



**INTACH**

**DELHI CHAPTER**

**Weekly News Clippings – 127**

**17<sup>th</sup> November- 23<sup>rd</sup> November**

## Editor's Note

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## JOINING HANDS TO SAVE A FOREST

Even as Delhi Development Authority (DDA) claims to have taken measures to increase the city's green cover, its 'inordinate' delay in constructing a concrete boundary wall on one side of Jahanpanah city forest — Delhi's largest green lung — has become a matter of concern for thousands of residents and morning walkers. They fear that any further delay in protecting the forest cover would only lead to encroachment, illegal felling of trees and other anti-social activities. The apprehensions of residents are not baseless considering that between 1980 and 1991 the total forest area was reduced to 435 acres from 800 acres. "We don't know how much the present forest cover is. The land use of parts of the forest has been changed and facilities like CNG station on Ravi Das Marg, a dhobi ghat, etc have been created," said S M Agrawal, president of Friends of Jahanpanah — a morning walkers' group formed in 1990s to take up the case of protecting this forest. While a gazette notification in April 1980 put the total forest cover at 800 acre, 11 years later the Supreme Court in an order mentioned the forest cover was only 435 acres. "This was a big shock and simply exposed the way the agency allowed almost a 50% fall in the green cover. The apex court directed the agencies concerned to protect the forest, but since they failed to do so we filed a contempt petition through Justice (retd) P S Mishra," Agrawal said. A retired chief justice of Andhra and Madras High Courts, Mishra offered his service for free and in 2003, a bench of SC directed DDA and other agencies to take steps to protect the forest. The residents' group had highlighted how a dargah, temple, taxi stand, several slum clusters and dhabas had come up and poachers had been killing wild animals. The SC not only ordered the agencies concerned to take all necessary steps to protect the forest but also ordered formation of a committee — comprising government officials and a member of Friends of Jahanpanah — with the mandate to take decisions on the basis of ground realities to protect the forest. Even as the committee decided to construct a concrete boundary wall on the southern side of Dakshinpuri in September 2007, DDA is yet to start work. In fact, MCD's deputy commissioner of south zone sent a letter to DDA chief engineer P K Nanda on September 1, 2009, stating, "...the delay in construction of boundary wall is denuding the area. Anti-social elements are indulging in illegal activities." The letter further said this delay amounts to violation of the apex court order. As per the minutes of the committee meeting in September, even the DDA horticulture director (south) N P Nim had recorded, "It is out of control to maintain the greenery adjoining the present dilapidated boundary wall which has lost strength due to encroachment."

**SOURCE**

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

## STUDENTS WALK UP TO HISTORY

Udita Bansal was thrilled on Tuesday. The visit to Humayun's Tomb, a world heritage site at Nizamuddin, was a brush with living history. "This is such a nice and practical way of learning about our history," said Bansal, a class VIII student of Modern School, Barakhamba Road. "Much better than the way it is taught in schools." For her classmate Naman Gupta, it was an eye-opener. "The message I am taking home today is that we should conserve and preserve our monuments for future generations," he said. Bansal and Gupta were part of a mixed group of students from different schools who participated in a heritage walk, part of a project called 'My City, My History'. The project, which was launched on Tuesday, aims to spread awareness about heritage among students. The project is being organised by FOX History and Entertainment channel in association with the Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a panIndian NGO working to conserve heritage. Similar heritage walks were conducted by INTACH experts at Mehrauli village, Basti Nizamuddin and Humayun's Tomb as part of the programme. "We are looking forward to inspire young minds to showcase the heritage of their respective cities and become more responsible towards the historical treasures," said Sudha Sadhanand, vice president (Programming) of FOX. Shobita Punj, INTACH's Director (Heritage Education and Communication Services) said the mission was to create awareness among children. "Our objective is to spread heritage awareness among schoolchildren," said Punj.

