



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 134

5th January- 11th January

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MCD SEEKS MORE FUNDS FOR OLD DELHI

This is why corruption continues to grow in Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). The civic agency has reinstated around 30 of the 62 officials caught redhanded by Delhi government's anti-corruption branch and CBI despite the commissioner having passed a policy against reinstating such officials. A list of 62 officials who had been caught on corruption charges have been provided by MCD's executive wing in response to a query by a Congress councillor, Preeti. The reply further states that all these officials besides two were caught redhanded by anti-corruption branch and CBI between April 2004 and April 2009. The reply also mentions that "on the basis of the recommendation of review committee, a policy has been prescribed by the commissioner that the officers caught redhanded by CBI/anti-corruption cell, be not reinstated." Most of the corrupt officials are from engineering, sanitation, horticulture, Slum and JJ and House Tax departments of MCD and were working in one of the 12 zones of MCD. They have been reinstated either by the commissioner himself or additional commissioners, who are the competent authority for reinstating such officials. Around 30 such officials have been reinstated showing the level of corruption in the civic agency. The rest have been placed under suspension. MCD did not wish to comment on this issue. While MCD has been making tall claims of trying to weed out corruption from its system through the introduction of biometric system of attendance, these startling facts show that it is in fact protecting its corrupt officials by reinstating them. Said Preeti: "I had been getting complaints of corrupt officials — who had been caught red-handed by anti-corruption branch — being reinstated in Shahdara (south) zone. When I approached the senior officials of the zone they clearly denied this. I therefore decided to seek some answers in this matter by raising this question in MCD House."

SOURCE

5th January 2010, Times of India

NTPC SIGNS MOU WITH ASI AND NATIONAL CULTURAL FUND

NTPC has signed an MOU with Archaeological Survey of India and National Culture Fund for restoration, conservation and development of group of monuments at Mandu in M.P, group of temples at Jageshwar in Uttarakhand and Archaeological site at Lalitgiri, Dhauli in Orissa. The MoU was signed by K.N. Shrivastava, Director General, ASI, Amaresh Singh, Member Secretary, National Culture Fund and Dinesh Agarwal General Manager, Corporate Social Responsibility, NTPC.

Jawahar Sarkar, Secretary, Culture was also present. Speaking on the occasion A.C. Chaturvedi, Executive Director (CSR) NTPC said that NTPC is committed to contributing in conserving the culture heritage sites which is our national treasure.

SOURCE

5th January 2010, Hindustan Times

NEW TRAFFIC PLAN TO MAKE CITY'S PROBLEM STRETCHES SAFER FOR WOMEN

IN a bid to make public spaces in the city safer for women, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) in its new traffic management scheme for the area surrounding the new MCD Civic Centre, will take into consideration key pointers for women's safety. The proposed traffic management scheme drawn up by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has incorporated recommendations made by Jagori, a city-based NGO, after a survey was conducted by the latter on the Ajmeri Gate-Delhi Gate stretch to make it safer for women. The survey is part of a larger study by Jagori, which has been commissioned to carry out an intensive survey of four cities around the world -- Dar es Salaam in Tanzania, Delhi in India, Rosario in Argentina, and Petrozavodsk in Russia. Through this study, under the Gender Inclusive Cities project sponsored by Women in Cities International and the UN Trust Fund, the NGO will make recommendations to the state governments to make the cities safer for women. "The project engages with different stakeholders, including the government, NGOs, citizen groups and the community to design and implement strategies that can bring about significant change in women's safety and rights in the city," project director Kalpana Viswanath told Newline. On the Ajmeri Gate-Delhi Gate stretch, which will be included in the proposed traffic management scheme around the upcoming MCD Civic Centre near the New Delhi Railway Station, the survey has thrown up some grim observations. "Three stretches were finalised for conducting the audits -- Jawaharlal Nehru Marg through Zakir Hussain College to the New Delhi Metro station, Jawaharlal Nehru Marg through Delhi Gate to Zakir Hussain College crossing and Asaf Ali Marg to Delhi Gate. Opinions of passersby, shopkeepers and a hearing impaired women's group, all frequent users of the place, were taken into account," Viswanath said. According to the survey, around 38 per cent women faced sexual harassment, while 36 per cent women complained of theft cases. Nearly 50 per cent women felt there was lack of visible police presence on the stretch, while 48 per cent women felt threatened by men dealing with or taking alcohol or drugs. Sixty-one per cent women complained of these issues during the daytime; 48 per cent said they experienced such problems while using public transport. "Women reported it to be one of the unsafe areas (in the city) especially after dark. They faced various forms of sexual harassment like catcalling, groping or lewd gestures. Open drug usage was another issue," the survey pointed out. Based on the findings several recommendations were made to improve the stretch: better pavements and monitoring of drug usage on the roads. Traffic monitoring was also among the suggestions.

