



INTACH

DELHI CHAPTER

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Editor's Note

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UNKNOWN LITTLE TOMB WILL WELCOME SPORTS' BEST

This little unnamed tomb, over 100 metres southwest of Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, is unique in many ways. It has 16 faces -tombs generally have four or eight faces -and the cenotaphs (a monument or tomb) are on its terrace with the covered portion/room empty. Further, it is situated on a small mound and has an almost round retaining wall. And it has survived certain extinction ahead of the 1982 Asian Games in the city. Senior photojournalist Sharad Saxena was instrumental in saving this wonderful piece of heritage in 1980-81 when the stadium was being built. "I was in a bus when I saw a massive balloon of dust. Curiosity got the better of me. I reached the spot and saw dust and rubble everywhere. Bulldozers were razing the place. I started shooting," recalled Saxena, who was then working in The Times of India. The newspaper carried the demolition photo on its front page the next day, prompting the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to haul up the officials concerned. "Mrs Gandhi ordered: 'No brick should be moved'. Thanks to her intervention, three small tombs, including this one, were saved," said Saxena, who later got 'Best Contribution of the Year' award from the newspaper's then editor Girilal Jain for the photo. Twenty-eight years later, this obscure little tomb from the Lodhi era is being revamped to welcome players and spectators, who would throng the Nehru Stadium especially during the opening and closing ceremonies of the Commonwealth Games. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), which got the custody of the monument six years ago from the Delhi State Department of Archaeology, continued to neglect it. But thanks to its prime location, this unusual piece of Delhi's heritage has finally got attention. "When refurbishing started, we discovered evidence of molding merlons (designs etched out on plain walls) on the upper edge. The walls were cleared of the moss and lichen in the traditional manner," said a senior ASI official. "We have now strengthened the retaining wall. That will ensure no further damage is done to the otherwise healthy structure," the official added. The Central Public Works Department has already put up eight lights/lamps around the monument to illuminate it. The agency is also working for developing a lush green lawn around the mound.

SOURCE

14th July 2010, Hindustan Times

KALAM'S 'THINKING HUT' DEMOLISHED

Former president APJ Abdul Kalam's famous "thinking hut" in Rashtrapati Bhavan's Mughal Gardens has been removed as work begins to restore the original character of Lutyens' best-known architectural creation. The Manipuri-style hut was installed during Kalam's tenure and the former president used to sit there in the mornings and evenings. He fondly referred to it as his "thinking hut" and told visitors two of his books were written on its sofas. While the hut made Kalam's creative juices flow, a committee of experts appointed for the restoration project has deemed it an eyesore in a garden designed by Lutyens as a unique mix of English and Mughal landscaping. The committee has also suggested that Kalam's other contribution to Mughal Gardens a modern-day musical fountain be demolished as this too defiles the heritage character of Lutyens' famous work. The restoration of Rashtrapati Bhavan is part of an ambitious project to preserve the majestic buildings on Raisina Hill. **Govt to source Lutyens originals** New Delhi: Raisina Hill is returning to its Lutyens blueprint. Rashtrapati Bhavan's Mughal Gardens will soon be rid of the Manipuri-style hut erected on orders of then president APJ Abdul Kalam. Other buildings on the conservation radar are Parliament House and North and South Blocks. UPA chief Sonia Gandhi is believed to be taking keen interest in the project. Architect Charles Correa, architectural restorer Sunita Kohli and artist Satish Gujral are among the experts consulted for the project. The government will have to source original drawings of Lutyens and Herbert Baker from London for finer nuances and details.

