



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 130

8th December- 14th December

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NDMC TO RELEASE PEACOCK CHICKS IN LODHI GARDEN

Walkers in Lodhi Garden can look forward to an unusual company Wednesday onwards. Otherwise popular as a lover's haunt, the garden is all set to have three-monthold chicks of peahens as its latest visitors. In an attempt to make Lodhi Gardens more 'bird-friendly', New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) is releasing its third batch of five chicks into its green environs. This is being done in association with World Pheasant Association-India and National Zoological Park. According to president of World Pheasant Association-India Samar Singh, more efforts are needed to revive the peacock population in Delhi. Said Singh: "There has been a decline in the number of peacocks cited in the city. This is because successful nesting is not taking place and chicks are not able to survive in the present environment." Confirmed an NDMC official: "The peahens do not lay eggs in the garden area as the eggs are attacked by stray dogs and cats. Moreover, peahens require a secluded area for nesting and that is not available in Lodhi Garden due to the huge number of visitors." The process of releasing the national bird in its natural environment began in 2007. Matari, a peahen, had been laying eggs on one particular ledge at India International Centre Annexe for years. Said Singh: "Peafowl's are essentially ground dwelling birds that lay eggs on the ground. But in 2004, I saw an unusual sight where a peahen had laid eggs on the window ledge at IIC Annexe and successfully hatched them there. It chose a ledge over Lodhi Garden as the garden lacks any secluded areas." Matari was joined by another peahen, Mayuri, and IIC members and staff ensured the would-be mother and her eggs were not disturbed. Said an NDMC official: "The chicks are kept in an enclosure in Lodhi Garden near Gate-I till they develop wings and can take care of themselves — this takes around three months. They will be vaccinated and provided food. We want to produce a conducive environment for peahans and peacocks to stay there." The first two chicks were released in August 2008 by chief minister Sheila Dikshit.

SOURCE

9th December 2009, Times of India

A TOWERING PRESENCE

Entering Lodi Garden can be a big relief for anyone looking to escape the cacophony of a hectic life in a city like Delhi. Lucky are those who live in the vicinity, for they can come here to unwind and take in the salubrious environs around them at any time of the day. Lodi Garden is one of the eminent historical parks of Delhi located on the main Lodi Road leading towards Safdarjung Tomb. Spread over 80 acres of land, this park was established in the 15th century during the reign of Lodi's and Sayyids, with a few additions done in the 16th century.

The park was developed during British era and was inaugurated by Lady Willingdon on April 9, 1936. This park was known as Lady Willingdon Park, but after Independence, its name was changed to Lodi Garden. The lush green lawn bisecting the jogging track flanked by flowers, rose garden and a 300-meter long spiral lake with a fountain are some of the major attractions of this park, which draws many a visitors every day. A glass house was developed in 1970 with the support of Ford Foundation for keeping indoor plants. National Bonsai Park, developed in association with Indian Bonsai Association, is another attraction for the visitors. As the dawn breaks, chirping of birds fill the air with lovely warmth. The park is a boon for morning and evening walkers as they can enjoy the cool morning breeze and fresh air. Apart from jogging, the park is a picnic spot for families and Yoga lovers. It has also turned out to be a paradise for love birds who want to spend some good time in the lap of Mother Nature. The visitors can also see many birds in this park which includes babblers, parakeets, mynahs, hornbills, kingfishers, golden Backed Woodpecker, Blue Rock pigeon, Red vented bul bul and many more. One can also see dignitaries and bureaucrats coming for their morning walks accompanied by gun-totting security personnel. The beauty of this historical park is further enhanced by the existence of tomb of Muhammad Shah and Sikander Lodi. The tomb of Sikander Lodi was built by Ibrahim Lodi in 1517. Besides this is situated Bara Gumbad mosque. Its rectangular prayer hall has five arched openings and is a fine example of the early Mughal architecture. This mosque was constructed in 1494 during the reign of Sikandar Lodi. Another historical footmark in this garden is Athpula bridge, which was built by Nawab Bahadur during the reign of Akbar in 16th century. The bridge is called Athpula because it stands on the eight piers and forms seven arches. Another important structure is Sheesh Gumbad which has the inscription of Holy Quran. The garden has a variety of trees which includes among others, Chir, Deodar, Chinar, Neem and Eucalyptus trees. The Lodi Garden has a beautiful rose garden with about 200 varieties of flowers. It is during the months of February and March that these flowers are in full bloom. Palm corner, bamboo garden and herbal garden are significant part of Lodi Garden. Food lovers and visitors can also visit 'Lodi – The Garden Restaurant' adjacent to the Lodi Garden for a variety of food delicacies such as Italian, continental and Mediterranean. While sitting in the balcony of the restaurant one can get a clear view of the entire Lodi Garden.

