



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 145

23<sup>rd</sup> March- 29<sup>th</sup> March

## Editor's Note

*16 die in heritage building blaze*

*Will cricket league spoil Earth Hour mission?*

*20,000 turned up to clean Yamuna*

*CP's old haunts disappear, charm intact*

*Bye guides: Soon, info on monuments on your cell phone*

*Back story*

*Makeover for Dilli Haats*

*New colour code for Old Delhi streets*

### **16 DIE IN HERITAGE BUILDING BLAZE**

A major fire raged through an eight-storeyed heritage building in this city's signature thoroughfare, Park Street, on Tuesday afternoon, killing 16 persons and injuring more than 21. Locals said it appeared to have been sparked by a short circuit in the elevator or an LPG cylinder that exploded in the 100-year-old building. While two leapt to their death from the upper floors, four died of burns in hospitals, Commissioner of Police Gautam Mohan Chakraborty said. "At least 17 victims are still admitted in three hospitals. Some of them are in critical conditions," said Joint Commissioner of Police Javed Shamim. The building, Stephen Court, housed two of Kolkata's favourite eateries -- Flury's and Peter Cat and dozens of offices and residential apartments. The fire broke out on the fourth floor shortly after 2 p.m. and people working in the offices were trapped as the flames spread, engulfing several floors in thick smoke. The wooden staircase of the building went up in flames, making it difficult for people to escape. "I could see people crying for help from the windows. A man jumped from the fourth floor. I rushed four victims to my nursing home," said Sangita Saha, an employee of neighbouring Royd Nursing Home. Forty-two fire tenders and more than 100 firefighters were deployed to bring the situation under control but at the time of going to press, the fire had not been doused completely. Locals rushed to the spot before the fire brigade arrived. Some people climbed down with ropes provided by locals. Fire brigade personnel had a tough time as water jets struggled to reach the top three floors. An hour after the fire broke out, three newly procured skylift machines, which could reach up to a height of 70 metres, were brought in. But their deployment was hindered by overhead wires and trees.

#### **SOURCE**

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Times of India**

### **WILL CRICKET LEAGUE SPOIL EARTH HOUR MISSION**

Will IPL-mania kill the mission to save planet Earth from global warming on Saturday? Two days prior to Earth Hour 2010, this question is doing the rounds as the city gears up to turn off lights on Saturday, March 27, so that the planet gets an hour's breather from greenhouse gas emissions that occur due to the generation of (mainly thermal) power. On March 27, Shah Rukh Khan's Kolkata Knight Riders are taking on Preity Zinta's King's XI Punjab, starting 8 p.m. That's just 30 minutes prior to the start of Earth Hour at 8.30 p.m. So, even if the lights are turned off, the millions of TV sets might spoil Earth Hour's party. Realising this, the proponent of Earth Hour, the World Wildlife Fund-India (WWF- India), is trying to get the IPL to make a symbolic contribution during the match.

“We are speaking with the IPL authorities regarding this. It would be great if they are on board,” said Aarti Khosla, spokesperson, World Wildlife Fund-India (WWF-India). “We are also appealing to people to not have lights or other non-essential guzzlers of electricity on, even if they DO watch the match on TV during the Earth Hour.” Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru are the official Earth Hour cities in India, among the 12 big cities leading the charge globally. The Delhi government and Hindustan Times are its official partners in India. As far as Delhi is concerned, power distributing companies, along with the government, are ready with a plan. Last Earth Hour, Delhi saved around 600 mw. This time, the government is aiming to top that. “We have held meetings with the labour department, New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), market and traders' associations, malls, hotels etc to get everyone on board,” said Delhi Environment Secretary Dharmendra Kumar. Discom BSES has sent Earth Hour messages in its newsletter, copies of which, pinned with the power bills, go to its 25 lakh consumers across Delhi. Its Tata-controlled counter- part North Delhi Power Limited (NDPL) has tied up with resident welfare associations and around two lakh students to spread the word. Power consumers in BSES areas will also receive auto- mated voice messages and bulk mails urging them to take part in the initiative. “We should all strive for the day when we will not need an Earth Hour to heal the planet“, says Gopal Saxena, CEO, BSES Rajdhani, Delhi's biggest power distributor. A freak thunderstorm with rainfall during last year's Earth Hour was also a reason why power consumption saw a dip. This year, however, the weatherman has not sounded out any such good news. “This Earth Hour, we hope Delhiites will make up for the absence of favourable weather for saving power,” Kumar said. Now, if only IPL could chip in too.

