



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 128
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HOUSE PANEL FINDS FLAWS IN HERITAGE BILL

Describing the government's efforts on the "The National Commission for Heritage Sites Bill, 2009" as "half-hearted", a Parliamentary committee report has said the government appeared to have put up the legislation only to keep up appearances. The bill was introduced in the Rajya Sabha in February and was referred to the standing committee, which oversees matters relating to Culture. The committee headed by Parliamentary Committee leader Sitaram Yechury (CPM) pointed out that India had done painfully little in the last 32 years to come up with a legislation to protect "valuable heritage sites". According to the Ministry of Culture -- the portfolio has been retained by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in UPA two -- the rationale behind the bill was to put in place a mechanism to ensure effective and active measures for protection and conservation of national heritages sites. The committee has found flaws in even basic definitions of terms within the bill and disagreed with the government's move to have only three members in the commission who had professional expertise in heritage matters. The report said "It appears that the sole purpose behind bringing this Bill is to fulfil the government's obligation under the World Convention on National Heritage."

SOURCE

24th November 2009, Hindustan Times

A DATE WITH HISTORY

Throw a stone and even that becomes history here. Such is the magnificence of Mehrauli that despite Delhi's constantly changing outlook, the place still boasts of a rich collection of heritage motifs. The mehrauli village, behind the historic Qutub Minar, is a place of many untold stories and it was an occasion to brush up with history walking along with school kids as part of a heritage walk. Titled My City My History, it was an initiative of Fox History and Entertainment in association with Intach to open a rare window for students to know about India's glorious history.

SOURCE

24th November 2009, Pioneer

'HERITAGE BILL HALF-HEARTED'

A department related Parliamentary Standing Committee has termed the National Commission for Heritage Sites Bill 2009 a "half-hearted effort" and suggested the government come up with a comprehensive Bill for protection and preservation of national sites. The committee in its 150-page report on the bill, presented in the Rajya Sabha on 26 February, said the proposed National Commission, being an advisory body, may prove to be

SOURCE

24th November 2009, Statesman

MONUMENTS TO PROMOTE NIGHT TOURISM

In view of promoting night tourism and capturing every visitor's eye during the next year's Commonwealth Games, the ITDC is quite busy illuminating the city's monuments. Besides the already designated task of lighting 13 monuments, another set of 33 monuments is awaiting the go-ahead from the ministry of tourism. Vice-president of engineering department, ITDC, Ravi Pandit said the agency has drawn a panel of international consultants for illumination of 33 monuments. Adding that the criteria for selection are history, location and prominence, he said, "The MoT is yet to sanction the plan, and the selection would come from historians and ASI experts." Earlier, 13 historical structures were chosen on the basis of their proximity to the Games venues and ITDC was appointed by the MoT as the implementing agency for carrying out the lighting work at the 13 monumental sites before the CWG.

SOURCE

24th November 2009, Tribune

FLASH BACK

Last week, Swati Mishra's day started on a historical note. The Class VII student was part of an eight-member group from Vasant Valley School that participated in a walk through Mehrauli. This was part of Fox History and Entertainment's initiative called MY City My History, which is being organised in collaboration with INTACH. The two-hour walk kickstarted the Delhi leg of a 25-city campaign that invites students between 11 and 15 to send essays about lesser-known places in their city. Students can also send videos, photographs and other material to supplement their essays. "Before the walk, I had only heard of Qutub Minar, now I also know about Adham Khan's tomb, known as Bhul Balaiya by the locals," says Mishra. Swapna Liddle, INTACH co-convenor, Delhi Chapter, adds, "This 16th century tomb was built during the reign of Akbar, in memory of a trusted aide." The last date for entries is December 31. Five winners will get a chance to host a 15minute show on the channel about their city.

