



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

Weekly News Clippings – 160

15th June- 21st June

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MCD ROAD-WIDENING PLAN RUNS INTO MUGHAL HURDLE

THE Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) plan to clear the traffic bottleneck around Hanuman Mandir near Jamuna Bazaar and thus decongest traffic flow towards Old Delhi Railway Station seems to have hit a 400-year-old road block. MCD officials said they had made the road under the Calcutta Bridge a four-lane one to smoothen traffic flow under the Hanuman Mandir flyover, which leads towards Old Delhi Station on one side and towards the Ring Road and Red Fort on the other. However, the implementation of the plan has hit a hurdle because a portion of the 17th century heritage City Wall of Shahjahanabad, a protected structure, is coming in way of the widening work. Hence, while the road under the Calcutta Bridge has already been made a four-lane one, only two lanes of the same are now in use for a portion of the City Wall, that goes along the Ring Road, is coming in the way of the other two lanes. MCD officials say the decongestion work is essential because the area faces heavy traffic inflow from Ring Road and North Delhi towards Daryaganj, Old Delhi Railway Station and the Walled City. "Because of the construction work on the Ring Road bypass, the road under the bridge has been made a one-way. No traffic is allowed in from the Ring Road side because of the ongoing work, hence making traffic flow here easier. However, once that work is complete the traffic chaos will be back. This makes the four-lane plan essential," said an official. It is understood that the Corporation had written to the Archaeological Survey of India seeking permission to raze the above portion of the City Wall. The ASI, however, denied them the same. "Sometime ago, we had received a letter from the MCD seeking permission to bring down that part of the wall. However, since it has a historical significance and is a protected structure, it cannot be pulled down. We have asked the MCD to approach the Director General, ASI," said an ASI official.

SOURCE

15th June 2010, Indian Express

NOW, RESIDENTS' BODY WRITES TO RAILWAYS, ASI AGAINST ILLEGAL CONSTRUCTION

AT A TIME when the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act 2010 has stricter rules for renovation and construction within the prohibited and regulated areas of Centrally protected monuments, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has been at loggerheads with the Railways over illegal construction near Humayun's Tomb, a World Heritage Site. After the ASI filed an FIR to protest against the ongoing work, the residents' welfare association (RWA)

of Nizamuddin East is now up in arms against the constant flouting of rules. The RWA, in letters to the Union Minister of Railways Mamata Banerjee; Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Jawhar Sircar and Director General of ASI, Gautam Sengupta, has enquired why residents of areas adjoining the monument are not being allowed to renovate or construct due to the existing law when the Railways is being allowed to construct without due permissions. Asha Kohli, president of Nizamuddin East RWA told Newline, "The ASI has not given permission to the residents either for fresh construction or for renovation of structures in the vicinity of the monument. The Railways, however, is constructing a multi-storied building within the prohibited area of the World Heritage Site. A government agency is flouting a rule made by the government and the ASI has not been able to stall it." Railway officials maintained that the multistoried building is urgently required and will be a 'running room', to be used as a restroom for train drivers. The foundation for the multi-storied building was laid in December last year, after which the ASI had filed an FIR. Work had been stalled briefly, but was resumed later. Two storeys of the building have already come up and construction is still in progress. Senior Railway officials alleged the building is barely within the prohibited zone and stopping construction is not possible. ASI officials maintain that the building falls at a distance of 100.6 m from the Humayun's Tomb, which is within the prohibited zone of the protected monument.