### SOURCE

18<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Hindustan Times

## WHO'S STEALING THE CITY'S GREEN COVER?

To ensure that saplings planted by New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) earlier this year are not stolen or damaged by the public, the civic body has started putting bamboo sticks and tree guards around them. The replantation drive is primarily aimed at avenues across areas under NDMC. "On a number of stretches such as Safdarjung Road and Man Singh Road, we have already covered the saplings with iron cages. This will act as a deterrent for those who pluck the saplings," said a senior NDMC official, requesting anonymity, as he is not authorised to speak to the media. More than 200 trees get uprooted every year owing to natural causes. "Of all tree species, Neem replantations have been severely hit. We have seen people plucking them and using them as toothbrushes. Also, due to the medicinal property of the herb, it is widely used in home remedies," the official added. While the civic body is replanting two to three times more than what is required, the damage done is much higher. However, on certain stretches such as Prithviraj Road, Aurangzeb Road, and Akbar Road, the drive has been quite successful. "Some of the stretches have come up very well and the trees have reached a decent height," the official said. According to experts, trees in the Lutyens' Delhi are quite old and replantation needs to be done systematically. "The need for replanting trees in Lutyens' Delhi was felt more than 10 years ago. Extra care is required to ensure they grow properly. Already, trees are facing the brunt of commercialisation and urbanisation," said Ravi Aggarwal, environmentalist and convener of 'Trees for Delhi', a forum of citizens and NGOs that was formed to protest the felling of trees for Commonwealth Games-related projects.

NDMC'S REPLANTATION DRIVE

RED CROSS ROAD: 27 Neem saplings were planted this year, of which none have survived

JAI SINGH ROAD: 20 Neem saplings were planted, of which all have been plucked

PALIKA BAZAAR: 7 saplings of Jungle Jalebi were planted, of which four have survived

R.P. ROAD: 25 saplings of Bahera (*Terminalia bellerica*) were planted, of which 10 have survived

SANSAD MARG: 10 Neem saplings were planted, of which four have survived

### SOURCE

19<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Hindustan Times

### **'TREES THIEVES' THREATEN LEAFY CENTRAL DELHI**

A municipal replantation drive to maintain the tree-lined look of central Delhi's grand avenues is struggling. The reasons: thefts and vandalism. According to the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), between 150 and 200 trees in the area have fallen each year over the past five years, mainly due to storms and drying up. The NDMC's attempts to replace these have failed because of "tree thieves". "While we're replanting two to three times more than what is required, vandalism is affecting the drive," said Subhash Chandra, director, horticulture, NDMC. Chandra said the neem tree was a particular favorite of thieves. "People pluck saplings to use them as toothbrushes," he said. "Also, the bark of full-grown trees such as the arjun is peeled off because it has medicinal value." Of the 95,000 trees in the NDMC area, 10,000 are old 'avenue trees'. These were planted after 1911, when the capital of the British Empire moved from Calcutta to Delhi, and Edwin Lutyens planned the new city. The NDMC has tried to safeguard the plants by putting up tree guards and bamboo sticks around them. But the problem persists. "On many stretches, even the tree guards are being stolen," said an NDMC official. : To ensure that saplings planted by New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) earlier this year are not stolen or damaged by the public, the civic body has started putting bamboo sticks and tree guards around them. The replantation drive is primarily aimed at avenues across areas under NDMC. "On a number of stretches such as Safdarjung Road and Man Singh Road, we have already covered the saplings with iron cages. This will act as a deterrent for those who pluck the saplings," said a senior NDMC official, requesting anonymity, as he is not authorized to speak to the media.

#### **SOURCE**

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

### **10,000 ATTENDANTS TO GUARD 3,675 MONUMENTS**

After 34 centrally-managed monuments went missing, the culture ministry has finally woken up and decided to recruit 10,000 attendants to save the remaining 3,675 monuments/sites across the country. At present, 3,463 attendants guard these monuments. This means that more than 200 monuments are unattended. The ministry's admission in the last session of Parliament about the untraceable monuments resulted in a hue and cry. But the reasons were ascribed to urbanization, commercialization and implementation of development projects. The ministry had said that the "disappearance came to light in the course of surveys of monuments", adding, "It is not feasible to fix individual responsibility." Sources said that the Prime Minister, who also looks after the culture ministry, took active interest in ensuring that at least the remaining monuments are well guarded. Delhi, the headquarters of Archaeological Survey of India, tops the list with 12 untraceable monuments. They now exist in memory and history books. In a written reply in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, the government gave a state wise list of monuments that cannot be traced. The 12 monuments missing from Delhi include Moti Gate in Bazidpur; Phool Chadar, Mubarakabad; Barakhamba Cemetery; Alipur Cemetery; Joga Bai Mound, Jamia Nagar; Shamsi Tallab, Mehrauli; and Nicholson statue. Uttar Pradesh with eight untraceable monuments comes second. Most of these monuments are spread over Lucknow, Banda, Hardoi and Jalaun. In Lucknow, the big monument lost is Imambara Amin-ud-Daula besides many cemeteries. In other places, most of the monuments are cemeteries. What cannot be traced in J&K are the rock carvings of Sitala, Narada, Brahma, Devi riding a lion and Radha Krishna in Kathua district. Also lost is a cave temple of Visveswara in Kathua. In Karnataka, a prehistoric site in Mysore cannot be traced while in Gujarat an ancient site in Sejakpur in Surendranagar is untraceable.