#### **SOURCE**

**26<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Hindustan Times**

#### **20,000 TURNED UP TO CLEAN YAMUNA**

An engineering student recently came up with an interesting description of the Yamuna: It is like a supermarket, you can find everything in it. Shiva, a final year student of Faridabad, who spent eight days attempting to clean up the Yamuna, said: “We have picked out just about everything from the river so far, from plastics to pooja samagri,” she said. She, along with over 20,000 people, joined the “Meri Dilli Meri Yamuna” initiative, launched on March 17 by the Art of Living Foundation, to clean the river’s ghats and to drive home a point to the government — the Yamuna needs urgent attention if it is to survive. And to show the way, it mobilized thousands of citizens to get down to action. While only a whole-hearted and sincere effort by government agencies can really make a difference to the health of the river, this citizens’ effort has drawn urgent attention to the city’s sprawling open drain that was once a glorious river. To spread awareness about ways to lessen the burden of waste in the river, public outreach programmes were organised by Delhi Jal Board and the Art of Living with street plays, puppet shows and music to involve even the most disinterested persons in the people’s movement to save the Yamuna. From March 18 to March 24, concerned residents, NGOs, corporates and other volunteers covered eight ghats in the city, raking up tonnes of rubbish and silt that took over 200 tractor trolleys to remove. Akhilesh Chhabra, in-charge of the cleaning at the Okhla Dhobi Ghat, and otherwise an LIC employee, said that his worst experience had been at the Yamuna Vihar ghat, where due to its proximity to Nigambodh Ghat, volunteers actually had to dodge dead bodies in their effort to pull out rubbish from the water. At the Okhla Dhobi Ghat on Thursday, Rashmi Paliwal, Art of Living’s north India in-charge, said that with their experiences of the past eight days, they would be developing a think tank along with the government, NGOs and corporates to come up with practical solutions for cleaning the river. “At the dhobi ghat, we started our cleaning work 15 days in advance. About 200 truck loads of muck, including carcasses of dogs etc, were removed from the banks of the river. Through our eight-day journey, we had numerous people and groups, like RWAs, NCC cadets, social clubs and children, join us,” she said. For those who went ghat to ghat, trying to give the dying river some semblance of dignity, wading into sewage that is ostensibly the river’s water, was no easy task. However, this was a mission to prove a point and they all joined in, from government officials to students and housewives.

#### **SOURCE**

## CP'S OLD HAUNTS DISAPPEAR, CHARM INTACT

In the early 1970s, Ravi Sharma, then in his twenties, would unfailingly make it to Standard restaurant near Regal cinema in Connaught Place's Outer Circle every evening around 8 for a cup of coffee. There, he and his friends would head straight to the jukebox, insert a 25 paise coin to play the longest-playing song that would fill the next hour as they lounged over coffee. His favourites were from films Barsaat, Awara and Pyaasa. "Those days coffee was served with a biscuit called Ferry," recalls Sharma nostalgically, now 60 and manager of Regal cinema for the past 30 years. Sharma's memories of a CP fast losing its originality are shared by many. For Santosh Kumar, 71, it was a frequent routine to park his white Vespa, a luxury in the 1960s to visit Gaylord, Kwality or Volga for his cup of coffee. "I would race my scooter from Railway Colony via Ashok Road to CP every day just to soak in the ambience of these fine places. Coffee was just an excuse. Also, one didn't have the means to afford a meal outside home in those days. Eating out was mostly an occasion to celebrate," he says. Agrees Sharma who recalls witnessing many matchmaking sessions arranged at Standard and Gaylord by well-to-do families. "Seating was spacious, the dim lights added to the privacy and soothing environs lent the right atmosphere for a marriage to be fixed. The girl and boy were introduced to each other, along with their families, in these comfortable surroundings". CP's travelled a long way from those days. Barring Kwality, these restaurants have now shut down; Volga the last to down shutters on February 28 this year. A notice on its door said, "Due to economic un-viability, the restaurant is shutting down", offering a month's salary to its staff. Jitender Pandit of Pandit & Co (car accessories) remembers Volga's 'jam' sessions in 1960s. "People danced to a live band; they'd come all the way from as far as Modi Nagar," he says. "At Volga, booking a table in advance was the norm as it would always be full," says Atul Bharghav, president, New Delhi Traders' Association. Outside Standard, its guard Ramesh Singh holds fort, as bleak and dilapidated as the restaurant itself. "It's been shut for the past three years. Kaam chalu hai," is all he mumbles, almost sullen. By the deserted, almost haunted, look of these once majestic interiors, it doesn't look like the buzz of an era gone by will be heard anytime soon. All that's left of these old-world charms are closed doors, dustladen interiors, decrepit wooden furniture and a silence that screams loud. Giving way to a new order of fast-food chains, branded stores and corporate takeovers, the wheels of change are turning fast in Lutyen's Connaught Place. Now, with the Commonwealth Games pushing that change in a big way, old-timers, traders and visitors alike want to desperately retain the old while ringing in the new. Not all old eateries are lost. United Coffee House (UCH) remains a favoured haunt for above 40s; The Embassy's liveried waiters with silver trays retain their quaint quotient while Wenger's continues to be one of the most successful confectioners in the capital. Not just eateries, the Indian Arts Palace in E-block holds its own in the hustle-bustle of standardization. Its owner Sultan Singh Backliwal, 82, calls himself CP's father figure, having seen it built before his eyes as a child in the early 1930s. For the former president of CP Traders' Association, currently its life patron, CP's character lies in its sheer class. "Whatever the changes, it retains an elite element. During British times, maharajas and their ranis, along with their guests and heads of state, were patrons. The Queen of England visited the old Cottage Emporium after Independence, Marshal Tito, all viceroys and their wives right up to Lord Mountbatten have visited showrooms like mine". Touted as one of the world's few circular markets with spacious colonnades, walkways, CP's central location makes it a shopper's paradise, currently though motorists' nightmare. "From a needle to a motor car, anything could be purchased here. All it needs is an empathetic handling of re-development because CP is unlike any other market," says Backliwal, a shade upset that he and old timers like him aren't consulted in the make-over of CP. "After all who knows CP better than us?" There's regret at the closing down of many old shops: tailors, chemists, stationers and of course, that of B Lila Ram in F-block that used to be a shopping hub for maharajas and maharanis. That's truly from era long gone by.