SOURCE

15th June 2010, Indian Express

BREAK WALL, EASE TRAFFIC: MCD

The urbanisation of Delhi is taking a toll on Delhi's heritage structures. In a bid to decongest Old Delhi, Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has widened Calcutta Bridge, turning the two lanes that used to pass under it into four to allow easy two-way movement of traffic. However, the Old City wall — which is partly protected — cutting through the area is preventing MCD from making use of all four lanes. To go ahead with its plan, the civic agency has written to Archeological Survey of India (ASI) asking for permission to demolish part of the wall. Said an MCD official: "In order to ease traffic movement in the area around Old Delhi Railway Station, we have widened Calcutta Bridge. Four lanes now pass under the bridge while there were only two lanes earlier, which inevitably led to traffic jams in the area. However, to make use of all four lanes, we will have to demolish a portion of the wall and have written to ASI, seeking permission for the same." MCD is also removing encroachments from the area. ASI officials confirmed they had received such a request from MCD. Said an ASI official, "We received a letter from MCD seeking permission to demolish a part of the wall near Calcutta Bridge. The wall is of historical significance and we have asked the civic agency to take permission from the director general of ASI. The part of the wall which MCD wants to break down is most likely protected, since it is near Nigam Bodh Gate and runs along Ring Road — which is the protected portion of the wall. Even if it is not, the wall is historically important and cannot just be torn down." According to conservationists, since part of the wall is under central protection, MCD cannot break down even the unprotected part without permission from ASI since it falls within 100 metres of a protected monument. MCD officials claim the decongestion is essential since the area faces heavy traffic inflow from the Ring Road side and from north Delhi, which is currently being directed towards Daryaganj, Old Delhi Railway Station and the Walled City. Said an MCD official: "With the ongoing construction on the Ring Road bypass, only one-way traffic is being allowed under the bridge for the time being. But once that work is complete, there will again be traffic chaos in the area. Hence, the four-lane plan is essential for decongestion of the area." The wall encloses the city of Shahjahanabad and was built by the Mughals. Part of the wall was rebuilt by the British. The wall is in serious disrepair and is also broken in a number of places.

SOURCE

15th June 2010, Times of India

ABODE OF RARE BIRDS NOW FISH GRAVEYARD

Walk down a Sultanpur National Park trail and the dead fish you see are a terrifying sight. Tread farther and you can't help but cover your nose. It looks like a massacre, caused by a shortage of water in the national park 15 km from Gurgaon. The lake in Sultanpur National Park has completely dried up, leaving behind dead fish and a massive stink. Once spread over an area of 195 acres, the five-and-a-half-foot deep lake no longer exists because there has been no supply of water by the Haryana irrigation department since January this year and because there was no substantial rainfall during the winter season. Wildlife department officials said the state irrigation department supplies water to the lake from September to January. Locals however alleged that the lake has been dried out "on purpose", to let the magur (Black African fish) die because they were eating the smaller fish and leaving nothing for the birds to feed on. But Haryana's chief wildlife warden and principal and chief conservator of forests Parvez Ahmed said, "Besides canal water, the lake is largely fed by rainwater. The situation has worsened in recent years because of construction in the rainwater catchment around the park." It seems the department's alleged purpose has been served. The magur died but so did the carp and other smaller fish. Tiny frogs and snails took refuge in the damp mud. When a Times City team visited the now-dry lake on Tuesday, a few live fish fought for space in the few puddles of water left. Some jumped out of their puddles, dying on the banks after a few desperate gasps. "We do not have any plan to rehabilitate the fish. It is not only black fish but all other types of fish that are dying because of the shortage of water. Since it's a national park for birds, our aim is to ensure that it attracts a maximum number of migratory birds rather than protecting fish in the lake," Ahmed said. But if there are no fish, what will the birds come for? "It's supposed to be a national park. How can the lake just vanish? There may be many theories but no policy pertaining to a national park allows authorities to let fish die," said Anand Arya, an avid bird-watcher and an environmental activist, who visited Sultanpur National Park every month till April. "There was enough water and many birds could be spotted. I have spotted many migratory birds in the park during June-July in the last five years. But there are hardly any now," Arya said. The drying up of the lake has also resulted in the death of a blue bull. Shockingly, the cows here seem to have taken to the taste of fish. Even as the dead fish glistened, cows chewed on them before moving on to grass. A park official, who did not wish to be named, said, "There are so many dead fish that even the cows tried eating them. The blue bull died because it got stuck in quick sand. As a policy, no animal can be taken out of the park. So we had to leave it there." He cautioned us before leaving, "Don't stay here for long. You could get sick."