SOURCE

25th November 2009, Indian Express

TO KEEP SAFE OUR HERITAGE

THE Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been fighting a prolonged battle for years now. Despite legislations and awareness campaigns, monuments, even the protected ones, are constantly defaced with graffiti as visitors leave remarks and profess their love by writing on the walls. Even popular heritage monuments like Purana Qila, Tughlaqabad Fort, Qutub Minar, Adilabad Fort, Safdarjung's Tomb and the Lodhi Tombs in the Lodhi Gardens have messages scrawled on the walls. While the ASI has been planning to erase the graffiti as part of its preparations for the Commonwealth Games, officials maintain the focus remains on creating awareness among the youth to abstain from such activity. "The youth has to be motivated and convinced that this is part of their legacy and it is their responsibility to protect it. It is only awareness that will bring a change in the long run," said KK Muhammed, superintending archaeologist, Delhi Circle, ASI. "We are tying up with a number of schools, and on occasions like the World Heritage Week, we conduct oath-taking ceremonies with students pledging to protect the monuments and heritage structures," he said. There are strict rules to curb such activity under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958, which clearly states that "whoever destroys, removes, inquires, alters, defaces, imperils, or misuses a protected monument... shall be punishable with imprisonment which may extend to three months, or with fine which may extend to five thousand rupees, or with both". But the ASI is unable to impose these laws due to a shortage of security personnel at the monuments. At a time when the requirement

Delhi Circle of the ASI is seeking help from Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) for effective conservation and maintenance of protected monuments. In an innovative move to make protection of monuments a social responsibility of every citizen, the ASI is now trying to motivate young students and all residents to adopt heritage structures near their schools and homes. Beginning with Sakri Ghumti, which falls in the neighbourhood of the Safdarjung Development Area (SDA) RWA, the ASI is experimenting with public private partnership in the maintenance of these monuments. The move might be extended to other cities if the first step meets with success. With around 3,675 protected monuments under the apex body, it has been difficult for the ASI to effectively conserve and maintain all of them. The ASI has been battling with issues of graffiti, defacement and encroachments at these monuments and has finally decided to engage RWAs to combat this. Some monuments have vanished from the city map due to the lack of proper vigilance and protection. If the partnership with the SDA RWA works out well, ASI is planning to involve RWAs near Barakhamba, Biwi or Dadi ka Gumbad and Bandi or Poti ka Gumbad, all situated in the Green Park and Hauz Khas localities in the city, and later on a larger scale across the country. "If people in the neighbourhood see the monument as part of their property, they will value it more and try to maintain it. The aim is also to involve young children and the elderly, who can use the parks around the monuments to play or for evening and morning walks," said a senior ASI official. "A sense of belonging to these monuments is necessary; this will also sensitise children against scribbling and defacing these heritage structures," he added. Involving RWAs will also help pump in funds for the maintenance of the monuments. "With the staff and fund crunches, it has been difficult for us to pay proper attention to all the monuments under our jurisdiction. This partnership will help in sharing funds and resources from both ends," said the official. RWAs too are upbeat about the proposal as a monument opening up gates right in the neighborhood will add charm to the locality. "As of now Sakri Ghumti's gate opens on the road towards the Hauz Khas Village, but we will soon have an entrance in our locality park. It will be great to organize our society functions in the park, with the monument as the backdrop," said Meenakshi, a member of the of the local RWA. "Only big events like the Commonwealth Games draw the attention of government bodies towards the conservation and maintenance of monuments. But they will again be neglected after the event is over. These partnerships, however, will go a long way in conserving our heritage," she said. "Also, so far only couples visited the monument to while away their time, but with the entrance opening in the locality, residents here will be able to keep a check on the visitors and also protect the monument better," Meenakshi said. "The RWA does have funds which can be invested in its upkeep and since we are the immediate neighbours of the monument it is our responsibility to maintain it well," she added. A similar plan was worked out by the Delhi government's Department of Archaeology, where an amount of Rs. 1 lakh was to be allocated to the RWAs for maintenance after the department had conserved the monument. The proposal, however, is yet to see the light of day. During the World Heritage Week, which is observed every year from November 19 to 25, ASI involves students and organises an oath-taking ceremony in schools to protect monuments from damage and quoting Ashoka's words from his Kalinga war repentance speech, the students make amends for the loss already done to heritage buildings. The ASI organises the week-long observation every year to mark Indira Gandhi's birthday, which falls during that week, as Gandhi was an ardent supporter of preserving the nation's heritage. Through the week-long awareness programme ASI is trying to get more schools across the country to take the pledge at various monuments.

