



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 150

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WALLED CITY BROUGHT DOWN BY PLANS

The last Emperor of India wrote this bleak line in Rangoon, Myanmar, when exiled from his beloved Dilli by the British, says the legend: Lagta nahi hai dil mera ujre dayar mein... (My heart has no solace in this wrecked land...) Bahadur Shah Zafar II died, away from Delhi, in 1862 and the British left India in 1947. But nearly 150 years after his death, Zafar's line still has currency. Except now it can refer to the city he was forced to leave behind: Shahjahanabad, walled city, Delhi 6. Wrecked land. **UNDONE BY PLANNING** It was in 1962, that the Master Plan of Delhi had suggested the area -- already crippled by poor infrastructure and growing population -- needed urgent attention. The home of "Chandni Chowk-... must be made more functional," it had said, "with adequate off- street parking and ... traffic regulations." The plan was to be implemented in the next 20 years but the proposals of MPD 1962 are still being proposed. Meanwhile, commercial activity in the area has risen by 1,000 per cent and civic infrastructure crushed to death. **FAMILIAR SCRIPT** The Commonwealth Games -- scheduled October 2010 -- had given the perfect opportunity to the government to showcase the soul of Delhi's heritage. After all, one lakh visitors are estimated to visit the Capital for the event. But even as New Delhi areas get facelifts, Delhi 6 -- home of Chandni Chowk, Jama Masjid and paranthewali gali -- decays. Like always, changes were planned. Like always, plans floundered. Even this time, backed by the intent of officialdom. Those who demanded the resurrection of the area in time for the Games included the Union Ministry, Delhi government, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Archaeological Survey of India. The MCD, which has been planning since the last eight years to renovate Old Delhi, claims multiplicity of agencies is hindering the project. "There are many stake- holders. Naturally it has taken time. But we can assure that pedestrianisation (sic), installing of street furniture will be done before the Games," said Krishan Kumar, deputy commissioner, City zone. Consultants of the project have sub- mitted a a detailed project report long ago. But work just won't start, they say. "The problem with this project is that everything is lost in rhetoric," says Abhimanyu Dalal, consultant architect, Chadni Chowk redevelopment project. Those living and working in Shahjahanabad remain deeply skeptical of any government promises. "Nothing will happen. They want to make it a heritage attraction but we don't even get the basic civic amenities," says Sanjay Bhargava of a traders' body. **TALK TO US** Do you think the government has neglected the walled city? Do you have suggestions to correct this? Write to us at: hreporters@hindustantimes.com **SHEESHGANJ SAHIB** This 17th century gurudwara with gold-plated domes, was built in memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur, beheaded at the same place on the orders of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb in 1675.

ANGLO ARABIC MASJID built in the early 18th century; the building has always been used as an educational centre. The complex houses a mosque and a madarsa (now a conventional school). AJMERI GATE built during 1644-49, this is one of the original 14 gates of the walled city. Its name comes from its direction: towards Ajmer. The single-arched Gate acts as a traffic island. RAZIA SULTAN'S TOMB This small yet significant tomb belongs to Delhi's only woman Sultan. The tomb of the daughter (1236-39) of Iltutmish has a simple beauty, comprising only of four walls. SALIMGARH FORT This fort located northeast Red Fort was built by Sher Shah Suri's son Salim Suri. It has thick rubble-built ramparts and has barracks that were once used as prison by the British. RAJ K. RAJ, SUNIL SAXENA, VIRENDRA SINGH GO MIRZA GHALIB HAVELI Believed to be an early 19th century structure, the Ghalib Ki Haveli was the residence of the famous 19th century poet Mirza Ghalib. The building is in Gulli Qasim Jaan in Ballimaran. SAIN AND NIVEDITA KHANDEKAR / HT PHOTOS All of us are disappointed with the pace of work. But things have changed in the past few years. The Red Fort area has changed. The MCD is improving the sidewalks and roads are also being redone. But other major redevelopment [projects will only be taken up after the Games are over. SHEILA DIKSHIT Chief minister, Delhi Chandni Chowk is a sensitive area and we have been careful in carrying out any work there. We have prepared the redevelopment project and work will start for phase I.