SOURCE

16th June 2010, Times of India

METRO TO MEHRAULI

This month Delhi Metro is reaching Mehrauli. Do not imagine that this south Delhi locality is all about Qutub Minar (Why bother when the tower is visible from far?) To make a good use of the Mehrauli Metro stop, HT City suggests you to discover Mehrauli's other temptations, such as; the fantastic Mehrauli Archaeological Park. Delhi would still do fine if it had no monuments, except those in this complex. Spread over 100 acres, this hilly green space has 70 monuments covering almost everything — tombs, mosques, caravanserais, gardens, gateways, 'follies' — and from almost every period. There are the Lal Kot walls of the pre-Islamic times, Qutub Minar (right next door) of the Slave Dynasty, tombs of the Lodhi period, pavilions of the Mughal period and 'follies' of the British. The Jamali Kamali mosque and tomb — the park's principal attraction — mixes up two dynasties. A poet, both in Sikander Lodhi's and Humayun's courts, Sheikh Fazlullah, aka Jamali Kamali, built his own tomb in 1528. A rare Delhi monument having retained almost perfectly-preserved interior decorations, it is kept locked.

If you insist, the chowkidar may open it for you. The lovely Lodhi-era Rajon ki Baoli, Delhi's oldest step-well, has cool arched corridors where you may lounge for hours with a book. Otherwise climb down the steep stairs to reach the lowest level where once heat-stricken Delhiites would go for refuge. The roof of the adjacent tomb offers cinemascope views of the Mehrauli countryside with ruins emerging from under a sea of thick green vegetation. Even if you don't want to run and touch all the ruins, you must climb the slope facing Jamali Kamali, to reach a structure called Metcalfe's Folly. It is a kind of lighthouse offering a spectacular view of the park, which in its entirety, like an instant 2-minute noodle, equivalent of Delhi sightseeing.

SOURCE

17th June 2010, Hindustan Times

ASI FRAMES ROUTE PLAN FOR RED FORT

Next time you visit Red Fort, you will have to follow a preplanned route through the complex. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has framed a visitor circulation pattern which will shortly be implemented. Senior officials said the move would help avoid congestion. "Most visitors, when they enter Red Fort, roam around aimlessly because there is no one to tell them where they should go first. Now, under the new plan, visitors will be guided along a pre-planned route from which they will get to see all the Mughal and British - period structures located here," said a senior official. New signages and information boards will also be put up. An estimate of the plan has been prepared by the ASI and implementation is to begin shortly. According to sources, entry and exit for visitors will be through Lahore Gate but arrow boards will be put up at important points so visitors will know where they have to go. Visitors will first enter from Lahore Gate, go to Naubad Khana, then Diwan-e-am, then move to the left of Diwan-e-am, go to the hamam, then diwane-khas, Rang Mahal, then the Mumtaz Mahal museum and then exit from where they came in. "Once the estimates are approved, the circulation plan will include putting up railings and reconstructing pathways, which are in need of urgent repair," said officials. The practice of a fixed route through heritage sites is followed at many sites. At Delhi's Red Fort, the visitor circulation plan is part of the monument's comprehensive conservation management plan (CCMP). "Red Fort receives the most number of visitors in Delhi after Qutub Minar. In recent years, the footfalls here have shot up drastically. More so, after Red Fort was awarded world heritage status a few years ago. The circulation plan is essential to ease visitor movement inside the complex," said officials. ASI has also almost completed restoration of the historic Chatta Bazaar inside the Fort. The market is unique because not only is it located within the premises of a protected monument but also because it is a covered bazaar. Like several monuments in the capital, Chatta Bazaar was in poor shape because its original form had been changed by the shopkeepers who had encroached on space and put up ugly signboards. The slanted roof covering above the shops had also developed leaks in several places. Plus, several alterations made by the military also had to be removed. "The external cover over the market had become very brittle with time. The top layer of the roof cover is being removed and a fresh one is being re-laid," said a senior official. ASI officials are using traditional materials, such as lime surkhi and urad ki daal, for the revamp.

SOURCE

17th June 2010, Times of India

INTACH'S STITCH IN TIME

"To preserve your brocades and silk-saris, avoid naphthalene balls -- they give out a noxious gas. Use dried neem leaves instead," says Smita Singh, senior conservator of the India Council of Conservation Institutes (ICCI), at the the spanking new wing of the INTACH office on Lodhi Road.