SOURCE

26th November 2009, Indian Express

MAYAPURI LAKE IS A WATER BODY, REVIVAL LIKELY: GOVT

ALMOST seven months after the Delhi High Court slammed the Delhi government and sought explanation from Chief Secretary Rakesh Mehta for declaring that the Public Works Department owned Mayapuri lake in Naraina was 'non-existent', the government has finally accepted the lake as a water body that would now be revived. The Delhi government presented an affidavit in the High Court on Wednesday accepting the lake as a 'water body'

before a Division Bench comprising Chief Justice A P Shah and Justice S Murlidhar. In a meeting on the 'revival of water bodies' chaired by the Chief Secretary earlier this month, the PWD said "the Chief Secretary has directed that action may be initiated for the revival of the water body at Naraina". The issue involves two disputed water bodies in the city -- the Mayapuri lake and the Jahangirpuri marshland. Based on environmentalist Vinod Kumar Jain's application, the court had, earlier this year, asked the government to submit a report on the two water bodies. Referring to High Court's order in 2007 for revival of various lakes and ponds in Delhi, Jain had filed a contempt case against the government. "The government has accepted in court that the Mayapuri Lake would be revived as per the ninepoint charter set down by the Chief Secretary. The Irrigation department has said that work on 154 water bodies has already been completed; work on 38 water bodies would be finished by December, while work on 62 more would be finished by March 2010," VK Jain told Newslines. Of the 81 water bodies owned by the Delhi Development Authority, work on 58 water bodies has been completed. The case pertaining to the Jahangirpuri marshland could not be heard on Wednesday. It has been decided that the Delhi government would now present its report on it on December 16.

SOURCE

26th November 2009, Indian Express

WALK IN SHAH JAHAN'S FOOTSTEPS

It is an attempt to bring the past to the present. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is proposing to revive the historic route between Jama Masjid and Red Fort known as the Shahi Path as part of the Jama Masjid Redevelopment Plan. The civic agency plans to make a pedestrian walkway along this route which will pass underneath Subhash Marg Road and will facilitate free movement of tourists between the two monuments. Said an MCD official: "The walkway will allow a tourist to come out of the eastern gateway of Jama Masjid (near Kasturba Hospital) and enter the Red Fort compound. It will be made along a historic route that existed before 1857. Looking at the large number of tourists visiting both monuments on a daily basis, we decided to revive the route so people didn't have to fight their way through heavy traffic, especially during Commonwealth Games 2010." According to conservationists, this route was used by Emperor Shah Jahan to visit the mosque on Fridays. The route was done away with after 1857 when the British built various structures around the area between the two monuments. The civic agency also plans to restore a chowk on this route known as the Saadullah Chowk. The plan to make the walkway has been given conceptual approval by Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) but a detailed project report still has to be submitted by MCD to the commission for approval, said a DUAC member. Said Pradeep Sachdeva, consultant for the Jama Masjid Redevelopment Plan: "We are in talks with various stakeholders involved with the redevelopment of Jama Masjid and we hope to start work soon. The pedestrian walkway will help revive an important link of history." Conservationists though have expressed concern that construction of a walkway so close to the two monuments might have a negative impact on them. Said an expert:

SOURCE

26th November 2009, Times of India

ENCROACHERS EVICTED, FACELIFT ON

For several decades, Bara Lao Ka Gumbad in posh Vasant Vihar served as house for a family. Now, a year and a half after the government evicted the encroachers from this 15th century monument, built during the Lodi period, the process for conservation and upkeep of this structure has been put on the fast track. Conservation work at the gumbad has also revealed a hidden staircase and traces of exquisite blue-tile work on its walls. The monument has been declared protected by Delhi government's department of archaeology and for the first time, this neglected structure is getting a facelift from INTACH Delhi Chapter. In the process of clearing dirt and brick masonry around the monument, officials also stumbled onto a staircase leading to the gumbad, which experts suggest could have been one of the main entrances to the gumbad. "When we removed construction carried out

by the encroachers, a portion of the ground was found hollow. This led us to a staircase," said a senior official. Experts say conservation of the monument is no easy task. One of the major hurdles is removing the unwanted vegetation growth on the surface of the monument and all around it. "We cannot just pull out the plants as their roots have penetrated deep within the structure. To avoid damage to the monument, we have to first trace the roots and see how deep they go and then deal with it accordingly," said an official. There are also eight huge trees growing on the boundary wall around Bara Lao Ka Gumbad. Officials said permission has been sought for cutting them so the the boundary wall can be restored. The conservation work on the monument have also thrown light on its original architecture. "Traces of blue tiles have been found on the dome but it is unclear whether the whole dome was originally built with blue tile or just portions of it. There are also evidences of blue tiles between kangoras," said a conservationist. The kangoras around the base of the dome and the parapet are missing in several points and INTACH officials said these would be recreated as per the original design and architecture. Inside the dome, workers are busy clearing the dirt and repairing the damage inflicted on the monument by the encroachers. The walls have been whitewashed which will have to be chemically treated and on the mehrab side, the encroachers had broken the original wall to rent out the space to tenants. The ceiling has years of dust and filth accumulated on it. "There is a huge amount of muck and soot on the ceiling and when we started cleaning it, we discovered floral patterns on the centre of the dome and a painted surface. These could not be seen before," said an official. Apart from conservation work on Bara Lao ka Gumbad that is expected to take up to six months more time, INTACH officials are also going to excavate the site of the missing tomb of Baradari located just a few feet away from Bara Lao. "There is evidence that we could find remains of a canopy there or some other remains. Excavation work at Baradari tomb site will take place in the last phase of the conservation work at Bara Lao and we hope to find some archaeological evidence there," said an INTACH official. In February 2008, TOI had reported how the 15th century monument was home to three generations of a family for the last 50 years and converted into a comfortable living quarters complete with electricity connections and water supply. The law finally caught up with them when DDA and Delhi government's State Department of Archaeology got rid of the encroachments in the monument and razed all the unauthorized structures including several small hutments around it that had been built over the years. The historical gumbad is now on its way to get a complete facelift as part of an MoU signed with the Delhi government to conserve 92 heritage structures before the Commonwealth Games.

SOURCE

27th November 2009, Times of India

MISSION GHALIB

It will all be simple and elegant," says Mohammad Shaheer, a landscape architect, of his latest charge -- Mirza Ghalib's tomb. The greatest flag bearer of Urdu poetry has been dead for 140 years, but his grave is at the centre of a revival plan, one that hopes to transport the visitor "to a pool of peace", as Shaheer puts it. The tomb complex covers an area of 3,500 sq ft and is tucked away in Nizamuddin Basti, a densely populated 14th century Delhi village. Like other places of historical significance, it has seen far better days. But the makeover will be drastic. "We are trying to restore the dignity of Ghalib's tomb," says Ratish Nanda of Aga Khan Trust for Culture, an international foundation that is doing the restoration in partnership with Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Located on the principal street to Hazrat Nizamuddin's sufi shrine, Ghalib's tomb usually goes unnoticed. "The white marble tomb is a well-kept structure," says author William Dalrymple, "but the courtyard is tatty." An understatement. Originally commissioned by a Nizam of Hyderabad, it was like a badminton court with its paved sandstone and marble strips. The entrance was merely a grilled gate. There was no wall to hide the butcheries, kebab stalls and open drains of the street opposite. The iron grill made the place resemble a jail, not a poet's grave. "[Now] we're creating something to suit Ghalib's status," says Shaheer.