#### **SOURCE**

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Time of India**

## **WOMEN ON ROAD SPEAK OF FEAR FACTOR**

For the first time in the city, roads will be designed keeping in mind the point of view of women. The findings of a gender audit on road safety will be amalgamated as part of the traffic circulation plan being readied for the MCD Civic Centre between Ajmeri Gate and Delhi Gate. The plan is proposed to be executed on ground before the Commonwealth Games in October next year. The gender audit — in its survey based on interviews of women road users between Ajmeri Gate and Delhi Gate — found that nearly 44% had faced some kind of verbal sexual harassment on the stretch. Around 13% complained of physical sexual harassment and 15% said they've had uncomfortable experiences of men staring at them lecherously. The audit has been carried out by NGO Jagori. "The audit comes as part of the safety walk initiative of Jagori wherein the target is to identify safety concerns of women on a particular road stretch or area and establish vulnerable points and the lack of facilities. In 2005, we had conducted safety audits in various areas like South Extension market, New Delhi railway station, Connaught Place and Delhi University," Kalpana Viswanath from Jagori pointed. Viswanath said Ajmeri Gate to Delhi Gate was a very busy stretch used by a lot of women considering there are hospitals like LNJP and GB Pant besides two colleges — Zakir Hussain College and Mata Sundari College, which caters to women students only. The audit involved seven to eight walks on this stretch by Jagori's women volunteers in September. A representative sample of 150 women was drawn and they were asked to respond to questions on road safety issues on this stretch, Viswanath elaborated. "The survey not only revealed the approximate percentage of women who experienced sexual harassment but also the vulnerable points. For instance, bus stops were identified by most as places where they face harassment. The survey reflected that many women found the bus stop near Delhi Gate and Zakir Hussain College unsafe. Inadequate streetlighting was also cited as a concern besides lack of proper pavements," she said. While eight male urinals open to the road were cited as points of tremendous discomfort, the safety walks also unravelled how there were no toilet facilities available for women. There is only one public toilet near the Asaf Ali Road parking which women said they felt scared to use as it was not a safe area. Women also complained about lack of policing. The audit report has been submitted by Jagori to Intach, which has been assigned the task to draw up a traffic circulation plan for MCD Civic Centre keeping in view the aesthetics of roads leading up to the Centre. These primarily involve the road between Ajmeri Gate and Delhi Gate and prime link roads like Asaf Ali Marg and Deen Dayal Upadhyay Marg. Convenor of the Delhi chapter of Intach, AGK Menon pointed that the traffic circulation patterns and architectural design of infrastructure projects largely tend to ignore the specific needs of women users. Thus, to make the planning more gender sensitive the traffic circulation plan for the Civic Centre seeks to make roads more women-friendly.

### **SOURCE**

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

## **KARAN SINGH INDIA'S REPRESENTATIVE TO UNESCO**

India has appointed Dr. Karan Singh as its representative to the UNESCO. Singh, who is the president of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations, has been appointed to the UNESCO Executive Board for a period of four years. The appointment was made by the PMO two days ago, said sources. Singh has served as India's Ambassador to US and has also served as Chancellor of the JNU and Deputy Leader of the Congress in Rajya Sabha. Singh's latest assignment is significant as India is set to host Asia's first Category I UNESCO institute- Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development.

### **SOURCE**

**20<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Indian Express**

## **END OF ROAD FOR TONGAS IN WALLED CITY**

Tongas, the horse-drawn carriages still much in use in the walled city of Delhi, will be phased out soon with the civic authorities unveiling a rehabilitation policy for their owners.

230 tonga-drivers will be given alternation employment and carriages will be banned- a move, the MCD says, will help ease traffic woes in the heavily congested area and prevent cruelty to animals. Tongas, driven by horse, mules or ponies, are used for ferrying passengers and carrying load in Sadar Bazar and Chandni chowk areas of old Delhi.