SOURCE

9th December 2009, Times of India

METAL MARVELS

With the magnificent Qutub Minar as the backdrop, Sheila Dikshit, recently unveiled commemorative medals carrying images of Indian Heritage Sites. The UNESCO World Heritage Commemorative medal in collaboration with MMTTC. A write-up on the history of the site accompanies each piece which is a chronicle of history in itself. At present, the medals carry the pictures of four sites, namely, the Taj Mahal, Buddhist monuments at sanchi, Chola Temples and Humayun's Tomb. Eventually it would cover all 27 Indian Heritage Sites and others, the world over. These medals will be available in the form of 8 – gm gold tablets, 30-gm silver tablets and burnished bronze tablets.

SOURCE

10th December 2009, Hindu

NATIONAL BIRD GETS A SAFE HOME IN HEART OF CITY – LODHI GARDEN

The Lodhi Garden in the Lutyen's zone is getting its third batch of peachicks. New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) officials said the garden, with its "bird-friendly habitat", would help the chicks grow, as they are quite vulnerable to human activities and their survival rate is very low. The chairman of the civic agency, Parimal Rai, said, "The chicks will be kept in an enclosure in the garden till they develop wings and are able to take care of themselves. This takes around three months. After that they are allowed to move freely." "We want to provide these birds a natural environment in the garden." The civic agency is releasing five peachicks in association with the World Pheasant Association (India). " We want to increase peacock sighting in the city, especially in Lodhi Garden, where there has been a rise in their population over the past few years.

The enclosure at Lodhi Garden will act as a refuge," said Samar Singh, the association's president. Singh said the process of releasing the national bird in its natural environment began in 2007. "Pea fowls are essentially ground-dwelling birds that lay eggs on the ground. But in 2004 I saw eggs a peahen had laid on the window ledge at an Annexe at the IIC," Singh said. "They don't lay eggs in the garden as stray dogs and cats attack the eggs. Also, peahens require a secluded area to lay eggs which is not available in the Lodhi Garden, as it is frequented by a large number of people," said a senior NDMC official. Singh said the enclosure in the garden would provide a safe environment for the birds to grow during the initial months. The civic body will also provide these birds food, water, shelter and vaccination.

SOURCE

9th December 2009, Hindustan Times

COURT RAPS MCD FOR ALLOWING SQUATTERS ON LADO SARAI TOMB

While the Government has been spending crores for restoration of historical monuments across the city, one of its agencies- the MCD has turned a blind eye to unauthorized constructions mushrooming around a protected medieval period tomb in Lado Sarai of South Delhi. Defying provisions of Delhi Ancient & Historical Monuments & Archeological Sites and Remains Act, the civic body also surprisingly proposed the construction of a community hall in the vicinity. Taking serious note of the civic agency's inaction, the Delhi High Court has now ordered the demolition of all illegal constructions in the area. Expressing its annoyance over the callous attitude of the body, the court also directed MCD to ensure that no construction was undertaken by any person in violation the Act.

