



## INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

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### Editor's Note

*DDA to take up revival of Neela Hauz in March*

*Report shows Yamuna's dirty faece*

*3 minutes, 12 schools & 190 short films on heritage*

*Ghalib's tomb gets an ASI makeover*

*HC presses for more guides ahead of Games*

*Railways, ASI agree to share land near Nila Gumbad for landscaping*

*Ghalib's tomb getting historic makeover*

*Delhi school gets a facelift*

### DDA TO TAKE UP REVIVAL OF NEELA HAUZ IN MARCH

With the opening of one side of the Neela Hauz bridge, Vasant Kunj residents are now anxious about the revival of the centuries old water body that had to be filled in with concrete to facilitate the construction. PWD, which is in charge of the project, says it would be able to hand over the 46,415 sqm fresh water lake in Vasant Kunj to DDA for restoration only by March-end after all development work related to the project is over and the malba from the water body has been removed. A PWD official said it would take another two months for the completion of work and then the removal of the malba from the water body. "We are trying to work with a deadline of March 31. The project was delayed due to a Supreme Court case against it and work has been going on only since the past eight months or so. The malba can be removed only at night since we would have to do so using trucks. After that we will hand over the water body to DDA," said the official. DDA sources say that at present, only an initial plan has been prepared for the restoration of the Neela Hauz and that a more detailed study will be required once the water body is handed over to them. "The lake is looking dead right now due to the amount of malba in it. The surrounding forest land with the forest department also has to be handed over to us so that we can start the work for the biodiversity park," said an official. As per the initial plan, a detailed survey of the map area would have to be carried out that includes contours, existing flora and fauna and topographical features. Even though PWD will have all the malba removed, DDA will have to clean out the lake again. Then, a detailed plan will be prepared for the creation of a naturally self sustaining eco-system that will include the lake and the area around it.

#### SOURCE

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010, Times of India

### REPORT SHOWS YAMUNA'S DIRTY FAECE

We all know Yamuna water is not fit for bathing, let alone drinking. But the latest report from the Central Pollution Control Board, sure to raise a stink before the Commonwealth Games in the capital, says the river is so full of excreta that its water resembles that of a drain. According to stipulated standards, water can be made potable with treatment if fecal coliform is less than 500 per 100ml and it's fit for bathing if the number is less than 5,000 per 100ml. According to CPCB's 10-month-long monitoring of the Yamuna at Nizamuddin, the lowest level of fecal coliform in the water was 4.4 lakh per 100ml, measured on May 4, 2009. That's almost 100 times above the level considered safe for bathing. Fecal coliform are bacteria that originate in excreta. Coliform levels reached as high as 1.79 crore per 100ml on February 3. Drinking water without conventional treatment but after use of

disinfectant should not have a coliform count in excess of 50 per 100ml and must have a minimum DO of 6mg per litre. Worse, the dissolved oxygen (DO) content of Yamuna water was “nil” on all the testing dates, though the water at Palla on all these days had a DO level of over 4 milligrams per litre, which is the standard. Palla is where the river enters Delhi, embarking on its most polluted 22-km stretch. The monitoring took place between January 6 and October 6 last year, according to the latest report submitted to the Supreme Court by CPCB through counsel Vijay Panjwani. Even at Palla the water quality could not be termed potable because of the high level of fecal coliform. Except for the test results on September 2, 2009, when the fecal coliform was 2,900 per 100ml, in all other months it was above the stipulated 5,000 level. The highest coliform count recorded at Palla was 43,000, on July 7. The alarming rise in the fecal coliform content in the Yamuna by the time it reaches Nizamuddin was mainly because of the number of drains that join it, throwing in untreated sewage and industrial effluent. “The total pollution load discharged through 25 drains in river Yamuna during the ten rounds of monitoring from January to October was between 174 tonnes per day to 330 tonnes per day,” CPCB said. “Although the drains are meant to carry storm water and tail-end discharge as part of the river basin system, at present the drains are being used to carry treated and untreated sewage and industrial effluent apart from storm water,” said the politely worded CPCB report. CPCB is monitoring the water quality of the river at five locations — Palla, Madanpur Khadar, Okhla, the meeting point of Shahadra drain and Nizamuddin — along with 25 drains, in compliance with the orders of the Supreme Court and has submitted results of 140 rounds of monitoring since 1999.