**SOURCE**

**26th March 2010, Times of India**

## BYE GUIDES: SOON, INFO ON MONUMENTS ON YOUR CELLPHONE

CELLPHONES could soon change the tourism scenario in the Capital, if the Tourism department has its way. For, Delhi Tourism plans to start coding all major monuments in the city. The idea: tourists can dial a special number on their cellphone and press the code to get a prerecorded voice narration on the history of a particular monument, as also interesting facts about it. The move, officials say, is meant to make the city more tourist-friendly so that people who do not want to hire a guide can get adequate information on monuments and heritage structures. According to Rina Ray, managing director of the Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation (DTTDC), one way to make the service more attractive is to provide interesting information. For example, very few know that the Humayun's Tomb is a symbol of a wife's love for her husband — the monument was built by Humayun's wife Hamida Banu Begam. The pre-recorded messages, Ray says, will provide such anecdotal information. "It is an interesting idea that can be used in Delhi as everyone has a cellphone today," Ray says. "We will tie up with a service provider to start the initiative." The plan will take a few months to come to practice but senior officials say it is part of long-term plans of the tourism department to promote Delhi even after the Commonwealth Games are over. It will be a paid service, Ray says, but tourists will be charged for the call, not the content. The idea has been borrowed from Madhya Pradesh Tourism, which was the first and till date the only tourism department to implement the scheme a couple of years ago. Ashwani Lohani, former managing director of MP Tourism who is at present working as divisional manager (Delhi) with the Indian Railways, had introduced the scheme. "It solved the problem of guides and was a non-human interface solution," he says. "Messages would last for about three minutes." Being a much larger state than Delhi, MP had four area codes — for Bhopal, Gwalior, Indore and Jabalpur

### SOURCE

26th March 2010, Indian Express

### BACK STORY

HEY have been restoring works of art for years now. However, it is for the first time that the team of restoration artists at Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is showcasing their artwork on gallery walls. The exhibition celebrates the silver jubilee of the organisation that has been conserving Indian heritage. While some artists showed a preference for contemporary art, others quoted tradition, and as the chief guest Krishen Khanna observed, "Some of the best art has come from experimenting". The youngest of the lot, Nagamurti Pareet, 24, has rendered a canvas that captures the destruction of a 100-year-old heritage site, the Taj Mahal Hotel in Mumbai, that went up in flames during the 26/11 terror attack. "I have painted a crow flying towards the Taj. It appears like a bad omen, but it also has a wing of green, which signifies hope. I wanted to depict how the destruction wrought by the attacks are being salvaged," says Pareet. His other work is an installation that is a dig at the new budget. "Mobile phones and vegetables have been placed in the same price slab," he says, pointing at his work — a large colour print of vegetables, displayed like phones in a store, while mobile phones lie in baskets, like vegetables in the market. The team's restoration work in Ladakh has led 28-year-old Joyoti Roy to take some arresting black-and-white images. "I was inspired by the face of children in the hilly terrain. Their relationship with the harsh landscape sculpts their features and builds their character," says Roy. Pankaj Sharma has chosen to muse on the female mystique, celebrating qualities of receptivity and acceptance on the outside, while the hidden qualities of womanhood remain shrouded under a BE brand sign. "I have never claimed to be able to figure out women, but they continue to fascinate me," says Sharma. "We hope to make this an annual event," says SK Misra, chairman of INTACH. One can look forward to more from the backroom team. The exhibition is on at India International Centre till April 7.

