



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

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Editor's Note

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ASI gets foot in door as court lifts ban, looks at bigger plot

Three plots allotted, but ASI still has to live in monuments

DELHI'S AGEING TREES UNDER STRESS

Age seems to be catching up with the towering and majestic trees lined up along the green stretches of central Delhi. And urban stress has cast a shadow over the longevity of the plants that date back to the British period, according to a study by the Dehradun-based Forest Research Institute (FRI). Listing physiological and physical stress factors affecting the green sprawl in the area, the study reveals that trees are in direct conflict with pedestrians and vehicles for 'breathing' space. Underground utilities such as pipes and cables also intrude into the space of trees, impacting their overall health. The study cites the example of India Gate lawns where a heavy flow of tourists, frequent public functions and use of tents on a regular basis has resulted in excessive soil compaction and thus stress. Of the 2558 trees surveyed around the Central Vista, 793 were found to be healthy while 770 were diseased. At least 566 suffered from physical injury, 322 were deformed and 107 were either dead or decayed, the survey states. Though the study asserts that the cause of stress observed in the trees could be due to age as most trees were planted between 1912 and 1930, it goes on to add that various man-made and natural factors also trigger stress. Injuries caused to the base of the tree due to construction of roads, concretization of areas around trees and waterlogging lead to trauma and even kill the roots. Nailing, debarking, writing names on trees, fixing electric wires and cables and excessive exposure to incandescent lights at night are also adding to the stress of these old trees, the study points. Pollution too seems to be playing big role in the aging of these trees. Plants were found to be exhibiting symptoms resulting from pollution on foliage such as hardening of main veins of the leaves. Irrigation water supplied from polluted Yamuna is also a cause for concern. "It's not fit for irrigation. The water quality needs to be tested before it's used for irrigation," the study states. Under the entire study, 6288 trees were surveyed over more than 40 stretches, including Akbar Road, Ashok Road, Shahjahan Road, Janpath, Shanti Path, Bara Khamba Road, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, Tilak Marg, Baba Kharak Singh Marg, Talkatora Road, Sansad Marg, Raisina Road and Pandara Road among others. Of 6288 trees surveyed, 5507 were found to be healthy, 436 fell in the dead or decayed category, 221 were diseased, 86 deformed, 145 suffered from physical injury and 196 have been recommended for removal. The study identified amalbas, bakain, banyan, gulmohar, imli, jacaranda, jamun, mulberry, neem, and peepul as the main species planted on these roads. The study brackets most of these trees under the category of old — above 50 years of age. "Most of them are standing since the time of Imperial Delhi's establishment. However, age seems to be catching up with these trees. The New Delhi Municipal Council, which constituted the study, plans to maintain or replace the deformed and decaying trees by planting new seedlings of

various species but due to heavy biotic and a biotic factors most of the tree are showing symptoms of physical and physiological stress, disease and decay," the study states. The study lists a series of recommendations to improve the health of the plants. Inter planting of saplings in the gaps between the old trees — to be replaced — has been suggested to preserve the aesthetic appeal of the stretch and minimize the impact of large-scale tree removal. The other suggestion stresses phased removal. The study also recommends a criteria for categorizing trees that need to be removed taking into account the urgency levels. **Taking Stock Of City's Green Lungs** As part of the study, around 6,288 trees were surveyed on more than 40 stretches in Lutyens' Delhi and other parts of central Delhi The study found that amaltas, bakain, banyan, gulmohar, imli, jacaranda, jamun, mulberry, neem and peepul dominate city roads Most trees showed symptoms of physical and physiological stress, disease and decay Of 6,288 trees, 5,507 were healthy, 436 fell in the dead or decayed category, 221 were diseased, 86 deformed, 145 had physical injury and 196 needed to be removed

SOURCE

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ASI FINDS A HOME IN MUGHAL MONUMENTS

APART FROM their love for architecture, the Emperor Shahjahan and the Director General (DG) of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have another thing in common: their residence at the Red Fort. Inside the colonial buildings at the 17th Century World Heritage Site, the ASI DG Gautam Sengupta and senior officials have found two-bedroom sets. The Mughal building of Naubat Khana has been turned into an office. Besides the Red Fort, the ASI has guesthouses at Purana Quila, Safdarjung's Tomb and even in Fatehpur Sikri -- to name a few. The accommodations are meant for the officials of the ASI, Ministry of Culture and special guests. Mostly located in heritage buildings -- these quarters have undergone a makeover, with fancy tile work, granite flooring, wooden interiors and air-conditioners. The development comes at a time when a strict vigil is being planned on renovation and construction at historic sites. An amendment in the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act 2010 calls for the constitution of a watchdog body -- the National Monuments Authority --for this purpose. The amendment states: "No permission including carry ing out any public work or project essential to the public or other constructions, shall be granted in any prohibited area on or after the date on which the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Bill 2010 receives the assent of the President." When the Army was made to march out of the Red Fort in December 2003, political circles discussed the relocation of ASI officials as well, but nothing came of it. The guesthouses at the Red Fort and Fatehpur Sikri are colonial buildings which were eventually converted. Those in Purana Quila and Safdarjung's Tomb came up after Independence just to accommodate officials. Though senior ASI officials are entitled to government housing, the Delhi Circle superintending archaeologist and conservation assistant have been living at the Red Fort for over a year. The DG, who joined office in the last week of December, has lived there since then. Around four to five families of ASI officials live in the Red Fort, said sources in the ASI. As for the offices in the heritage monuments (see box), conservationists say officials of heritage bodies across the world do have such offices, but these are temporary arrangements. And even then, certain specifications are strictly followed. AGK Menon, the Town Planner and Convenor, Delhi Chapter, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), said: "Syria's Aleppo Fort, where excavation is underway by a German team, has the team leader living in it. But this is a temporary arrangement." Gurmeet Rai, conservationist and Director, Cultural Resource Conservation Initiative, said: "The spirit of the monument and its historic value should never be compromised when changes are made to it. Monuments should be put to adaptive reuse, officials should not abuse it."Even the Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan for the Red Fort passed by the UNESCO says while the colonial structures can be used by officials, the Mughal buildings should be left untouched.

