



## INTACH

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### Editor's Note

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### BACK IN TIME: ASI USES AGE-OLD TECHNIQUES TO CONSERVE

THE Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has chosen traditional methods of conservation, which have stood the test of time, to restore and conserve heritage structures in the Capital. With the Commonwealth Games coming up in less than a year's time, several historical monuments in the city can be seen coated with layers of plaster made of a variety of materials. A mixture of lime and several indigenous ingredients like urad dal, the juice of bel and tobacco, jaggery and gum from the acacia tree, is being used for coating and plastering. Surkhi, made of powdering bricks, Badarpur sand and stones like Delhi quartz are being used for reinforcing and restoring the walls, said K K Muhammed, superintending archaeologist, Delhi Circle, ASI. "Around 46 monuments are being given a facelift for the CWG and we are trying to use traditional methods of conservation. At present, work is on at Kashmere Gate, Satpula in Khirki Village, Sher Shah Gate, Dadi Poti tombs in Hauz Khas, Delhi Gate, Safdarjung tomb, Najaf Khan Tomb and a few others. Some monuments like the Chhoti Gumti and Shakri Gumti have already been restored," Muhammed said. This traditional mixture is believed to have been used in ancient monuments, which have withstood the ravages of centuries. "Lime, as opposed to cement, lasts much longer. It is soaked in water for nearly a fortnight and when its heat is released completely, lime gets its full binding strength. Lime, however, takes more time to settle compared to cement. Cement starts settling in four to six hours. Lime takes nearly 21 days but lasts much longer than cement," an ASI official said. "Most Mughal buildings have lasted several centuries because of the traditional methods that were used. We are trying to recreate the same mixtures to conserve these monuments." Urad dal powder is used for waterproofing the roofs while natura adhesives like gum from acacia trees and jaggery is used for binding the mixture. "Conservation is done in three stages, one layer after another. Usually for fine plastering, marble dust, jaggery and malai are used in the last finishing layer," said an ASI official working on the Safdar jung Tomb conservation project. To fine-tune the skills of worker experts from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and senior re tired ASI officials will conduct a lime workshop for the present AS officials from November 9 to 13. "This is a regular feature where AKTC experts and retired official conduct sessions for ASI men from across the country," said an ASI official.

#### SOURCE

4<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Indian Express

### GOVT PLANS RS 25- CRORE DARYAGANJ UPLIFT

After restoring the facades of shops and hotels in Connaught Place, the Government is now trying to give a similar look to the hotels and guesthouses in Daryaganj area, behind Jama Masjid and near Old Delhi railway station, Church Mission road in the city zone.

Shahjahanabad is also planned. Both the projects are to be completed before Commonwealth Games. The project will include augmentation of engineering services and infrastructure- roads and pavements, underground utility duct, electrical system, water supply and drainage- and façade restoration with ROW and signage. the project includes reduction the impact of air and noise pollution by controlling traffic, commercial and pedestrian chaos and redevelopment of water body. Old water body or canal will be restored in front of Jain Mandir. It has been proposed that the Chandni Chowk would be one way road from the direction towards Red Fort and Mission road. There is provision of two lanes of 3M wide meter vehicle lane and two lane of three meter wide electric bus.