**SOURCE**

20<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Pioneer

**MEHRAULI, THE MILLENNIUM VILLAGE**

Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Mughal, loved his monsoon and summer outings, a break from the walls of Red Fort in Shahjahanabad. He loved to go hunting from Zafar Mahal, his summer palace in Mehrauli, to nearby jungles. Long after the capital was shifted out of Mehrauli, it remained the summer and monsoon retreat for the ruling elite. Princes asked for houses there as gifts and later, highranking British officers maintained a 'kootub house' for its cooler climes. The place stays true to its tradition -- it is synonymous with farmhouses today. According to the Archaeological Survey of India, Mehrauli is the oldest continuously inhabited area of Delhi, with a history of a millennium. The Tomars were its earliest rulers. They were defeated by the Chauhan Rajputs and then came the Turkish rulers of Sultanate who shifted the capital. According to Charles Lewis, the author of Mehrauli: A view from the Qutb, "The ruined walls of Lal Kot -- the evidence of earliest fortification of Delhi -- from 11th century are clearly visible from Adham Khan's tomb." This tomb, locally known as Bhool Bhulaiyya (maze), stands in front of the busy Mehrauli bus terminus. A ride on Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) bus no. 533, that plies from this oldest part of Delhi to Old Delhi, gives a glimpse of the great caravan of life from the 11th to 20th century. It is home to India's most visited monument, Qutub Minar, but just a casual walk into the village will tell you that no place in Delhi comes embellished with so many medieval ruins. Once resplendent palaces, pillared halls, tombs, baolis (wells), mosques and pavilions appear and vanish like a dream here. Mehrauli Archaeological Park, spread over 100 acres behind the minar, houses 80 monuments. "I love you Mamta. I miss you. I am sorry. Please call me," reads a message dated November 12 on a cement bench. Lovebirds have made it their rendezvous and the cricket loving kids of the neighborhood have found many a 22 yards to play. But the park is so huge that their worlds never meet. Vehicle sounds from the civilization outside seem like voices coming from a deep well, an antidote of a place for urban ennui. Emperors were very fond of Mehrauli due to their reverence for Khwaja Qutbuddin Bakhtyar Kaki, a Sufi saint who lived in the 13th century. Qutub Minar gets its name from the saint. Most of them wanted to be buried close to his dargah. A narrow lane from the bus terminus goes to the dargah, where qawwalis (a form of singing) starts after the late afternoon prayer. Thursday evening is the best time to visit. Mehrauli's busy bylanes retain a lot of the old world charm and way of life, never mind the open gutters. The main bylane is also the market and has, among others, many fascinating hookah shops. Cheap biryani and kebab shops dot the area. The arches of erstwhile buildings serve as gates for many of the houses even today, the subzi mandi (vegetable market) being one. A plaque on the primary health centre's wall proudly announces: "From the zails (administrative units) of Mehrauli and Badarpur 1261 men went to the great war (1914-1919). Of these 92 gave up their lives." In contrast are the high-end boutique shops like Ambawatta Complex and restaurants catering to the elite. For the residents, it's a lot more than a place they live in. "I shot most of the serial Zabaane-Ishq (Language Of Love) based on the lives of 40 Urdu poets here. The atmosphere lends itself well," said Muzaffar Ali, filmmaker. History lives on here and historian William Dalrymple couldn't have lived at a better place than Mehrauli while writing *The Last Mughal: The fall of a dynasty, Delhi, 1857*. In his introduction he writes: "Sometimes, on winter afternoon walks, I wander to the lovely and deeply atmospheric ruins of Zafar's summer palace in Mehrauli, a short distance from my Delhi house."

**SOURCE**

21<sup>st</sup> November 2009, Hindustan Times

## **THE GATE TO NAJAFGARH**

STANDING before the Delhi Gate in the crowded market in Najafgarh in West Delhi, it is hard to imagine that this was where a decisive battle was fought between the sepoys and the British on August 25, 1857. The gate, built in 1770 as a part of the bastion of Najaf Khan, a powerful minister living in Delhi during the decline of Mughal rule, has been partially renovated with a new name: Vaid Kishori Lal Dwar. However, like the city's other landmarks that have been renamed, the older name has stuck. The late Mughal period red brick structure with pointed arches also has a plaque that says it was witness to the Battle of Najafgarh. Today, without any protection from the Archaeological Survey of India, it shares its walls with the Municipal Corporation office next door and faces chaotic traffic, a marketplace and an animal hospital. One thing, however, hasn't changed: From the time of Najaf Khan to now, it is the centre of the neighbourhood. Najaf Khan, whose tomb lies near Safdarjung's Tomb, had, in fact, built four gates leading to his fortress and it's only Delhi Gate that has survived. The battle this gate witnessed was significant because it was the last of the battles before the fall of Delhi. Also, in many ways it exposed the lack of coordinated leadership as well as infighting among the leaders. Bakht Khan, a veteran artillery officer of the East India Company, who rebelled against the British had been appointed commander by Bahadur Sha Zafar. The British were led by Brigadier John Nicholson. Historical accounts talk about the British destroying the bridge near Palam and the sepoys' attempt to retreat through the swamp in Najafgarh. After their defeat, the sepoys were on the defensive and soon the walled city came under heavy artillery fire. The defences started crumbling and within three weeks of the battle here, the British had entered the city.

### **SOURCE**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November 2009, Indian Express**

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