SOURCE

4th May 2010, Indian Express

ASI GETS FOOT IN DOOR AS COURT LIFTS BAN, LOOKS AT BIGGER PLOT

THE Delhi High Court has given its approval for the maintenance activities on the 11-acre plot of land opposite the Humayun's Tomb. The order by the Division Bench of acting Chief Justice Madan B Lokur and Justice Mukta Gupta will facilitate the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) plans to integrate the plot with the world heritage site, Humayun's Tomb. In March, two-and-a-half months after the ASI had taken over the land — referred to as Bharatiyam Complex — to develop it prior to the Commonwealth Games, the High Court had ordered a stay on any further activity. The stay order came after the Delhi State Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG), who earlier owned the land, moved the court against the Land and Development Office and others for demolishing its structures in the premises. The Bench has now given the ASI liberty for "maintaining" the premises in accordance with the court's earlier directives and law. A senior ASI official said: "Yes, the court's directive to lift the complete stay on any further activity has come as a major relief. We are however awaiting the final outcome of the case so that we are able to restore the Mughal complex and integrate it with the Humayun's Tomb world heritage site by the Commonwealth Games." Nearly four years ago, a Supreme Court appointed monitoring committee had sealed the Bharatiyam Complex, after the BSG was found guilty of misusing the property by running commercial activities within the plot. On January 7, the Ministry of Urban Development had handed over the plot to the ASI, ending a 12-year battle between the heritage body and the BSG. The transfer was meant to facilitate the conservation of the two Centrally-protected monuments on the premises and their integration with the Humayun's Tomb. The plot was de-sealed for the ASI to take over but before work could begin, the BSG reclaimed its office and filed a petition with the High Court. The Bharatiyam Complex houses the Kunzru Stadium, Camp Office, VIP Room, Sports Complex, Bajpai Memorial Hall and the two Centrally-protected 17th Century monuments -- Bada Batashewala Mahal and Chhota Batashewala Mahal. THE HISTORY In 1989, when national children's meet -Bharatiyam -- was held in the complex, a number of modules (small hutments) were constructed temporarily for participants to stay on the premises. After the event, however, the BSG rented out the modules to several organizations and institutes, including the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage. In 2001, the Parkland Club entered into collaboration with the BSG to build a club on over 1.5 acres of land and operate it on a commercial basis. Over the last few years, the modules have been home to at least seven families of the BSG employees. A Supreme Court-appointed monitoring committee had, however, sealed it for misuse of property a few years ago.

SOURCE

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THREE PLOTS ALLOTTED, BUT ASI STILL HAS TO LIVE IN MONUMENTS

IF THE Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is operating out of protected monuments like the Red Fort or the Old Fort in Delhi, it is not out of choice but due to compulsion, senior officials would have you believe. At least some offices were intended to be "temporary arrangements" with the ASI having acquired two plots of land in the Capital and one in Greater Noida over a decade ago. A 25-acre plot near Pari Chowk in Greater Noida was acquired by the ASI in 1996-97 to develop an international campus for the Institute of Archaeology and the Central Antiquity Collection at a cost of Rs 39.5 crore. However, with work yet to start on the project, the Greater Noida authorities wrote to the ASI for repossession of land. At this, the then ASI Director General K N Shrivastav raised a boundary wall to show that work has started. An expression of interest was issued to select an architect and consultant around a year ago, but no name has been finalized yet. In 2002-03, the ASI was allotted the 'D Block' of a proposed Central government office complex in

Building Survey Department, Science Branch and some other offices would be shifted there. The project was estimated at Rs 29 crore, but not a brick has been put in place since. The Delhi Circle office, earlier accommodated at the Red Fort, was shifted out last year to Safdarjung's Tomb. The Horticultural Branch, Science Branch and other such offices have all been accommodated at the Old Fort. ASI officials said the offices run from an old school building constructed soon after Independence for refugees from Pakistan who were living inside the Old Fort. On the other hand, top officials at the ASI headquarters are waiting for a more spacious office at 24 Tilak Marg -the erstwhile Belgian Embassy was taken over by the ASI in 1985 and converted into a campus for the Institute of Archaeology. Since the institute shifted to Red Fort, the National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities has been operating from the address. For over five years, the ASI has been thinking of shifting its headquarters from 1 Janpath. Sources said the file is with the Delhi Urban Art Commission for approval over the last six months. The ASI has pushed its own offices inside monuments at a time when its new conservation rules stipulate that "no permission, including carrying out any public work or project essential to the public or other constructions, shall be granted in any prohibited area..." LIVING IN HISTORY THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, which was accommodated for a few years at 24 Tilak Marg and then at the ASI's 1 Janpath headquarters, has shifted to a Raj era building within the Red Fort. THE CENTRAL ANTIQUITY COLLECTION operates out of the Old Fort. ASI'S DELHI CIRCLE OFFICE, earlier accommodated within the Red Fort, was shifted out early last year to Safdarjung's Tomb. THE HORTICULTURAL BRANCH, Science Branch and other such offices have all been accommodated at the Old Fort.

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

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