



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

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## Editor's Note

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### TRADERS ANXIOUS ABOUT RENOVATION WORK IN CP

The NDMC and the traders in Connaught Place are awaiting anxiously these days for the two Games projects currently going on at Connaught Place, to get over at the earliest possible. While the CP restoration project is nearly 90 to 95 per cent over, the other project of installing four escalators in CP's outer circle and laying of duct for wires in the middle circle is keeping the authorities on their toes. NDMC spokesperson Anand Tiwari told this newspaper that the work on the project related to installation of the escalators and laying of duct for in the middle circle was going on at good pace and it was hoped that it would be finished by August 30. "We are hopeful that deadline will be met. Some unexpected barrels, lines and other utilities underneath do get discovered by the agencies working on the project. It then takes some time to shift them," said Mr Tiwari. He added that the CP restoration project was expected to finish by Julyend or August beginning. Though the traders had given approval to the projects, they are wary about the time chosen to finish it. "The idea is very good. But I believe that the NDMC has taken up too huge a task in short a time," New Delhi Traders' Association president Atul Bhargava said.

#### SOURCE

6<sup>th</sup> July 2010, Asian Age

### ONCE A LAKE, IT WILL NOW BE HOME TO A COLONY

What was once a sprawling water body will now be a concrete jungle. Haryana Urban Development Authority (HUDA) is developing a lake in Ghata village — on the foothills of the Aravalis in Gurgaon — as Sector 58. Construction activity has already started. Builders have started work on a portion of the lake bed that gets water every monsoon. According to locals, barring a few acres, landowners have sold the entire lake bed to private developers. While scanty rainfall in the past 5-6 years is mainly responsible for the drying up of the natural water body, locals say farmhouses built on the hills have also blocked the passage of rainwater from the catchment areas to the lake. Balwant, now in his 70s, has fond memories of the time when the water body attracted young swimmers. "In our youth we used to swim in this lake. It was beautiful round the year. The villagers never faced water scarcity. I don't like this dry lake. People who own land on its bed might support residential development — they have got good money by selling off their properties to private developers," the native of Ghata said. This seasonal lake has also been documented in the Gazette of India (1883). It stays filled with water from the monsoon season till Dussehra around October —

when the sluice gates are opened for cultivation on the bed. Locals alleged that Haryana government's temptation to add to its revenue by giving licences to private developers is ruining this natural source of water. "We don't know how Gurgaon, with all its skyscrapers, will survive if all water bodies around the city are ruined for residential and commercial development? After every monsoon the lake helps improve the groundwater level in this region," said Jaswant Singh of the state irrigation department, which looks after the bund (dam) around the water body. The shallow tubewells have started drying up. Locals complain the water table is depleting further. Vandana Menon, an urban architect, who has been visiting the lake for the past 15-16 years, says farmers used to water their wheat crop with the help of these shallow tubewells. "Even today, groundwater is available at 20ft in villages near the lake. This is unheard of in the region. Had the state government taken measures to protect and revitalize the water body, it would not have dried up," said Menon. She further points out, "On the one hand the government has made rainwater harvesting mandatory for every house, but it's knowingly killing a natural water body." The irony is for everyone to see. The government agencies now plan to build a drain to clear all the rainwater that gets collected in the area. The caretaker of the dam, built in 1890s, Jaswant Singh, says the last time the lake was completely filled with rainwater was in 2003. "The water was about 10feet deep. I remember in 1972 and 1977 some portions of the dam had even got washed away," he recalls. Renowned photographer Raghu Rai owns a house in a nearby village, Baliawas. He blames the government for overlooking the impact of such mindless development activity has on the ecology. "When I visited the lake last year there was a lot of water around the sluice gates. Besides allowing construction of houses on the hills, government agencies have filled huge tracts of land around the water body to build roads. This will not allow rainwater to reach the lake. Builders are lobbying for this highway for easy connectivity to properties that are being developed," he said.

#### **SOURCE**

**7th July 2010, Times of India**

#### **WALL OF HUMAYUN'S TOMB TAKEN OVER**

Humayun's Tomb may be one of the three world heritage sites in the capital but that has not prevented illegal structures from cropping up around the monument. Old shops, construction material and piles of garbage is all one can see from the Mathura Road side. The tomb's boundary wall is hardly visible to motorists passing by. Even as the Supreme Court monitoring committee had sealed all unauthorized shops near Arab ki serai as it fell in the prohibited zone around the centrally-protected monument, the authorities are yet to raze these illegal structures. Heritage experts say unauthorized construction has completely obstructed the view of Humayun's Tomb boundary wall from Mathura Road and old shops, broken cars, loose malba and construction material are an eyesore for passersby. The illegal structures start just a ahead of Subz Burj and extend to about 300m towards Nizamuddin railway station. Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) — the body responsible for upkeep of centrally-protected monuments — is keen to have the constructions razed so that the area can be landscaped as part of beautification plans for the world heritage site.