SOURCE

[28th April 2010, Hindustan Times](#)

RARE WALL ART FOUND IN FORGOTTEN MOSQUE

For ages, it wallowed in obscurity. Now, an obscure mosque at the butterfly park in Lodhi Garden has thrown up a surprise for conservators, sprucing it up ahead of the Commonwealth Games. A rare colour finish in fresco style has been found in the mosque that doesn't even have a name. A fresco is a mural -- a form of artwork -- painted on walls or ceilings. Grime and dust were the mosque's only friends as it lay hidden under bamboo shrubs covered by branches of a tree. The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is now taking steps to conserve what is turning out to be one of a kind mosque. "Once we began cleaning the surface, we realized the mosque's exterior was painted in red, resembling the fresco style. It is very rare for a late-Mughal period monument," said Ajay Kumar, senior project manager of the Delhi Chapter of INTACH. INTACH is sprucing up several monuments that have been recently notified by the Delhi State Archaeology Department. "The exterior has been done up in geru (natural reddish-brown dye) and also has ornamental plasterwork," Kumar said adding that no other monument in Delhi has an exterior resembling this mosque's exterior. "The texture of the surface is different from the others inside the Garden too. The plaster on the walls also has a red-dish tinge which indicates that the paint was done on wet plaster," he said. The monument has been listed as part of the Lodhi era in the INTACH's The Built Heritage: A Listing published in 2000. But, looking at the architecture, INTACH conservationists feel it is a late Mughal- era structure. A senior Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) official, who wished anonymity as he is not authorized to speak to the media, said, "There are many monuments inside the garden and not all of them belong to the same period. The work done on the exterior is not very common. We are trying to ascertain the exact period to which the mosque belongs."The restoration work for the monument is expected to be completed by June.

SOURCE

[28th April 2010, Hindustan Times](#)

LODHI GARDEN'S JEWELS FACE RED TAPE JEOPARDY

Most Delhiites swear by their city's unmatched historic heritage. But its upkeep is something that draws the concern of very few. In one of Delhi's favourite spot for morning walkers, Lodhi Garden, which also happens to be a repository of some fantastic Mughal architecture, several monuments are waiting for the restoration work to begin.

Five monuments, most of which date to the 1400s and were built during the Lodhi period, were to be restored by the Delhi chapter of Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) by March 2010. March has gone, but the work that stopped in January shows no signs of starting soon. The Steel Authority of India (SAIL) under the National Culture Fund (NCF) is funding the project. NCF is a trust that coordinates between private companies and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to fund heritage conservation projects. "The first phase of the project was completed in December 2009. Since then no further work has been conducted due to non-availability of funds," said A.G.K Menon, convener of INTACH's Delhi chapter. Only the Tomb of Mohammed Shah (the oldest of the five monuments, it was built in 1443) has been restored so far. Work on Bara Gumbad, Tomb of Sikander Lodi, Sheesh Gumbad and Athpula has been stalled. SAIL transferred the fund to NCF's account in March. The NCF has said the fund cannot be released till the utilization certificate (a document giving details of the expenditure incurred) for the first phase is submitted by INTACH. "We have to follow a certain procedure and cannot release money till the utilization certificate is submitted," said S.S.Malkani, NCF manager, finance and accounts. INTACH officials claim they were not asked to submit any certificate till last week. "We are in regular touch with the NCF for the last three months, requesting them to release the money. They asked us to produce a utilization certificate just last week," said an INTACH official. "We have already sent NCF the documents through email and will submit the hard copy shortly," he added. A new deadline for completion has not been set as of now. Menon confirmed, "We will start work as soon as we get the money. We now have our hands full but will try to complete the work before the Games." Earlier, the project was held up as public signage regarding the implementation of the project were not installed at the designated site as per the terms of the MoU between ASI, SAIL and NCF. According to INTACH, the design of the signboard was sent to ASI for approval in March last year but got okayed in December. The sign was put up in January this year.