#### **SOURCE**

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010, Times of India**

#### **3 MINUTES, 12 SCHOOLS & 190 SHORT FILMS ON HERITAGE**

Nainika, Aditi, Priyanka and Medha are only 12 years old but they are very aware of Delhi’s history and character. These class VII students of Shriram School are part of today’s aware generation, children who make the effort to protect their city’s cultural and natural heritage. And their passion for their city was beautifully reflected in short three-minute films on the seven cities of Delhi, screened at the FilmIt festival on Monday. Three minutes can make a lot of difference to the audience. Almost a dozen films on Delhi’s heritage were showcased at the festival organised by INTACH. The participating students planned, scripted, edited and shot the entire videos on their own. Various themes were selected for the videos — be it the seven cities of Delhi, the hustle and bustle of the Walled City or the craft of traditional pottery making. Twelve schools from classes VI to VIII were part of the multi-cultural event at which students got to exchange ideas and showcase their film-making talents. The chief guest at the event was censor board chief Sharmila Tagore, who spoke about experiencing Delhi through the performing arts. “An audio-visual impact can change public opinion completely and you get to learn so much. The idea of communicating through films is an excellent way to get your message across to the audience,” said Tagore. Said Aditi Sharma who, along with three friends, made a video on the seven cities of Delhi: “We explored various ideas and narrowed down on the option to highlight the cities that made up Delhi. It took us two days to go to all the sites, from Qutub Minar to Tughlaqabad, and shoot the film.” Added her classmate and project partner Priyanka Oza: “We read up a lot on the city’s history and did our own research before making the film. It helped us get more passionate about our city and what its history represents for us.” Class VIII student Vidisha Gupta of Modern School made an unusual video-film of how clay pots are made. “This was basically a sequel to the video I made at the film festival last year. I got the idea from my mother and shot a video of her shaping the different parts of a clay tea pot and then putting them together. The experience has got me thinking about film-making as a career now,” she said. The participating schools included Sanskriti School, Shriram school, Modern School, Springdales Dhaultan Kuan, DPS Mathura Road, St Mary’s, The Banyan Tree, Delhi Police Public School, Bluebell’s International, St Columba’s, Navyug School and Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya. Apart

from Delhi, the Filmit India festival is also taking place in Kolkata and Chennai. All together, over 190 short films have been made. In Delhi alone, students made 130 short films, of which 12 films were screened at the festival, one from each school.

#### **SOURCE**

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010, Times of India**

#### **GHALIB'S TOMB GETS AN ASI MAKEOVER**

Weeks after controversy over Mirza Ghalib's haveli in Chandni Chowk, his burial place in Nizamuddin Basti has got a new lease of life. As part of a long-term partnership for development of Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have restored Ghalib's Tomb as per its original glory. Among the first visitors to the revamped tomb and courtyard on Tuesday were Vice-President Mohammad Hamid Ansari and his wife Salma. Ansari and his wife offered their respects to the poet while taking a tour of the complex. "This Nizamuddin project is very commendable and it keeps pace with Aga Khan Trust's work around the world. I was part of the meeting when the project was conceptualized and I am very happy with the results. The Capital's monuments need to be preserved for future generations. Some monuments like Barah Khamba in Delhi are unique and I have seen nothing like it," said the Vice-President. According to AKTC officials, the conservation of Ghalib's Tomb was part of Humayun's Tomb-Sunder Nursery-Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti Urban Renewal project. "The setting of Mirza Ghalib's tomb has been landscaped in a manner that enhances the historic character and bestow dignity to his place of burial," said AKTC project director Ratish Nanda. Officials said the newly-renovated courtyard would provide a serene and tranquil atmosphere to tourists at Ghalib's Tomb, which attracts thousands of visitors even 140 years after the poet's death. The tomb has often been overlooked by visitors despite its prime location in the main road of Nizamuddin Basti. While the tomb itself was maintained fairly well by ASI, the courtyard was in a bad state before AKTC took on the project. The narrow road in front of the monument and an iron fence around it gave it an ugly look. Now, hand-carved stone lattice screens have replace iron fence and the concrete pavement in the courtyard has been replaced with marble inlay and hand-chiselled sandstone. "The architecture pattern is now similar to what Mughals would have conceived when Ghalib mesmerized his audience," said an AKTC official. Apart from Ghalib's Tomb, Chausath Khamba — a Mughal period tomb — has also been landscaped to create space for Quawali performances. "Space so created will allow community gathering," added Nanda. The work in the tomb commenced in early 2009 and it involved master craftsmen and hundreds of skilled and unskilled craftsmen. "The Municipal Corporation of Delhi is now planning to improve the streets in Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti," said an official. Mirza Ghalib, considered amongst the greatest Urdu poets of South Asia, died on February 15, 1869.