That seems impossible -- the Mughal-era poet's stature is far too majestic. With his verses figuring in Bollywood chartbusters, bestselling books, and Prime Ministers' speeches, the poet is a popular cultural icon. But Ghalib, a lover of wine and women, died in poverty and his last haveli in Ballimaran, Old Delhi, was converted into a coal depot for some time. The tomb must fare better.

SOURCE

26th November 2009, Hindustan Times

DELHI MUST WAIT TO TURN HERITAGE CITY

The idea of turning Delhi into a heritage city in time for the Commonwealth Games 2010 was first mooted in 2005. The proposal is likely to get delayed. Minister of State for Planning and Parliamentary Affairs V. Narayanasamy, who is also incharge of the ministry of culture, on Thursday, informed Rajya Sabha that there was no provision called 'heritage city' under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958. "There is no provision called Heritage City and only heritage sites, historical ancient monuments and archaeological sites have been mentioned in the Act," he said in a reply to a question tabled by DMK MP Kanimozhi. In 2008, Delhi government's Department of Archaeology had signed an agreement with Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), a conservation body, for developing the Capital as a heritage city. "The memorandum was a step towards development of the Capital's cultural heritage to get the coveted status of a 'Heritage City'," said a senior government official on condition of anonymity. Delhi has more than 1,200 heritage structures and monuments. According to the rules, only the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) can apply to the UNESCO for a 'World Heritage City' status for Delhi. "We are aware that there is no provision in the Act for a 'Heritage City'. Certain changes are needed. But we are lobbying for it," said AGK Menon, convenor of INTACH's Delhi chapter. INTACH would do the groundwork to facilitate government agencies. "The advantages this status would bring are huge, but it will need a change in attitude," Menon said.

SOURCE

27th November 2009, Hindustan Times

WORLD HERITAGE WEEK CELEBRATIONS

To celebrate the culmination of the World Heritage Week, the Archaeological Survey of India, universal Peace Foundation of India and the National Service Scheme in association with Telemission Media and Communications organized a function at Purana Quila here on Wednesday. ASI Delhi Circle head K.K. Muhammad welcomed students participating in the programme.

SOURCE

26th November 2009, Hindu

RAZING EYESORES

The ugly tin sheds, toilet blocks and hutments which were built by the Indian Army during its stay in the Red Fort from 1947 to 2003, are finally on their way-out. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has decided to demolish the structures as part of its conservation plans for the citadel. It also plans to reopen the drains along Red Fort's walls which had been closed by the British. Over 100 structures that have no archaeological or historical merit have been identified in the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan (CCMP) prepared for Red Fort. "These structures were built by the Army while they lived inside the Red Fort complex from Independence to December 2003. They will be phased out in the next few weeks," said a senior ASI official. Two canteens within the fort grounds will also be removed. According to conservationists, spaces like these have been an eyesore for tourists visiting the complex, which boasts of buildings from three different eras — including the Mughal and British periods. "The Army built many structures — small

these structures need to be removed and the space they are occupying opened up,” said a senior official. Once the structures have been removed, the Diwan-iam and Rang Mahal will be renovated and the fort’s museums will be shifted to the British-era barracks. ASI also plans to open the six-foot deep drains that run along the citadel’s outer walls. According to sources, they were blocked by the British when they took over the fort after the 1857 uprising. “The water trapped in the drains is stagnating at various points, triggering capillary action in the fort walls. During the Mughal era, drainage ensured that not a single drop of water entered the Red Fort. However, the British wanted huge lawns so they had the drains blocked,” said an official. ASI officials say the blocked drainage has also damaged the two gateways to the fort — Lahore Gate and Delhi Gate. “The blocked drainage causes water to seep inside the foundation of the fort wall and the two gates. This weakens the structure and the problem had to be addressed urgently,” said officials. Conservation work on the Red Fort — the second most visited city monument after the Qutub Minar — is expected to kickstart once CCMP gets the final nod from the SC-appointed expert committee.

SOURCE

30th November 2009, Times of India

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