#### **SOURCE**

**4<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Pioneer**

#### **WINGED VISITORS DESERTED DELHI**

This year, the winged winter visitors seem to have delayed their visit to the capital. Experts and birdwatchers have reported that very few migratory birds can be spotted in the city at present. Even the coot, which is normally one of the first few to arrive, is present only in small numbers. While experts say that this is not an indication of a long term trend and that it is still too early to say why this is happening, they believe that the delayed monsoon, loss of habitat and polluted water could be major reasons. This year, as per the migratory bird census done in Europe, their numbers have been lower and thus fewer birds have reached India. Avid bird watcher K B Singh says that this could only mean that climatic conditions in Europe are still favourable and more birds may migrate as the winter season progresses. “The number of some species like ferruginous pochards, mallards and coots is definitely much lower over the years. We have seen very few winter ducks till now,” he said. Experts say that despite lesser migration, Delhi’s fast disappearing water bodies, polluted water and excessive human intervention have already started inhibiting the numbers of migratory birds, the impact of which may be felt shortly. With the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary facing a massive crisis this year, Dr Surya Prakash of the School of Life Sciences at JNU says that Delhi may also face the problem of “leap frog migration”. “When the habitat changes, birds tend to fly over the spot and go further on. This is what has happened at Bharatpur and may also be happening in Delhi since its water bodies have shrunk considerably. A poor and delayed monsoon could have also adversely affected the microfauna and flora that constitute a major dietary consideration for birds,” he said. He added that the importance of stopover sites was similarly important as migrating birds faced with the dilemma of a stopover site having disappeared may not have any other viable options. “Without places along the way that provide an adequate food supply for the quick replenishment of fat reserves, shelter from predators, and water, these birds are probably not going to make it,” he said. At the Yamuna Biodiversity Park, one of the few places in the city that migratory birds have arrived, even though lesser in numbers, scientist in-charge Faiyaz Khudsar says that there might have been a change in aquatic plants and insect population because of which some birds are yet to arrive. “Numbers of tufted pochards and gadwalls have in fact gone up here in the past few years though this year the overall number is low. Northern shoveler and coots are less in number,” he said. Singh feels that with Delhi losing many of its water bodies, Bhadkal Lake almost dry, the swamp at Basai having disappeared, Sultanpur more of an artificial lake and many other water bodies either concretized or turned into agricultural fields, birds like pochards which prefer clean water ponds with lots of reeds are also much lesser in numbers. “The stretch of Yamuna is dirty due to so much sewage flowing into it. Birds like coots which prefer clean water will also start dwindling with loss of habitat,” said Dr Prakash.

#### **SOURCE**

**5<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Times of India**

#### **THE CAPITAL’S DRYING WETLAND**

Kya, newswaali hai kya (Are you a newsperson?)," Suraj Kumar, the cheeky 14-year-old, asks me. He is standing on top of the garbage dump that doubles up as the banks of the Mayapuri lake, overlooking the Naraina flyover. Right behind us, the lake stands

Inspired by film maker Ishani Dutta's recent documentary that highlights the cause of the lakes of Surajkund, Badkal and Damdama that are being lost to the interests of the mining industry, I have just started my journey around some of Delhi's lakes, or 'wetlands', to be technically precise. And Suraj and his friends are amused that the sewage dump near their makeshift cricket ground is even being considered. "The water flows till Delhi Cantt and all the sewage from the houses here flows into this. Some TV crew also came once, but what are you looking for," asks young Dinesh Kumar, peeping into my photographer's camera, before he runs off to kick around the trash around the lake. I try to explain that I am looking around some of the city's threatened water bodies -- 623 at last count, going by the figures submitted in the court as part of PIL to save Delhi's water bodies including the one at Mayapuri. Sushmita Sengupta, research associate, water unit, at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), tells me these waterbodies are known as Delhi's "threatened wetlands", and attributes the phenomenon to unplanned urbanisation and sheer neglect of the authorities. The implications could be huge, she says, counting depletion of groundwater, floods and lack of drinking water among others. But kids will be kids, unmindful of the consequences as they saunter off to resume the unfinished game of cricket. I set out for my next stop -- the Bhalaswa lake near Jahangirpuri. A plush golf course, a park, green grass, and lots of seemingly clearer water this seems to be a better bet. The lake complex itself is pretty deserted and a boat ride on its waters looks promising. Only Suresh Sharma (name changed on request), boy of about 25, wants to play spoilsport. "This is nothing. About 10-12 years ago, this lake was much deeper. Now it's only 1,200 metres. My friends and I used to practice kayaking here when it was deeper," the boy tells me, when I make a few enquiries. There are a couple of empty Delhi Tourism boats and kayaks stationed at the banks and Suresh volunteers to show me around on one of them. "See, there's barely three-foot water left," he says, dipping a stray wood stick into the lake as we pedal our way across to the other end -- a greener patch that looks inviting. Err, that's a landfill site, I am told. And onto my next stop -- Sanjay lake in Mayur Vihar. As I enter the serene lake complex, and spot a few ducks, I take heart. Surely, this should be worth the trek. I walk across the Delhi Tourism office to take a closer look, and a signboard cautions 'Deep waters, stay away'. Instinctively, I step back. "Just relax, it's not so deep anymore, barely three-foot," a caretaker from the Delhi Tourism office tells me. Even as a court order early this year had said this lake should be revived, on ground zero, the situation is already making my heart -- and a dirty yellow polythene bag --sink. "Madam, there's some cleaning going on," the caretaker tries to offer solace. But by now I have already lost interest in the muddy waters and filthy banks of the Sanjay lake, much like many of the migratory birds that use to visit once. But the last straw really is the small lake that stretches across the IG stadium, and the Delhi secretariat. Right next to the lake, more like a pond of sorts, lies a construction site that makes it almost impossible for me to cross over to the waters. As I make my way back home, I look fervently for the Neelam Haus, the water body that lies on the Aruna Asaf Ali Marg. But amidst the construction chaos of an upcoming flyover at the site, even the newswaali in me can't find the lost waters.