#### **SOURCE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, Times of India**

#### **HC PRESSES FOR MORE GUIDES AHEAD OF GAMES**

The Delhi high court has hastened the process of Delhi getting its own qualified and trained state-level guides in the run up to the Commonwealth Games 2010. In a crucial direction, Justice S Muralidhar has ordered the state and central governments along with the Archeological Survey of India to immediately grant licenses to guides who can operate in any monument in Delhi, including those protected by the ASI. This will prepare a battery of guides qualified to handle influx of foreigners during the Commonwealth Games scheduled at the end of this year. Till now, visitors to the city had to rely on regional guides who operate across north India and are not focussed just on Delhi. "It is directed that Delhi government, ASI and union government will take further steps to endorse licenses issued to the statelevel guides operating in Delhi," Justice Muralidhar said, disposing of a batch of

approached HC seeking permission to operate as tourist guides and take visitors into monuments protected both under the ASI Act and Delhi Act. Arguing on their behalf, Gosain had urged the court to issue directions to the authorities to start grant of licenses to state-level guides to make up for paucity of trained manpower in the city. While delivering its judgment, the high court also took into account the rulings on this issue by HCs of Allahabad and Rajasthan. Justice Muralidhar agreed with the stand taken by Allahabad HC which had permitted state guides to operate in protected monuments. On its part, both the department of tourism of the central government and Delhi government assured the court that they will expedite the process of grant of licenses to guides as it will facilitate the preparedness for the Games.

#### **SOURCE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, Times of India**

#### **RAILWAYS, ASI AGREE TO SHARE LAND NEAR NILA GUMBAD FOR LANDSCAPING**

THE Railways and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) seem to have finally arrived at a compromise of sorts over the contentious issue of land-sharing near the centrally protected Nila Gumbad structure. According to sources, following a high-level meeting by the Railway Chairman Board S S Khurana, the outgoing Director General (DG), ASI, K N Shrivastav and new DG, ASI, Gautam Sengupta, it has recently been decided that 34 metres of land on the north and south of the monument will be given to the ASI for landscaping, while a road separating the monument from Humayun's Tomb may be diverted. The decision, however, comes across as more of a token land-sharing. While the ASI's requirement of building an alternate road on the east of the structure is 2,000 sq metre, only around 600 sq m has been permitted. Sources in the Railways said it was decided the diverted road will not be on Railways land. "It has been agreed that the Railways will relocate the water tank located next to the monument so that the archaeological remains discovered at the site are left untouched. The road can now be diverted but we have maintained that railways land should not be used for this," a senior Railways official said. There were also reservations regarding granting the requested 34 metres of land towards the south of Nila Gumbad. The Chairman of the Railway Board, however, agreed to hand this over to the ASI as it was originally connected to Nila Gumbad. ASI officials are relieved to have arrived at a compromise with the Railways over the longstanding dispute, but are disappointed over the road diversion issue. As reported by Newline earlier, while the Railways allowed the construction of a temple on railways land within the Railway Protection Force (RPF) barracks, they refused to part with land for diverting the road. The decision now awaits a formal correspondence between the two bodies, sources in the ASI told Newline. Work on Nila Gumbad, which features among 46 monuments that have been earmarked for a facelift for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, is yet to begin; only after a formal agreement is made between the two bodies will it make any headway. ASI officials are, however, hopeful that if the land permitted for sharing is handed over to the heritage body soon, it might be possible to complete landscaping around the monument before the Commonwealth Games, as well as integration with Humayun's Tomb nearby.