However, officials said they had no jurisdiction to demolish these. "The constructions were sealed by SC monitoring committee and the land belongs to LNDO. It's the civic agency's responsibility to demolish these constructions but nothing has been done for years," said ASI officials, adding that their territory was only till the boundary wall of the tomb. Experts point out that the unauthorized constructions were not only within the prohibited area of a world heritage site but also on the way to Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium — the venue for the opening and closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in October. Chief Secretary Rakesh Mehta said: "Some of these shops were given by MCD and some by LNDO. While they were sealed long back, the shop-owners have still not been relocated. Their allotment orders are pending, along with compensation." MCD officials were unavailable for comment. The unauthorized structures, adjacent to Arab ki serai, even block an approach path to the monument. "Under Section 4 A of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958,

ASI officers have right to approach monuments from all sides for maintenance and conservation, but it's not possible here," said an official. The land is also being misused by bus operators for parking, further blocking the view. Residents of Nizamuddin East say the structures should be razed at the earliest. "Landscaping the area can make Humayun's Tomb complex even more attractive. We have been pushing for this for years," said a resident. Recently, ASI started the beautification of the land opposite Humayun's Tomb main gate. It housed Bharat Scouts and Guides for years and ASI got its possession after years of struggle. Now, the focus has shifted to the surrounding spaces at Humayun's Tomb for similar landscaping.

**SOURCE**

**8th July 2010, Times of India**

#### **ROAD TO QUTUB A BUMPY RIDE**

The city government is busy making claims that Delhi will be ready to host the Commonwealth Games in October but access to the city's world heritage sites might be a challenge for the millions of visitors expected to arrive in Delhi for the sporting extravaganza. While the 17th century Red Fort still does not have a designated parking lot for visitors, the approach road to the Qutub Minar complex is in poor condition. While the Qutub Minar is Delhi's most visited monument with footfalls of up to 10,000 visitors a day, the access road to the monument is not just broken in several places but also suffers from frequent spillage of water due to the presence of a water-filling facility in the vicinity. Traffic here is another problem and is especially dangerous for pedestrians who have to run across the road, after parking their cars, to the Qutub Minar entrance. To ease traffic, a traffic circulation plan was prepared by INTACH which proposed that Gurgaon and Mehrauli-bound traffic be diverted away from the Qutub Minar, but the plan has not yet been implemented. "We have written to several agencies about the problem since traffic is especially heavy around the Qutub. We proposed that only vehicles coming to the Qutub and Mehrauli areas use the main road while other traffic be diverted from Lado Sarai, bypassing the Qutub Minar. But since, at the moment, even Gurgaon-bound traffic passes by the Qutub, vehicular movement here is bad," said officials of the Archaeological Survey of India. The other problem with the access road to the Qutub Minar is the poor condition of the road. "The stretch is in bad shape partly because of heavy vehicular movement, but mostly because of a water-filling centre by the side of the Qutub Minar. Water tanks park here for long hours to fill up their tanks which also leads to the frequent spillage of water on the road," said ASI officials. The road-owning agency PWD also blamed the water filling centre for the poor condition of the road. "The only problem area on the stretch is where the DJB tanker office is located. A lot of water is spilled onto the road here. Otherwise, the road is in good condition. We just got micro-surfacing of the road, from Aurobindo Marg to Lado Sarai, done at a cost of Rs 50-60 lakh," said a senior PWD official. Another world heritage site with problems is Red Fort where the parking lot for visitors — which will accommodate up to 300 vehicles and has been under construction for the last two years — is yet to be opened to the public. The delay with the parking lot means visitors to the Mughal citadel find access to the monument difficult due to Red Fort's location in Shahjahanabad. Said ASI officials, "We will be calling for an expression of interest and then invite tenders from contractors to run the parking lot, which we will open before the Games at any cost. The parking lot has already been hit by several delays and we want to make it operational at the earliest."