For the first time in the history of museum studies and conservation, INTACH will dedicate a whole wing to the task of reviving and restoring some of the great textiles of India at their Specialised Textile Conservation Unit (STCU). "We have a hoary tradition of textiles in India from Lucknow's Chikan to Bengal's Kantha, from Punjab's Phulkari to Kashmir's Pashmina, but somehow the awareness about conservation and restoration of textiles is lesser than it is for painting. Which is why we at ICCI want to change that with outreach and actual restoration work," says Dr O P Aggarwal, ICCI director general. "To preserve your brocades and silk-saris, avoid naphthalene balls -- they give out a noxious gas. Use dried neem leaves instead," says Smita Singh, senior conservator of the India Council of Conservation Institutes (ICCI), at the the spanking new wing of the INTACH office on Lodhi Road. For the first time in the history of museum studies and conservation, INTACH will dedicate a whole wing to the task of reviving and restoring some of the great textiles of India at their Specialized Textile Conservation Unit (STCU). "We have a hoary tradition of textiles in India from Lucknow's Chikan to Bengal's Kantha, from Punjab's Phulkari to Kashmir's Pashmina, but somehow the awareness about conservation and restoration of textiles is lesser than it is for painting. Which is why we at ICCI want to change that with outreach and actual restoration work," says Dr O P Aggarwal, ICCI director general. The Nebulizer, usually used for asthma patients, is innovatively used in this instance to spray a fine mist of adhesive onto the restored painting to consolidate the colours. Singh says silks should not be displayed without a padded hanger and the display cabinets should not be padded with foam since that too releases a noxious gas. Pashmina should not be sunned for a whole day since ultraviolet rays will bleach the delicate threads of silk and wool and decolorize the garment. These are just some of the tips that one can pick up by just visiting the STCU. For a more serious talk on conservation of India's textiles, one can always attend one of the intensive workshops that will be held by Aggarwal and Singh as part of their awareness and training programmes. "Since we have a no-profit-no-loss policy at INTACH, we will be taking up private work to generate funds for the smooth running of the department but our work with museums across the country will continue," says Aggarwal.

SOURCE

19th June 2010, Indian Express

BEFORE HISTORY EVAPORATES

Amidst the tall skyscrapers and residential buildings of Hailey Road, Connaught Place, lies Agrasen ki Baoli, a 14th Century marvel. Said to have been built during the Mahabharat era, this place used to serve as a destination for people to rest and rejuvenate during summer. Located at a just a few steps from Connaught Place, which is being spruced up for the Commonwealth Games, it is, relatively speaking, in a neglected state. The baoli is flanked by chambers and passageways on both sides. The baoli or step well once acted as a reservoir for water. People used to come and swim too. They used to jump from the topmost floor straight into the heart of the baoli. The 103 steps at one time used to be submerged in water, which was a sight to behold. That was then. The water dried up some 15 to 20 years ago, and now people can walk down to the deepest point of the baoli. A popular belief sees people throwing in coins (silver and bronze), in the belief their wishes will be fulfilled, even today, says the caretaker. A 140-year-old neem tree which stands tall till date is one of the lesser known features of the place. The Baoli is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Entry is free, and students and tourists, both Indian and foreign, do frequent this unusual landmark. It is also a favourite hangout for couples seeking solitude. Gurgles of hundreds of pigeons can be heard while bats are seen in the darkest of chambers. Once this place was a hub for the anti-social elements, but stricter action, it seems, has ensured their removal, and a guard is on duty day and night. Unfortunately, the monument has been reduced to ruins. Rickety steps, dirt and debris mark the place today. The entrance, originally built to showcase the marvellous architecture of the Lodhis, is in a shambles.

The opening of the reservoir which connects the well to the baoli is clogged with debris. Restoration work However, all is not lost yet. Restoration activities have been undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) with active support from the Aggarwal Samaj. Some of the dirt and debris have been cleared and the place looks better. Vikas Kumar Singh, the caretaker, says, "Staff working in Jantar Mantar come and clean the place regularly." They have also installed lights to improve the structure's presentation. Hopefully the baoli will soon regain its lost glory.