#### **SOURCE**

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2010, Indian Express**

#### **GHALIB'S TOMB GETTING HISTORIC MAKEOVER**

In what could be an apt tribute to Delhi's poetic icon Mirza Ghalib, his tomb, Mazare-Ghalib, in Nizamuddin, would soon reverberate with qawwalis, mushairas and mehfiles. This would be possible thanks to the redevelopment work carried out by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture at the Survey of India (ASI)-protected monument. The tomb, which was lying in a sad state earlier, has undergone a sea change. A hand-carved stone lattice screens separate the premises from the narrow street brimming with locals, vendors and beggars. Neighbouring Mughal era Chausath Khamba, also an ASI-protected monument, too has been renovated as part of the project, that commenced early 2009. Vice President Hamid Ansari visited the mazar on Tuesday with his wife Salma and offered floral tributes at the poet's tomb.

He also took a stroll around the Chausath Khamba monument. Aga Khan Foundation's Dr Abad Ahmed while taking the guest around the premises told him about the cultural revival of the area. "For a small gathering, the area in front of the mazar can be used while for a bigger event, the courtyard of the Chausath Khamba can be utilised," he said adding, the modalities would be worked out with the ASI. "It is a remarkable initiative. I remember the first meeting of the Trust, when the project was conceived. I am glad things have turned out so well. It is keeping in line with Aga Khan Trust's efforts," Ansari said. ASI Director General Dr Gautam Sengupta and Chief Information Commissioner Wajahat Habibullah and were present on the occasion. EDUCATION INITIATIVE The Municipal Corporation CoEducation Pratibha Vidyalaya, Nizamuddin (W) was readying for a visit by Vice President Hamid Ansari and his wife Salma. Ansari visited classes and interacted with students, teachers and parents from the locality. The school has seen a complete makeover, not just in physical infrastructure but also in the quality of education imparted by the municipal teachers as part of the 'Building Renovation and Education Initiative' project under Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti Urban Renewal Initiative, by the Aga Khan Development network. "The efforts have led to an over 50 per cent increase in enrolment within one year; 425 girls and boys from the basti are now attending the school," NGO officials said.

**SOURCE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, Hindustan Times**

**DELHI SCHOOL GETS A FACELIFT**

The Municipal Corporation Co-education Pratibha Vidyalaya at Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti here has received a facelift as a result of an MoU signed between the Aga Khan Development Network and MCD three years ago. The input of school faculty, students, parents and architects, craftsmen and educationists was considered while planning the refurbishment of the school. For the renovation work to precede, classrooms, toilets and corridors had to be almost completely demolished and rebuilt. Safe electric connections, replacement of claustrophobic iron-grills with sandstone lattice screens in the corridors, colourful furniture and practically designed toilets spaces among other improvements have made the school much sought after for its facilities. A striking feature of the school now is the presence of a Ford Foundation-supported vibrant "cultural wall" painted by folk artists which depicts the elements of earth, air and water.