SOURCE

29th April 2010, Hindustan Times

TOTAL ECLIPSE IN CHANDNI CHOWK

"We used to take pride that we were living in an area with such a rich past," says Sanjay Sharma, resident of Masjid Khajoor in Kinari Bazaar, Chandni Chowk, with a sad smile. But rich as the past of his neighbourhood -- established in 1650 -- may have been, its bankrupt present has cost Sharma in many ways. "I could not send my children to a good school in central Delhi because of my address," he says. "You see, most school buses don't even want to come here." Buses from most schools -- weary of battling the virtually navigation-resistant traffic congestion here -- drop children at the Red Fort. "How could I let my children walk the filthy, crowded lanes back home?" Even so, Sharma stayed on at his Delhi 6 address. But many others have not, abandoning their ancestral homes and havelis for more comfortable and civic-friendly, if anonymous, confines. As the number of commercial establishments in the Walled City has grown by 1,000 per cent in the last 50 years, its population has dwindled, from 4.2 lakh in 1961 to 2.35 lakh in 2001. "The Walled City is not a place for families now," says Anwar Ahmed, who shifted out of his ancestral house in Ballimaran to south Delhi in 2005. Civic agencies have been promising embattled residents for years that their hellish living conditions will improve. But as they say, talk's cheap. "They are talking about sprucing up this area for tourists ahead of the Commonwealth Games," says Vihans Gupta of Nai Sarak. "They should first make it liveable for the residents." The twist in the knife: The government has labelled Chandni Chowk -- where poet Mirza Ghalib once lived -- an 'urban slum' in the Slum Areas [Improvement and Clearance] Act, 1956. "The factors that qualify it as a slum officially are: degraded quality of life; lack of infrastructure, including sewerage, water and electricity problems; collapsing buildings and overall filth. Even the 2001 Master Plan does not recognize it as 'heritage area', but as a 'special area', says INTACH Delhi Chapter chief A.G.K. Menon. But not many ask: was it not official apathy that turned moonlight square into a slum in the first place? TOMORROW TOURIST-UNFRIENDLY Home to monuments, unique eateries and markets, Old Delhi has not been preserved as a tourist destination

SOURCE

29th April 2010, Hindustan Times

LOST IN TRANSLATION

(The street) well worth a wander simply to take in the sights and smells because things have changed little here for centuries...“-- The Lonely Planet Guide on Khari Baoli, Asia's Biggest Spice Market located on the western fringe of the walled city. What the walled city once had is an intangible something that steeps the great cities of the world - London, Rome, Cairo: atmosphere. But three centuries after it was founded, its quirks and quaintness -- the elements that give it soul and make it a potential tourists' haven -- are being beaten out of Shahjahan's Dilli. “Shahjahanabad has been high jacked by squatters, drug addicts and touts,” says 85-year-old Digraj Tiberiwal, a resident of Nai Sarak. The area's intricately engineered network of by lanes -- that reared up as a navigational challenge for the British cavalry during the mutiny of 1857 -- is today devoured by potholes, filth and an unregulated maze of human traffic. “It's a far cry from where I grew up. Khari Baoli used to attract visitors from the world over. But it has lost its charm because lack of civic amenities.” Market associations active in the walled city estimate the total tourist traffic in the area at around 50,000 visitors per day. “While a major chunk of them are domestic tourists, at least 5,000 to 7,000 international tourists start making their way into the market as soon as shops start opening, which is as early as seven am daily,” says Sanjay Bhargava, general secretary, Chandni Chowk Sarv Vyapar Mandal. Agrees Rajiv Batra, president, Khari Baoli Sarv Vyapar Mandal. “Every day, I meet dozens of tourists who visit the area after having watched documentaries praising its historical legacy. They know that any trip -- not only to Delhi, but to the country itself -- isn't complete if one hasn't visited the by lanes of Shahjahanabad.” But the decades over which the area has been shunned by successive governments seem to have had their toll on tourism, too. According to Manoj Sharma (35), a private taxi operator-cum-travel agent from Karol Bagh, “Five years ago, nine out of ten foreign tourists landing in the capital wanted to visit Chandni Chowk. But now, many drop the idea as soon as they see how congested and dirty the area is: something visible even as one drives past the Red Fort.” And those who do decide to explore it, have nothing but nightmares to relate. “In March, some of my friends from Berlin were on a tour of India so I took them to Khari Baoli,” says 28-year-old Lisa (who goes by her first name only). Hailing from Germany, Lisa has been in Delhi since November 2009 and counts Chandni Chowk among her favourite destinations - despite the rude shock she received as she guided her friends through the spice market. “As we made our way through the jam-packed street, someone groped me, but I hit back. I couldn't help but feel humiliated.” Authorities claim amenities that have not been in place for six decades will be there in six months. “Well in time before the Commonwealth Games, we will be coming up with facilities such as exclusive hop-on-and-off buses, a bed and breakfast scheme for the various havelis in the area in addition to providing maps and literature about the area,” says Rina Ray, tourism secretary, Delhi. Sagar Preet Hooda DCP (north) said, “The general security in the area has already been beefed up. We have been cracking down on street crime and will be more vigilant during the event.” Despite similar failed reassurances assurance over the decades, hope still flickers in a pair of old eyes. “It was and always will be the heart of Delhi. The administration might have left it behind, but how can we?” says Tiberiwal, letting a sher from Mohammad Ibrahim Zauq to express the rest: “In dinon garche dakan mein hai bari qadr-i-sukhan...kaun jae Zauq par Dilli ki galiyan chhor kar.” (The streets may be bereft of artists and poets today...But still - who can leave, Oh Zauq, the lanes of Dilli behind?).