SOURCE

19th June 2010, Hindu

'CAN'T ADD SINGLE BRICK TO CHANGE MONUMENT'

The popular canteen-cum-restaurant inside the Purana Qila premises was empty on Saturday. No sign of inhabitation, except for the brick structure, which too was being pulled down. This is what greeted Bhure Lal and K J Rao, members of the Supreme Court monitoring committee on sealing, when they reached the Purana Qila to remove any illegal structures on the premises. The owner of the canteen had decided to abandon the shop and protect his belongings before the committee arrived to check "blatant violation" of existing norms for protected heritage monuments. Rao ordered the canteen's demolition. "You cannot change the existing facade of a monument by adding even a single brick. Here they have raised a new structure inside the monument. That is a major violation," Bhure Lal told Newslines, about the canteen. "Besides, nobody is permitted to carry out any commercial activity from within the monument," he added. The committee also sealed a Himachal government operated kiosk outside the main entrance of the Fort, as it was in violation of the Masterplan 2021. Officials from the Archaeological Survey of India, Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Delhi Police accompanied the committee members. Near the lake at the Fort, employees of an eatery were in the process of hastily removing its goods, alerted by Rao's presence at the Fort. Rao ordered the employees to move all the material back inside the wood and tin eatery. "Seal this eatery right away, and lodge an FIR at the closest police station about the violations. Also, ensure that a guard is posted here till further notice to ensure that these people don't sneak in to remove their things later," Rao told the accompanying officials. Most of the illegal structures at the Humayun's Tomb were found empty too. A popular eatery was sealed here. "Many of these joints are facing sealing for the first time. They mushroomed almost 15 years ago so it is difficult to assign responsibility. Now that they are being sealed, if they open again, we will know where to place blame," an ASI official told Newslines. The committee also sealed a cigarette kiosk and a mechanic shop at the Dargah Fatambi, next to the Oberoi Flyover. "This is government land, you cannot encroach on it for commercial purposes," KJ Rao told an agitated Mohammad Khalil, proprietor of the shop. "This dargah was leased to my family by the Wakf Board half a century ago. What government land are these people talking about? The government hasn't invested a penny towards this dargah," Khalil protested.

SOURCE

20th June 2010, Indian Express

'NO TRIBALS IN DELHI, SO CAN'T IMPLEMENT ACT'

The Delhi government finds itself in a piquant situation over the implementation of the Tribals and Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. The Act came into force in January 2008, but much searching and a special committee for Delhi later, it has been decided that there are "no traditional forest-dwelling tribals" in the city's forests. Instead, the Forest department found several encroachers living in Delhi Ridge. Now, the Forest department has called for the dissolution of a committee set up to work out the rights of traditional forest dwellers. The committee has members from the Environment and Forest departments and also wildlife experts from across the city. The committee was also to identify critical wildlife habitats, along with recognising forest access for traditional and tribal inhabitants. Neither holds for Delhi, says the Forest department.

“There are simply no forest-dwelling tribals in the city. We wrote to the Law department on this. They recommended that the Act could not be applied in this case,” he says. “We are also not in a position to notify critical wildlife habitats as we don’t have such conditions in the city. We have the Asola Sanctuary and there are no plans for creating any other wildlife sanctuaries. The Law department has advised us to state that this cannot be done in Delhi. We have written to the Ministry of Environment and Forests stating our position that there are no traditional and tribal forest dwellers or any critical wildlife zones,” he says. But there are encroachments. The High Court has handed over 13 acres of land in Mukhmailpur in Outer Delhi near Narela to the Forest department. The land, which was in the care of the Delhi Jal Board, was illegally encroached. This will now be developed into a city forest. Another new city forest is being planted on a 30 acre plot at the ITO Chungi near Laxmi Nagar. While several new city forests have been created for the Commonwealth Games, most of them have still not been notified as protected, a process which the Department says it is “working on”.

SOURCE

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

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