### SOURCE

28th March 2010, Indian Express

## MAKEOVER FOR DILLI HAATS

After venues, it's the turn of tourist spots in the city to get a Commonwealth Games makeover. Delhi government is planning to renovate and upgrade both the Dilli Haats — in INA and Pitampura. From rejigging the menu to setting up paid toilets, the government is looking to make both Haats distinctive. Said Rina Ray, managing director, DTTDC, "The renovation is going to start from the first week of April. We hope to make both complexes ready for the Games by August." Interestingly, the government is looking to make both Haats different from each other. While Dilli Haat at INA will be refurbished along with the menu to make it representative of the various states of India, the Pitampura Haat will be more international in look and cuisine. Said Ray, "The ministry of external affairs is setting up a SAARC museum in Pitampura. We therefore, decided that the Haat would have food from the eight SAARC countries as well as handicrafts and cultural programmes intrinsic to them." As part of the renovation project, INA's Haat will see the children's park within the premises being revived. The park, which will have a tree house and other features, will be renovated along with the stage nearby. Officials said that the government is also planning to build a new air-conditioned auditorium in the premises, which would be rented out for functions. Said a senior government official, "The air-conditioned building will also be used as an alternative space during summers, where visitors can come and lounge." The project will also see a complete overhaul of the menus in the state stalls. Sources said over the years, the stalls which originally offered cuisine of a particular state had started selling generic dishes. That is now set to change, however, with the city government pushing the state governments — which were ostensibly running the stalls — to update the menu to ensure only cuisine of that state was available. Admitted Ray, "We have asked them to ensure that a state food stall will offer cuisine of that state only. After all, that's the USP of Dilli Haat." To underscore the national flavour of the INA Haat, the government will also be adding more geospecific artifacts, added sources. For instance, the food stalls will be decorated with handicraft from that state, in the form of murals and other artifacts. The two Haats will also offer radio cab services, in time for the Games, Said Ray, "The emphasis is on using public transport. So we want visitors to have the option of either taking a radio cab or the Metro." Also, valets who will help shoppers take their possessions to the Metro will be made available at the Haat, to make it more visitorfriendly, added the MD. "Parking space is scarce, so we don't want visitors to be caught up with the travails of finding parking space," added Ray.

### SOURCE

29th March 2010, Times of India

## NEW COLOUR CODE FOR OLD DELHI STREETS

It's not just New Delhi that's getting all spruced up for the Commonwealth Games. With lakhs of tourists expected to visit the city in October, the government is hoping to turn Old Delhi into a major attraction. As part of the beautification project proposed by the Shahjahanabad Redevelopment Corporation (SRC), streets in Old Delhi will be colour coded by the government in association with local traders' bodies. Savitir Prasad, managing director, SRC, said: "The idea is to make the bylanes of Old Delhi attractive to tourists. Each street will have a different colour signage so that tourists can move about easily," Prasad said. The proposal was passed by the SRC board last Thursday. The colour codes and typography of the signages have been selected by the traders' associations. "After a series of meetings, traders as well as residents decided on not only the colours but also the physical dimensions of the boards," said Gurbachan Singh, president of the Daryaganj Traders Association. Singh said the project was welcomed by almost all the traders' associations. "The cost will be borne by us. We want to be a part of a national event like the Commonwealth Games. We would like for tourists who visit Old Delhi to have an aesthetic experience." Naseer Ul Hasan Jhinjhanvi, one of the area's prominent residents who had pushed for the project, said it was the first time that traders had come together to be part of a major government project. "The facade of over 2,000 shops will be renovated by traders," Jhinjhanvi said. The streets include main Daryaganj road, Chitli Qabar cloth market, Urdu Bazaar, Jama Masjid Motor market, Delhi Gate, Turkman Gate, Matia Mahal and other bylanes. Singh said:

“Though there are certain obstacles like showrooms refusing to change their colour codes on display boards, the rest of the traders associations are more than willing.”

**SOURCE**

**29<sup>th</sup> March 2010, Times of India**

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

**INTACH Delhi Chapter**

**71, Lodhi Estate, New Delhi – 110003**

**Tel : 2463 2267, 2463 2269 Ext. 105**

**Email : [feedback@intachdelhichapter.org](mailto:feedback@intachdelhichapter.org)**