#### **SOURCE**

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Hindustan Times**

#### **WALLED CITY'S HERITAGE HAVELIS A THING OF PAST**

While there was always a novelty about living in one of the grand old havelis of the Walled City, residents of the area have been gradually moving out. Tired of maneuvering their way through the choked lanes of Chandni Chowk, they are selling off their ancestral havelis and buying apartments in other parts of the city. The havelis are being brought down by their new owners — mostly builders— to make way for modern flats or commercial spaces. And even as most of these havelis are a century old, there is no concrete conservation plan in place for such structures. Forty-five-year-old Dr Meenakshi Gautam has fond memories of staying in her family's haveli in Kucha Pati Ram for 13 years. But her father and his brothers sold it off to a builder two months ago as the haveli was lying vacant for many years. Said Gautam;

“I live in Gurgaon with my family. It used to be great fun living in Chandni Chowk. We were four families living under one roof. But the area was so cramped that I couldn’t invite my school friends over. We are a middle class family and the cost of conserving the building was huge. We feel the builder will conserve it instead of getting it razed.” Those who still live here say that while some of the havelis have simply been abandoned by owners who are now waiting for a good price, many have already been broken down to construct flats. Said Jagjivan Aggarwal, resident of Kucha Kashgiri: “Most havelis are being brought down. No one wants to live in old structures anymore, as maintaining them involves a lot of investment.” The haveli next to Aggarwal’s house has been locked for five years and lack of maintenance has taken its toll on it. The structure has started to crumble. Its owner, Laxmi Narayan, lives in a flat in east Delhi. When contacted, Narayan said: “I want to keep it locked. As soon as I get a good price for it I will sell it.” A Dharamshala across Kucha Kashgiri, which stands out for its carved doorway, is also on sale, according to local builders. However, owner Rajinder Gupta refutes these claims. He said: “We are happy living here and have no plans of shifting.” House number 504 is another building in Kucha Pati Ram with a facade carved with beautiful stones. It’s even listed in MCD’s heritage list. But those who dwell here are in two minds about staying put. Said haveli owner Abhay Gupta: “We are not getting a good deal to be able to afford an equally spacious living area elsewhere. This haveli covers 800 yards.” Gupta’s grandson said since it was a heritage building they weren’t sure if it could be sold. “We are willing to sell it for a good offer. This is a huge property and if given to a builder, it will get commercialized. We’d rather make smaller flats. But since it’s part of MCD’s heritage list, we don’t know if we can sell or make changes to it,” he said. “No one’s interested in staying in this area anymore. Commercialization has made it impossible to commute here. One would rather move out,” said an area resident. A portion of house no 3163 of Mohalla Dastaan, Phatak Nanak Chand, has also been sold to a builder. Rita Sharma, who lives in house no 3162, said: “We have also heard about it. The plot in front of it has also been bought by builders. There used to be a mammoth haveli in front of our house but that too was sold off four years back.” Conservation plans have often been floated by various government agencies to convert these havelis into guesthouses and hotels, but no concrete steps have been taken to ensure the same.

