna. The function was organized by the MCD and Asian Centre for Organization, Research and Development under Yamuna Action Plan, according to a press release. Delhi Mayor Kanwar Sain appealed to the citizens to work on the principle of reuse and recycle and not to increase the load on garbage management.

SOURCE

13th September 2009, Pioneer

RAM LILA AT RED FORT DUE TO 'PRESSURE'

What was labelled as "an exception only for this year" in 2007, has turned out to be an albatross around the neck of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). This year again, two social organizations have been given permission to hold Ram Lila on the lawns in front of the Red Fort, a World Heritage Site. "There is pressure to give permission to the two groups to stage Ram Lila," said ASI sources without any mention of the source of "pressure". Opinion is divided over such an event being held in the vicinity of a heritage structure. The practice of holding Ram Lila in front of Red Fort was discontinued in 2002 and permission for the same denied in 2003 when the ASI took over the heritage building from the army. Conservation architect Anisha Shekhar Mukherji, who has done extensive research on the 17th century citadel, said: "Red Fort was always a centre of cultural activities. Why should the Ram Lila discontinue?" She said public activities should be encouraged in and around Red Fort. But they needed to be planned and organized better, she said. Echoed A.G.K. Menon, convenor of the

Delhi chapter of Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a non-profit conservation body: "Purists might differ. (But) monuments should not be exclusives. Local traditions should continue while ensuring that there is no harm to the monument's structure." However, can these be called "traditional" Ram Lilas? The two groups started staging the 10-day religious event only in the early 1990s. In 2007, permission was given bowing to "political pressure". "This should stop. It takes almost eight months to restore the lawns and just the two events are enough to bring the efforts to nil," said Sanjay Bhargava, member of Society for Culture and Heritage.

SOURCE

14th September 2009, Hindustan Times

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