**SOURCE**

**12th July 2010, Times of India**

## HERITAGE STATUS HINDERING REPAIRS AT ICONIC BENGALI CLUB

The Bengali Club, next to the Kashmere Gate wall on the Boulevard Road, is part of the gazette notification listing 746 heritage buildings and structures under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). However, thanks to the notification, the building cannot be touched without the permission of the civic body, even though it is in dire need of repairs. Said Somprakash Mitra, Arts & Cultural secretary of the Bengali Club, "One of the cast iron pillars supporting the balcony was damaged some time ago after it was hit allegedly by a speeding truck." The roof has cracked, the plaster is coming off the walls and in general, the building has become unsafe. There is always the danger of electric shock due to seepage in the old walls. In fact, the Club members have restricted the number of functions to avoid any mishap. Despite repeated requests to the owner, nothing has been done. The Club members then approached the MCD, first in August 2009. Then, despite repeated reminders, the last letter they wrote was in March 2010 after the notification for the heritage building was issued. Vinay Gupta, owner of the remaining portion of the building his family has two shops said, "MCD has not been carrying out its job, not even cleaning. How do we expect them to help us in this? We carry out our own repairs." Apart from the Bengali Club, there are several other tenants in the building. One of them, on condition of anonymity, said, "I don't have expectations either from the owner or from the MCD. They have done nothing." Said A.G. K. Menon, convenor of the Delhi chapter of Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), "Unfortunately, the tenants cannot do anything. It is the owner who has to approach the civic body." But like in case of the Bengali Club, Menon points out, if the owner is not willing to do anything, "MCD should act on itself. Otherwise, it should be blamed for any untoward accident." Said Deep Mathur, MCD's Director (Press and Information), "The proposal has recently been received and is under process at MCD. On completion of formalities, it will be sent to the Heritage Conservation Cell (HCC) of the Central Government, as per rules. The MCD will take further action on the basis of the recommendations of the HCC."

### SOURCE

12th July 2010, *Hindustan Times*

## NIZAMUDDIN BASTI, TRANSITION FOR THE FUTURE

WALK down the narrow congested A bylanes of the Hazrat Nizamuddin basti -where Amir Khusrau started the Qawwali music traditions in the thirteenth century and now thrives a community that is considered the living heritage of the Capital -one can see a visible transition. Small eateries, ittar shops and heritage structures still dot the streets, but what comes as a surprise is the feverish activity going on in the area. The revamped MCD school is abuzz with children, the community centre has women cutting out designs on paper, a queue snakes out of the polyclinic and workers reconstruct collapsed portions of an ancient baoli. In a successful public-private partnership, three years after its inception, the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme in Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti has been able to usher in visible changes in the life of the community settled here over centuries. Inspired from similar conservation-based development projects in Kabul and Cairo, also being carried out by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), the Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti Urban Renewal Project goes beyond mere restoration of monuments and engages in activities related to adaptive re-use, contextual urban planning and the improvement of housing, infrastructure and public spaces. A partnership that includes the Archaeological Survey of India, the Central Public Works Department, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and AKTC, the project will unify three zones -Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, Sunder Nursery and Humayun's Tomb -into an urban conservation area of cultural significance while improving the quality of life for the residents. "Our Delhi project benefits from the worldwide experiences of the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme such as in Cairo and Kabul. To be effective in India, it is essential that conservation is used as a tool for socio-economic development of the inhabitants within the conservation areas," AKTC project director Ratish Nanda told News line.

The AKTC has been carefully working on conserving the heritage of the area which has a high concentration of heritage structures like the Dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya, Mazar-e-Ghalib, Baoli, Lal Mahal and Chaunsath Khamba. "The conservation of monuments and the rehabilitation of open spaces in the Basti aim to restore its intrinsic cultural, historical and spiritual significance. It combines conservation with a major socio-economic development effort that is implemented through a community-centered collaborative approach," Nanda explained. The major effort towards improvement in primary education included a revamp of the MCD primary school, introducing arts education, greater interaction with parents and improved school management. A pathology laboratory has also been set up. Last year, a physical mapping survey of the Basti was undertaken, leading to the preparation of street improvement plans which will be implemented by the MCD. Farhad Suri, former Mayor and councillor of Nizamuddin, who has been an important linkage between the Trust and the MCD, said, "The public-private partnership has worked out remarkably here and more so because the community living here has been involved in the development of the area. Young children have been trained as tourist guides and around 150 children enrolled with the American Embassy for English speaking classes. Some others were offered scholarships for intensive programmes by the British Council. The women of the community are now earning through their intricate paper cuttings." He said a positive change can be seen not only in the area but also among the residents. "They have now become more confident individuals. The Trust's initiative has come as a god-sent for the residents," Suri added. "Despite the initial teething problems, the active community participation has changed things for the better. The project can be replicated in other localities that house the Capital's living heritage." The project goes beyond restoration of monuments and engages in activities related to adaptive re-use and contextual urban planning.

**SOURCE**

**12th July 2010, Indian Express**

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