**SOURCE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2010, Hindu**

**ART OF LIVING FOUNDER TO CLEAN UP YAMUNA**

The Yamuna has found itself another saviour, this time in the form of Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. The spiritual guru is launching a 'Meri Yamuna Meri Dilli' campaign that will see him, along with scores of his followers, NGOs and other volunteers travel the entire stretch of the river from Delhi to Vrindavan, cleaning it and creating awareness among those living near it. The programme will start on March 7 in Delhi and will culminate in Vrindavan a few months later. "Our aim is to finish most of the work before the monsoon. There seems to be no coordination between the various agencies and the government which were supposed to ensure that the river was clean. In fact, we carried out a study on the problem and realized they had not even met for several months. However, it is both the government and people who should take responsibility for the state of the river and a major part of our work is to inform the public on the issue," said Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Calling the river the "dil of Dilli", the Art Of Living founder said: "Cleaning the river is no easy task but the government has assured us of its support. The Yamuna is filthier than the Ganga and it makes me sad to see hundreds of devotees bathing in its polluted waters.

**SOURCE**

**5<sup>th</sup> February 2010, Times of India**

## **'LITTLE' HELP FOR NEELA HAUZ**

The dying lake at Aruna Asaf Ali Marg has found itself some support in Delhi's young school children. On Thursday morning, students of 10 city schools visited the Neela Hauz, over which PWD is constructing a bridge for the Commonwealth Games, to see what steps were being for the restoration of the erstwhile fresh water body. The students also interacted with senior PWD officials to get an idea of how the restoration work would be carried out. The initiative, led by students of St Mary's school, included other institutions like Father Agnel, Springdale (Dhaulakuan), Tagore International (Vasant Vihar), Vasant Valley, Mothers International, DPS (Vasant Vihar), Gyan Bharti (Saket), Iraqi School and Amity International (Saket). They will also be writing to Delhi Jal Board to ask for details on the repair of damaged sewer lines that were leaking into the lake. "I remember seeing this as a clean water body but now nothing of it is left. The PWD officials have assured us that the lake will be restored to its earlier glory and we would like to believe it but the condition of the lake is very poor right now. If more Delhiites take interest in our ecosystem, then we might be able to preserve it," said one of the students. The 46,415 sq m lake and the area around it, including Sanjay Van, will be developed as a biodiversity park once the bridge project is complete. It is one project that the is L-G is known to monitor personally. One side of the bridge was thrown open for operations on Monday though the other side would only be complete around the end of March. PWD officials said that they would be able to hand over the lake to DDA for restoration only by April 2010 after all developmental work related to the project is over and all the malba from the water body has been removed. Official said that it would take another two months for the completion of work and about 15 days for clearing the water body of the malba and removal of the water hyacinth that completely covers whatever is left of the water body. Once it is handed over to them, DDA will carry out a survey of the region and prepare a detailed plan for its restoration.

### **SOURCE**

**5<sup>th</sup> February 2010, Times of India**

## **WALL TO PROTECT CENTRAL RIDGE**

To help save the green lung of the city, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has started constructing a boundary wall around the central Ridge area. The 7-foot-high concrete boundary wall is being built to keep a check on encroachment and dumping of malba. "We are building the wall on either side of Shankar Road. We are carrying out this work as a deposit work and once the construction work is over we will hand it over to the Forest department," said a senior NDMC official. The entire stretch is 2.67 kilometre-long. It begins at the Talkatora stadium roundabout and ends at the traffic signal of Ganga Ram hospital. The cost of the project is Rs. 2.11 crore. "We were directed by the Delhi chief minister to construct the wall as it faced constant threat of being encroached," said the official. "It was also being used as a dumping yard for throwing construction material," added the official. Experts are happy that such a step is being taken. However, they are also apprehensive about the height of the boundary wall. "Demarcating a boundary wall is a first step in ensuring that people don't dump garbage or carry out any encroachment in the area," said Ravi Aggarwal, member of Ridge Management Board. "But it also makes the area more vulnerable as the high wall will also serve to block any access to the ridge and probably only encourage illegal activity inside," he added. The construction work started in September last year and will be completed by April. "A number of people used to cut wood in the Ridge area too and the wall is going to act as a barrier for that too," said Aggarwal. "While the wall is being built to keep out unwanted elements, we have made white strips on it for aesthetic value," he added.

### **SOURCE**

**8<sup>th</sup> February 2010, Hindustan Times**

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