SOURCE

11th December 2009, Pioneer

ASI, RAILWAYS CROSS SWORDS OVER BUFFER ZONE BUILDING

THE stand-off between the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Northern Railways over illegal construction near Nila Gumbad, an early Mughal-era monument, has taken an ugly turn. The Delhi circle of ASI is filing an FIR against the Railways, demanding a stay on the project. The Railways recently began work on a five-storied building within 100 metres of the monument -- considered a prohibited zone - and has dug up a large area for building the foundation. "After getting to know of the illegal construction, we have filed an FIR against the Northern Railways. The Railways authorities should have taken permission before going ahead with the construction," said KK Muhammed, Superintending Archaeologist, Delhi Circle, ASI. The FIR, registered at the Nizamuddin police station on December 7 (a copy of which is with Newline), states: "Construction work is being carried out near platform number 1 of Nizamuddin Railway Station without prior permission or approval, and according to the Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958, and (the) amended rules of 1992, this is declared illegal." The ASI has also demanded that action be taken against the Railways. Sources in ASI said construction within prohibited zone of a protected monument requires approval from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, the Delhi Urban Art Commission and the ASI. There is also disagreement over the purpose of the building. Railways officials said it was meant to be a resting room for drivers as the Nizamuddin station lacks such arrangements. "Train drivers need at least 12 hours of rest between journeys," a Railways official said. Sources in ASI, however, said the building will serve as a Railways guesthouse. "Nila Gumbad is an important Mughal monument and is significant as it stands in the buffer zone of Humayun's Tomb, a World Heritage Site. The Railways had earlier dumped track material near the monument and are now constructing a new building," a senior ASI told Newline. Half of the heritage structure is located on land owned by the Northern Railways; the other half belongs to the ASI.

ASI NOTICE TO 92 PROPERTIES IN CITY Following a Delhi High Court directive, the Archaeological Survey of India will issue show cause notices to 171 properties across the country as they all lie in the prohibited 100-metre limit of protected monuments. These include two Commonwealth Games projects, a Delhi Metro stretch, structures in the Imperial Hotel in Janpath and alterations made to Delhi Finance minister A K Walia's house in Daryaganj. Of these properties, 92 are in the Capital, as per an ASI report submitted to the court. Approval for these constructions was given by an ASI committee, which the court had declared illegal on October 30.

SOURCE

11th December 2009, Indian Express

ASI IN A BIND OVER HC ORDER DEMOLISH ILLEGAL STRUCTURE

THE Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) finds itself in an uncomfortable situation after the High Court on Wednesday asked it to issue showcause notices to 92 properties within the prohibited area of centrally protected monuments. Permission for construction within the prohibited zone was granted by the ASI Director General (D-G) on the advice of an expert advisory committee. Post-High Court order, the D-G will have to issue showcause notices. A number of properties in question are important development projects for the Commonwealth Games and the Delhi Metro, say officials. On October 31, the expert committee was declared illegal by the High Court and was soon disbanded by the ASI. As a result, the properties constructed following permission granted by the ASI D-G now await demolition. Sources in the Ministry of Culture said the expert committee was formed to advise the ASI D-G to deal with cases where relaxations were considered for construction within the prohibited zone of 100 metres of a centrally protected monument. It was done to allow necessary development projects, said officials. "As pointed out in the order, there is a paradox in the ASI's own rules and that the expert committee formed has no legal basis," said a senior official in the Ministry of Culture. "But what the ASI did was to promote development projects. In that case, the ASI should have asked for requisite amendments in the law." Now that important development projects, including those for the Commonwealth Games and the Delhi Metro, face the threat of demolition, the DG ASI, K N Shrivastav will take the matter with the government, sources in the ministry said.