#### **SOURCE**

**7<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Times of India**

#### **DARKNESS CONTINUES TO COURT CITY MONUMENTS**

The romantic ‘night tourism’ project has hit a dark roadblock. As part of the ambitious plan, work on illuminating important heritage monuments in the city was to be completed before the Commonwealth Games in 2010. Two years after it was first announced, not even the first phase of the project is complete. The India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), which has been entrusted with the task by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, is to carry out illumination in the first phase at Rs 23.75 crore. The first phase involved illuminating 13 heritage monuments protected by Archaeological Survey of India. ITDC has completed work only at Purana Qila; Sher Shah Gate and Masjid (opposite the Delhi zoo); the Subz Burz monument and the Safdarjung’s Tomb. The remaining nine monuments were to be illuminated by July 2009. But three months past the promised deadline, work has not even started at the sites. The officials concerned are blaming “technology change” for the delay. For Safdarjung’s monument; the corporation had adopted LED (light emitting diode) technology to throw ‘milky light’ on the monument. But the LED plan has been scrapped for something more modern.

#### **SOURCE**

**9<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Hindustan Times**

#### **THE BRIDGE ON THE HINDON**

About five miles outside Delhi’s Eastern limits, a redbrick railway bridge falls in Ghaziabad district. Thanks to a series of six 70-foot-wide arches, it looks like a Roman aqueduct. Spanning the width of the Hindon river, a tributary of the Yamuna,

the bridge looks best at dawn. If it's winter, the mist would be drifting over the river. At 6 am, the traffic on the roads is slow, the train traffic heavy. Sit down on the stairs leading up to the bridge. First, you hear the faint whistle of the rail engine. As the train nears, the weak echo builds up to a boom. Then the climax -- the train is running over the bridge. A minute later, the bridge is back to its solitariness, the river limpid. What was the fuss about? Looking for vital stats While there are boards and slabs detailing the bridge's length (488 meters) and the highest flood level (recorded in 1978), it is unclear when it was constructed. "Most arched railway bridges were built during the Raj," says KP Singh, an engineer who crosses the structure daily. Another overpass, more modern, runs parallel to it. Falling on the busy Delhi Ghaziabad route, many super-fast expresses pass one after another on both bridges. This gives the train spotter a fleeting feel of connection to faraway places the trains come from. Very poetic Walk under the bridge. Be careful, for here in the road is a steep turn, and an approaching car may not see you. The visual perspective of the arches enlarges from this place. Their reflection on the water might tempt you to write poetry. There's also a view of the Hindon dam. Control yourself Resist from too much romanticizing. The river is black with filth, the parapet is scrawled with graffiti, the area is not completely crime-proof, and you could even come across beggars. "We live in such a crowded city," says Payal Singh, who had driven over from Vasundhara, a nearby suburb. "But here it is so peaceful. You don't feel you are in a city." All around, there is open landscape not yet encroached by apartment complexes and shopping malls. But the quiet is as lasting as the morning dew. Another hour, and the road under the bridge become crowded with muggles. The magic is lost until the next morning.