SOURCE

30th April 2010, Hindustan Times

INTACH TO TINKER WITH ITO TRAFFIC

It's a decision that has left transport planners and experts fuming. The heritage conservation and restoration body, Indian National Trust for Art, Culture and Heritage (INTACH), will take a shot at sorting out the ITO traffic mess that has eluded a solution for many years because of pussyfooting by government agencies. Apparently, MCD got tired of the heritage lobby's objections to whatever the transport planners proposed for this stretch and hit upon this brilliant idea of entrusting INTACH with the job. Why INTACH — which has done some invaluable work in conservation and restoration across the country — would want to diversify without the necessary expertise is anybody's guess. The ostensible logic is that this area is an important link to Shahjahanabad and needs to be dealt with differently. Anyone who has any idea about the traffic and parking mess at ITO that has been subjected to ideas which range from the impractical to farcical — like Dr AK Walia's 72-hour flyover, a parking to be assembled in a jiffy near Kotla and another under Shaheed Park — would know that the project has caused frustration among many agencies, including IIT. But, what's more important, is that there can't be anymore delay in implementing a workable integrated solution. INTACH's audacious foray into uncharted territory will only come in the way of an immediate solution. INTACH has been tasked with working out the traffic circulation plan for the new MCD Civic Centre and will also be looking at Bahadurshah Zafar Marg. MCD had earlier hired traffic consultants for the job, who had proposed construction of flyovers, underpasses and foot over bridges to decongest the area. Over Rs 1 crore was paid for preparing the initial drawings which have now been thrown into the dustbin. MCD's director, press and information, Deep Mathur, told TOI: "These areas connect Shahjahanabad and New Delhi. The traffic plans proposed for the civic centre earlier were turned down by heritage bodies. We, therefore, decided to assign the work to INTACH as there was a need to factor in Shahjahanabad's unique character while coming up with a traffic pattern for these areas." Transportation experts across the city are appalled by the decision. Said Prof Vinay Maitri, head of transportation division, School of Planning and Architecture (SPA): "Transportation planning is a highly specialized field which requires a systematic, scientific and comprehensive study of the patterns of vehicular movement in an area. This is a highly specialized function and there are several agencies in the city which can deal with this. INTACH is a very good organization but their competence is not transportation and there will, therefore, be no accountability. MCD is just playing with public money." The country has several agencies which specialize in transportation planning, such as Central Road Research Institute (CRRI), SPA, IIT and RITES but they have been ignored. Traffic planning needs engineering expertise which experts feel MCD lacks. "Traffic management needs engineering expertise and definitely not something that a heritage body should do. A municipal body like MCD should have a traffic engineering cell to install traffic control devices. The role of the traffic police is only enforcement. Handing it over to yet another agency will cause chaos," said Rohit Baluja, President, Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE). INTACH defends its stand on the ground that while transport planners have created flyover after flyover, they will concentrate on improving quality of life. "Since both Minto Road — stretch leading to civic centre — and Bahadurshah Zafar Marg are near Shahjahanabad, the transport planning has to be heritage-sensitive. The focus should be not only on transportation but also on revitalizing the area. We have traffic planners like IIT-Delhi in our team who will give their suggestions but they do not call the shots," said INTACH convenor AGK Menon. The heritage body has suggested construction of a BRT corridor on the road leading to the civic centre and introducing more traffic lights to slow down traffic. It doesn't need much imagination to see that chaos could follow. At Bahadurshah Zafar Marg, an underground parking lot has been proposed under the busy service road where all the offices along the stretch park their cars at present. Said a member of INTACH: "We are planning to create a two-level parking under the service road leading from Shaheed Bhagat Singh Park to the ITO intersection. It will have space to park 800 cars. After restoring the road, the entire service lane will be a pedestrian plaza which will be used as an emergency road only. We will also create a direct open access from Khooni Darwaza to Feroze Shah Kotla besides carrying out landscaping work." Experts who didn't wish to be quoted said this wasn't a game of Lego but a very real and complicated situation. It would be a travesty of governance to let anyone's imagination run wild fuelled by public money anymore.