SOURCE

13th December 2009, Indian Express

COLONIAL ERA STRUCTURE RAZED FOR GRADE SEPARATOR, CONSERVATIONISTS QUESTION PROJECT

THE Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) plans to begin the construction of a 1.7-km grade separator on Rani Jhansi Road near Old Delhi to tackle congestion in the area ahead of the Commonwealth Games has led conservationists to arise questions about the project's blueprint. The construction, they claim, will disturb many heritage structures in the area. The construction of the four-lane grade separator has already led to the demolition of the Bishop House, a colonial-era building located inside the Methodist Church complex built in the 1930s. The work will also affect the facades of several other listed heritage buildings, including Queen Mary's School and the chapel of the St Stephen's Hospital -- structures mentioned in the civic body's own list of heritage monuments based on an earlier listing by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), which is currently awaiting the state government's notification. Officials of INTACH said the MCD has not discussed the subject. "The matter has not come to us and we heard about it from other sources," said Professor A G K Menon, Convener, Delhi Chapter of INTACH. "The MCD needs to respect its own heritage list even if it has not been notified yet. Besides, according to rules, they must discuss the project with the heritage committee." The MCD officials said the heritage structures have no legal entity yet as the list has not been notified by the Delhi government. "At the time of finalizing the project blueprint, the MCD took into confidence all the parties involved. The Bishop's House agreed and accepted the compensation," said MCD spokesperson Deep Mathur. The Corporation also argues that all those who have been shifted have been paid appropriate compensation. The occupants of the Bishop's House

Bishop S S Singh of the Delhi Episcopal Area, Methodist Church in India, said he had taken up the issue with the authorities a number of times, but to no avail. "We finally submitted to their demand and vacated the premises when we were told that the MCD project was necessary for the larger public good," Bishop Singh said. Residents of bungalows -- numbers 12, 14, 16 (including Bishop's House) and 12 quarters in the Methodist Mission compound at Boulevard Road -- have already vacated the premises. The Delhi Urban Art Commission said the proposal was cleared in October 1995, when these monuments were not listed as heritage structures. It was only after 2000 that INTACH came up with a heritage listing for the city. The project was originally sanctioned in the early 1990s. The MCD, however, took over 10 years to begin work, citing the shift of the tyre market and other shops in the area as a reason for the delay. The Unified Traffic and Transport Infrastructure and Engineering Centre recently cleared the revived proposal and a private firm, Brahmputra Infrastructure Ltd. will carry out the construction. The grade separator, from Filmistan Cinema to near St Stephen's Hospital in Tis Hazari, will cater to around 50,000 vehicles daily. For the Rs 177-crore project, the MCD also had to cut around 570 trees in the area.

SOURCE

14th December 2009, Indian Express

HERITAGE BODY TO GO BY THE BOOK, RETAIN OLD LOOK FOR 100 YR OLD BRIDGE

EIGHT months after the Mangi Bridge, a 100-year-old British era bridge connecting Red Fort and Salimgarh Fort, was found damaged, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has finally decided to repair it. After several rounds of deliberations with the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Traffic Police, the ASI has decided to give a facelift to the damaged portions of the bridge using quartzite stone in its core masonry and retain its original look. since April this year, when the inner walls of the bridge first gave in due to abrasion with heavy vehicles plying underneath it on the Outer Ring Road, the ASI had taken up the issue with the PWD and Traffic Police. But failing to reach any conclusive and long term solution, the ASI resorted to repairing the inner walls -- a solution that the heritage body felt would not be long-term. The level of the road has been increasing under the bridge scrape its inner walls. Several rounds of discussion were held with PWD officials and the Traffic Police, but no viable solution could be found," said a senior ASI official. Several design options were also explored in the meantime and suggestions like caging the inner arch to avoid abrasion and use of iron plates to strengthen the structure were made. earlier this year, the ASI was planning to reconstruct the damaged portions and then look at a long-term solution. During the discussions it was also considered that pulling down the bridge and reconstructing it completely at a raised height might be the best possible solution. But the idea was shot down considering that authentic building material may not be available. ASI officials told Newslines that a plan was approved last week, according to which just the damaged portions of the bridge will be repaired. "Details of the restoration are now being worked out and the target for the completion of the work is two months. New consultant has been appointed to strengthen the bridge. Though this might not be a long term solution as heavy vehicles plying under the bridge might continue scraping it, there was no cooperation from the other agencies involved," the official said. Ideally, the constantly due to regular repaving of the road beneath it. As a result, heavy vehicles plying level of the road should have been lowered and this would have been the most viable option but the PWD didn't agree with us on this. According to the PWD, the bridge is on Ring Road, a major artery which connects UP and Haryana with East Delhi."

SOURCE

14th December 2009, Indian Express

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

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