#### **SOURCE**

**9<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Hindustan Times**

#### **NEW LEASE OF LIFE FOR LODI ERA TOMBS**

Five Lodi-period tombs located in the hearts of Zamrudpur and Mohammedpur villages will soon get a facelift. As part of its plans to notify 92 unprotected monuments in the city, the state department of archaeology has zeroed in on these heritage structures for state-level protection. The monuments were recently surveyed by the department and the process for notification has begun. The tombs are in a dilapidated condition. Since they are located inside an urban village, locals have used these monuments for their personal use. Four of the identified tombs are inside Zamrudpur village, while the fifth is in Mohammedpur village. A senior official of archaeology department said: "As no effort was made earlier for the protection and conservation of these tombs, villagers have encroached upon them and defaced their facade. One of the tombs in Zamrudpur is being used as a junkyard while another is being used as a cow shed. A third tomb remain buried behind huge buildings and access to the structure is no longer possible. Another is crushed between two residential buildings and is being misused." Not realizing the significance of these heritage structures, inhabitants of Zamrudpur village for years have been misusing them. Access to the tombs is met with stiff resistance. In Mohammedpur, the tomb has been encroached upon and its facade is falling off. "Even during the survey, police protection was required as locals did not want these monuments to be notified as heritage buildings. Once these are notified, we will not allow locals to encroach misuse the buildings," said a senior government official. Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) officials said they were planning to start a massive conservation programme for these monuments once they were notified. "We have completed the survey recently and are preparing the drawings for the notification. The documents have to be authenticated by revenue authorities and then the preliminary notification will come. After that there will be a time period of two months during which objections (if any) will be invited. After getting the nod from L-G, we will issue a gazetted notification," said a top official from the department of archaeology. Officials said they would have to tread carefully on the issue. "We expect to meet a lot of resistance. Conservation is crucial as these monuments have to be salvaged. We need to re-acquire them soon," said an official. The tombs have been graded A and B in terms of heritage value by INTACH. Department of archaeology has already notified 27 monuments and 12 more will be notified shortly. Six monuments were already on the notification list earlier.

**SOURCE**

9<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Times Of India

**WITH NO SIGNAGE, MONUMENTS PUSHED TO OBSCURITY**

IN Green Park, the row of magnificent Lodi period structures continues to attract tourists and Delhiites. However, there are very few who are familiar with the names of these monuments -Shakri Gumti, Chhoti Gumti and Dadi Poti ki Gumbad. Even as the Archaeological Survey of India has provided these structures a protected status, they stand in obscurity with no signboards to identify them -let alone describe their historical significance. What the monuments do have are blue signboards, where the ASI claims the structures as its property. Regular visitors to the park have worked out their own names. A group of young boys playing near the Shakri Gumti said they call the monument 'Tumbak Park'. Green Park, however, is not the sole example of unidentified monuments. Be it the Subz Burj in Nizamuddin or the Khairul Manzil opposite Purana Qila, most heritage structures despite being among the list of 'protected monuments' have no signage. ASI officials, meanwhile, cite lack of funds as the reason behind the oversight. "Despite getting the status of protected monuments, most of them have been lying in neglect due to paucity of funds. Earlier, the fund allocation was around Rs 2 crore for a year for the Delhi circle, which was lately increased to Rs 3 crore. Under this, 174 monuments have to be maintained, leaving a paltry sum for each of them," a senior ASI official said. "Only those monuments which are prominent and frequently visited are in focus and taken care off." With the Commonwealth Games round the corner, the ASI has been sanctioned Rs 25 crore to spruce up 46 monuments that fall on the route of the Games venues. "Due to this at least the 46 chosen monuments will get a proper facelift and also new signboards to determine their names and also historical significance and background. Contracts for developing the signages have already been given out to three agencies," the official said. Other monuments, meanwhile, will have to wait. "As of now, the focus is on these 46 monuments and there is already a lot of work to be done on them. Once the Games are over, we will take up the others in a phase," a senior ASI official said.

**SOURCE**

8<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Indian Express

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