SOURCE

29th April 2010, Times of India

ANOTHER GAMES MAKEOVER: GOVT WANTS ENTIRE YAMUNA STRETCH A BIODIVERSITY ZONE

TO GIVE Yamuna the status of an ecological river -and not one that only treats sewage water -the Delhi government decided on Tuesday to nurture the entire 48 kilometres of the river's stretch in Delhi as a biodiversity zone. Lieutenant Governor Tejendra Khanna set the project in motion at a meeting on Tuesday. Work is expected to start in four months on the river's banks, spanning over 10,000 hectares. Newline had earlier reported that Khanna's office and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) were working on a proposal to create a biodiversity area along the river's urban stretch -22 kilometres from Wazirabad to Okhla. Khanna met the chief secretary, the DDA vice-chairman, officials of the Environment department and scientists from the Centre for Management of Degraded Ecosystems (CEMDE) on Tuesday to discuss this action plan. The scope of the original idea was subsequently expanded to include the entire 48 kilometres of the river in the state. Officer on Special Duty to Khanna, Ranjan Mukherjee, said: "The L-G has asked the DDA to examine if the Palla Okhla stretch, and not just the shorter Wazirabad-Okhla stretch, can be converted into a biodiversity zone. He has emphasized that people should be aware of the conservation status of the river so that there is no scope for encroachment." Another new proposal that got an in-principle nod was the creation of small riverine ecosystems -or a chain of smaller water bodies -parallel and perpendicular to the river. This network of water bodies will prevent treated or untreated sewage water from flowing directly into the Yamuna. Rocky areas will be developed and the treated water will pass through created aquatic and fish cultures (in the riverine systems and ponds) before entering the river, the plan says. Existing craters and depressions on the banks will be cultivated to hold water. This will also filter out heavy metals and other pollutants. An environment expert, who was at the meeting, said: "These will also serve as sinks during monsoons. Some of the areas will need to be desilted." Chief Secretary Rakesh Mehta said work would start immediately as "there was no scope for wasting time".

SOURCE

28th April 2010, Indian Express

MONUMENTS AS IMPORTANT AS ENVIRONMENT: CENTRE TO STATES

ARMED with a landmark legislation that was cleared by Parliament last month, the Centre is now urging all state governments to put protection and conservation of historical and cultural monuments top on their priority list and accord it the same importance as, say, environmental concerns. The Parliament last month amended a 1958 law — Ancient Monuments and Archeological Sites and Remains Act — to provide for a complete ban on new construction within 100 metres of any protected monument. A further 100-m zone would be a 'regulated area' where any new construction would have to be cleared by competent authorities. The new law also provides for the establishment of a National Monuments Authority that will be empowered to grade and classify monuments and suggest measures to protect and conserve them. The Centre last week called a meeting of all state governments to discuss the issues relating to a strict implementation of the new law. "This law would ensure that conservation of heritage is taken as seriously as concerns about environment," Culture Secretary Jawhar Sircar said. The law, if applied retrospectively, could make many of the Commonwealth Games projects in Delhi completely illegal. But an exception for them had already been made through an ordinance in January this year. Violation would invite tough penalties of imprisonment up to two years, or fines up to Rs 1 lakh or both. More severe penalties are in store for officials who fail to implement the law.

SOURCE

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

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