SOURCE

6th January 2010, Indian Express

GAMES DEADLINE UNREALISTIC, SAYS MCD

WHILE work is yet to begin on the planned makeover for the historic Jama Masjid precinct, the ambitious redevelopment project has already run aground. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has now admitted it will not be able to complete the redevelopment work in time for the Commonwealth Games this year. Although MCD Commissioner K S Mehra maintains that the delay of over two years has been caused by a combination of factors like problems in getting the necessary clearances and "funding issues", sources in the MCD said one of the main reasons for the delay is a paucity of funds. Mehra had also recently written to Lieutenant-Governor Tejendra Khanna seeking Rs 20 crore as additional funds for the project. The Delhi government too had committed to fund one-third of the total project cost. It has, however, not released any funds yet. "While there is not enough funding for the redevelopment work right now, efforts are being made to arrange for the same. Once the state government releases the money, we will work accordingly," an

The civic body as well as planners in charge of the project, meanwhile, said the Jama Masjid project should not have been linked to the Games. "It was too ambitious on the part of the administration to have linked it to the Games. Jama Masjid redevelopment is a largescale and very sensitive project. Even if we had the funds available on time, the Commonwealth Games deadline would still have been unrealistic," the official added. The Corporation has, however, decided to begin "preliminary work" on the project. According to the plan, the MCD will make site visits to the Jama Masjid precinct next week and begin work like "cleaning up the area and putting up boards that will depict what the area is going to look like after the makeover". The supplementary plan of redeveloping neighbouring areas like Subhash Marg have been submitted with the Unified Traffic and Transportation Infrastructure Planning and Engineering Centre (UTIPEC) and is likely to be considered for approval next week. The MCD has also finally managed to the two major stakeholders of the project -over 633 shopkeepers of Meena Bazaar and the shopkeepers of Dargah Sheikh Kallimullah -to arrive at a consensus. "It took us around 50 odd meetings with them to finally get a consensus on the redevelopment plan," the MCD official said. The MCD had, in May last year, managed an approval from the Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) for the plan. Much of their original plan that boasted of an underground parking space and a heritage mall was, however, done away with as both the DUAC and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) insisted on minimum intervention in the sensitive zone to preserve its glory. While the agency agreed to do away with underground parking, the proposed shopping complex in the basement around the mosque will now be at the same level as Meena Bazar. The final plan will cost MCD Rs 150 crores.

SOURCE

7th January 2010, Indian Express

WANNA PLAY CRICKET IN A RUIN?

You do not expect a short flight of stairs to lead into this vast arcaded courtyard. The mid-14th century Begumpuri mosque, near Sarvapriya Vihar in South Delhi, is grand, simple and rundown. The pillars are massive but with hardly any design etchings on the arches and columns. Raised on a plinth, the mosque's main entrance, on the eastern side, faces the unaesthetic skyline of the Begumpuri village that is easy to ignore once you enter. The courtyard's calm makes the congested world outside seem unreal. And the domes completely take you in. There are 44 domed compartments on three sides. The Mecca-facing Western side has a prayer chamber as well as the building's central arch -- flanked by sloping buttresses with in-built winding staircases. Feel free to climb. The view of the courtyard clashes with that of the village's -clotheslines, water tanks and cow dung patties. Built by a Tughlaq-era minister, Khan Jahan Junan Shah, Begumpuri Masjid probably served as the principal Friday mosque during the reign of Mohammad Tughlaq. Owing to the anarchic times of 18th century Delhi, vulnerable communities had moved inside the mosque and a village had sprung up, which was cleared off by the Archaeological Survey of India in the 1920s. Today the mosque is dead. Prayers have been discontinued, the walls are broken, parts of the roof have collapsed and the stonework has blackened. Goats graze, chickens squeak, village boys play cricket and lovers scrawl 'I love you' messages. Rarely visited by group tours, the absence of touts and souvenir sellers makes an excursion here more intense than in Delhi's more popular ruins. Where Begumpur Village, Sarvapriya Vihar, near IIT

SOURCE

7th January 2010, Hindustan Times

FUNDS CRUNCH MAY DERAILED JAMA MASJID'S CWG MAKEOVER

The ambitious Jama Masjid redevelopment project of the MCD is battling a funds crunch and may not be completed before the Commonwealth Games this year. According to sources, the civic body is yet to receive funds for the project notwithstanding the fact that

Rs. Crore in additional funds for the project while the Delhi Government also said it will fund one-third of the total cost. The civic body is now says that the sensitive project should not have been linked to the Games as it took a long time to persuade the main stakeholders, the shopkeepers of Meena Bazar and Dargah Sheikh Kallimullah.

SOURCE

7th January 2010, Pioneer

LACK OF FUNDS HOLDS UP JAMA MASJID REFURBISHMENT

The much talked about plan for re-development of the historic Jama Masjid, which has been hanging fire for over four years since it was conceptualized, is yet to see the light of the day despite being approved by the DUAC and MCD. According to the project consultants roped in by the civic body, lack of will and availability of funds for the Rs.150-crore project appears to be the main reason behind the delay. The project is aimed at redeveloping and beautifying the area around the Jama Masjid mosque. It was formulated by the civic body after the Delhi High Court directed it in 2004 to conserve and redevelop the structure while hearing public interest litigation on the condition of the mosque.