SOURCE

16th July 2010, Times of India

SC PANEL DESEALS EATERY AT RED FORT

Dawat Khana, a popular restaurant at the historic 17th century Red Fort, has been desealed by the Supreme Court monitoring committee on Friday and has been permitted to resume its services. The restaurant was sealed by the SC-appointed committee a month ago. A total of five structures were sealed on the Red Fort premises for illegal encroachment, including the popular restaurant run by the Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC). Other than the ITDC restaurant, two canteens and two shops were sealed for illegal encroachment. ITDC had signed a MoU with the ASI nearly 10 years ago, gaining permission to run its restaurant Dawat khaana inside the Red Fort premises. The SC committee, however, had said the restaurant was in violation of prevalent norms for protected structures and ordered its immediate sealing. According to ITDC officials, Dawat Khana is the only facility which serves high-quality food and beverages to the guests — both domestic and international — visiting the Red Fort, as well as the sound-and-light show. "In view of the forthcoming Commonwealth Games 2010, dignitaries and visitors who are expected to visit the Red Fort would avail the services here," said an ITDC official. Dawat Khana had started within the premises of the Red Fort in the year 2003, based on an understanding between ASI and ministry of tourism. Subsequently, on 28 October, 2005, a deed of license was entered into between director general, ASI and ITDC, whereby, the latter was permitted to operate the Souvenir Shop and Restaurant-cum-Activity Centre (Dawat Khana) and facilitate tourists visiting the Red Fort. Since then, ITDC has been operating Dawat Khana with 40 covers with facilities of catering to the visitors in the lawns.

SOURCE

17th July 2010, Times of India

ARCHED GRACE

The most beautiful of all buildings in the congested Nizamuddin Basti, it is also the most ignored. Most visitors to this 14th-century village, named after a sufi saint, head straight to the saint's shrine. A few may notice Urdu poet Mirza Ghalib's tomb that lies on the left of the principal street. Hidden behind this mausoleum is the marbled Chaunsath Khamba (circa 1624), the rare Jehangir-era monument in Delhi,

so well-preserved that it does not look old. Built by Mirza Aziz Kokaltash, a foster brother of Emperor Akbar, Chaunsath Khamba was so named because 64 pillars are said to have supported its roof. You will, however, find only 36. These pillars join the roof in a soft, sloping harmony. Inside, the hall has 10 tombs, two of which belong to Kokaltash and his wife. Outside, towards Ghalib's memorial, there are more tombs. Since the walls have stone jaalis, sunlight falls through the latticework, making embroidered patterns on the marble. Chausanth Khamba faces the open courtyard of Urs Mahal, a venue for cultural shows, which remain empty except in the evenings when boys come to play cricket. Ghalib's tomb, too, is usually deserted. Amid the desolation, the monument feels as isolated as the North Pole, yet it is close to civilisation. Surrounded by the Basti's jagged skyline, sounds of children's cries, women's laughter, hawkers' yells and the hissing of pressure cookers' whistle waft through the pillared hall, where they echo softly. You feel at peace with the world. Where: Nizamuddin Basti Time open: Sunrise to sunset

SOURCE

18th July 2010, Hindustan Times

NO BLUE IN THE NEELA HAUZ

It takes just one glance at the Neela Hauz lake to know what ails it. A small but important water body in the southern ridge, the lake should have been brimming with water after last week's rainstorm. But heaps of earth and construction debris in the lake's bed hinder its natural harvesting of the rainwater. The Public Works Department (PWD) constructed a bridge across the lake to cut short the distance between Old JNU Campus and Vasant Kunj. However it has left behind debris in the bed of the centuries old lake. The agency is supposed to clear the earth and the construction debris by July 31. Two weeks before the deadline, the shuttering -scaffolding erected to support during construction -is yet to be removed from beneath one portion of the bridge, not to mention the heaps of earth scattered all over the lake bed. Residents of Vasant Kunj, who have been protesting PWD's construction over the water body, are unsure about the agency meeting the deadline. On Sunday, a core group of residents met to chalk out a plan to clear the lake. "If the authorities do not clear the lake, we plan to carry out shramdaan (volunteer work) on September 5 by roping in people from neighbouring colonies and students from south Delhi schools. Our priority is to clear out excess soil and pull out the weeds," said Nitya Jacob, an activist-writer from the group. Another member, Sudha Bhattacharya, who is also the Dean of Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of Environmental Science, plans to rope in her students for the outreach activity. However, PWD's Principal Chief Engineer A.K. Sinha is confident the department will meet the clean-up deadline. "The bridge would be ready by July 25, only after which we would remove the material and earth from the lake bed. Our work would be over by July end," he assured. According to the Delhi Development Authority, Neela Hauz is to be converted into a Biodiversity Park.

SOURCE

19th July 2010, Hindustan Times

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