SOURCE

8th January 2010, Hindu

LOVE HERITAGE, GET BETTER MARKS: CBSE TO CHILDREN

Now heritage conservation will be a part of school education. CBSE has asked schools to involve their students in the protection of monuments in the vicinity and organize seminars, quizzes, skits and exhibitions on heritage conservation. According to CBSE, these activities will make students more sensitive towards heritage and can also be used for continuous and comprehensive evaluation of students from up to class X for social science. In a circular dated January 7, CBSE instructed schools to administer an oath to all students on January 12, which will be observed as the Heritage Day. The school community will have to pledge to respect all monuments, not scribble, deface or encroach upon any monument and give all possible help to conserve it. "The oath may be administered preferably at a local monument for which local ASI office, State Archaeological Department or INTACH may be contacted by schools," CBSE chairperson Vineet Joshi stated in the circular. "The CBSE office is also writing separately to the heads of these organizations so that the monuments are opened for visit by the school students." CBSE has specially emphasised on 'adopt a heritage scheme' as part of a project in social science in which the students will have to adopt a historical building in the neighbourhood and create awareness for its preservation. "They can act as guides for visitors by taking them around the monument and explain its history, architectural features, connected stories, ethos etc. They can also distribute post cards, greeting cards and posters to the visitors," the circular mentioned. Making a CD on the monument and collection of archival sources can also be done. "Students can show interviews with visitors, actual caretakers and those in authority by asking pertinent questions," it added. The CBSE, in fact, are targeting not just the students but the entire school community with the introduction of this project. Though this campaign to preserve the monuments will run in schools across the country, some Delhi schools have already been involving students in protecting monuments and now plan to take it further after the CBSE directive. Said Bharti Sharma, principal, Amity International School, Saket, "Our students have been taking up the conservation work of monuments for many years now. But if CBSE is planning to introduce it in all schools, heritage conservation can become a mass movement." She added, "It is heartening to know we are moving in the right direction."

SOURCE

9th January 2010, Times of India

ASI OUTSOURCES WORK ON HERITAGE SITES TO MEET GAMES DEADLINE

As it works overtime to spruce up Delhi's historical sites ahead of the Commonwealth Games, the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) is depending heavily on outsiders

, generously outsourcing work to “heritage contractors”. With conservation work in full swing at over 40 monuments across the capital, the ASI, the apex body for maintaining heritage sites, has employed some 10 to 15 agencies to implement its plans on the ground. Mostly roped in from outside Delhi, the “heritage contractors”, as they are called in conservation parlance, bring with them vast experience on implementing heritage projects around the country, ASI officials said. “It is not a routine practice for us to employ outside workers for our projects in Delhi, and earlier we used to do such work on our own,” said Delhi superintendent archaeologist K K Muhammad. However, given the paucity of time and the amount of work to be completed within the October deadline, it was imperative for the heritage body to rope in outsiders. “Given our limited staff and strength, it was practically impossible for us to finish this work on our own. We, therefore, brought in agencies who have worked with us earlier on crucial conservation projects in Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and some historical sites in Madhya Pradesh,” he said. The contractors, who have been employed following a bidding process, have in turn brought to the restoration sites hundreds of labourers from nearby states. “At some sites like Tughlaqabad Fort, the Jahapanah Wall, Qila Rai Pithora Wall and Najaf Khan’s tomb, where massive restoration projects are underway, an estimated 500 labourers are currently working through these agencies,” Muhammad said.

SOURCE

11th January 2010, Times of India

CBSE'S 'ADOPT A HERITAGE' PROPOSAL FOR SCHOOLS

A student's commitment towards protection of heritage monuments could soon determine his or her academic performance in class. In a bid to inculcate a sense of responsibility in youngsters, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to implement the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme across all affiliated institutions in the country. The scheme was announced in circulars sent to schools on Friday. And in order to ensure that students take this initiative seriously, all related activities will be part of the new Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) system. Students studying up to Class X could be involved in a range of related activities organising heritage walks, talks quizzes and community sensitisation programmes or even adopting a monument as part of a social science project -- suggested by the Board and then be evaluated on their effort. Schools in the Capital, which received the circular on Friday, are gearing up to include heritage conservation in CCE. "We have set up a meeting on Monday to work on ways to make this a part of CCE. However, I am not sure if putting a marks constraint on this scheme is a good idea," said Jyoti Bose, Principal, Springdales School, Dhaula Kuan. The circular also directs all schools to henceforth celebrate January 12 as Heritage Day, during which all students will be administered an oath to protect heritage monuments. According to the directive, the oath should preferably be administered at a local monument.

SOURCE

9th January 2010, Hindustan Times

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

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