

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

LIBRARY

PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

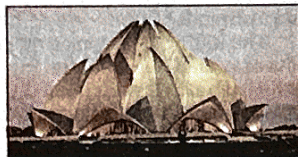
THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI
WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2023

NEWSPAPERS

DATED

HC to DDA: Stay work at plot next to Kalkaji Temple

Abhinav.Garg@timesgroup.com



Work at the site will affect the surrounding skyline and visibility of Lotus Temple, the court said

New Delhi: Taking note of its impact on the skyline around and viewing of the iconic Lotus Temple, Delhi High Court on Tuesday paused further construction at a plot adjoining Kalkaji Temple. Justice Prathiba M Singh asked Delhi Development Authority to stay all activities at the plot where the authority had earlier begun excavations and fresh construction.

When the counsel for DDA sought permission to use the plot for at least some functions and other activities, the court asked it to file an affidavit detailing the type of functions it had organised at the site earlier, if any.

Last month, the court had expressed concern at the work being done in the plot by a third party to whom the said land is stated to have been leased by DDA.

"It is surprising that when the demarcation itself is not finalised, how DDA has started developing the same....the court expresses enormous concern as DDA has been a party to these proceedings right from the inception and when the demarcation process is being undertaken for the redevelopment of the mandir, suddenly, DDA is stated to have entered into some arrangement with a third party and has started construction

immediately adjoining the mandir," it noted.

It had then demanded an explanation from DDA as to "what kind of arrangement has been entered into with the person or entity who is carrying out the construction on the land next to Kalkaji Mandir as also Lotus Temple."

It had also asked DDA's officials concerned to remain present on the next hearing.

The court is monitoring redevelopment of the Kalkaji Temple complex and has passed a series of orders. The court had earlier underlined that it is essential for a temple, where thousands of devotees visit for conducting puja every day, irrespective of its public or private status, to be devoid of unauthorised encroachments.

Apart from a retired HC judge being appointed as administrator, the court has already appointed Goonmeet Singh Chauhan, a renowned architect, to prepare a redevelopment plan for the Kalkaji Temple complex.

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

LIBRARY

PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

NAME OF NEWSPAPERS-----

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI
WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2023

-----DATED-----

To protect freed land from encroachers, ASI to build 3km-long, 6ft-high wall in fort area

Anuja.Jaiswal@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The two-day demolition drive undertaken by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) at the historic Tughlaqabad Fort has yielded about 25 acres of land, which was earlier taken over by over 1,000 squatters. ASI now plans to build a 3km-long boundary wall, with a height of 6-8 feet and concertina wire over it in order to protect it from further encroachment.

The drive was conducted after Delhi high court on April 24 directed ASI to remove encroachments within four weeks. This was the second such drive in the area in the past 22 years since Delhi Development Authority (DDA) handed over an area of 2,661 bighas to ASI in 1995 for its protection, preservation and development. In 2001, about 250 bighas were vacated by ASI and the land was fenced off, but over 60% of it was reoccupied, according to officials.

DV Sharma, who retired from ASI and was posted as superintending archaeologist (Delhi circle) in 1995, told TOI the land was partially encroached when it was handed



File photo

ASI has managed to free 25 acres of land from the encroachers

over to ASI by DDA, with an assurance that squatters would be removed. However, nothing was done, he said.

Over the years, the villages surrounding the fort extended and encroached public land. "When we initially tried to free the land, our officials were beaten up by the encroachers," he said. However, he did not explain why the freed area was not protected by ASI and encroachments continued.

Historian Swapna Liddle said the most urgent matter is to ensure historical buildings and monuments are not en-

TIMES VIEW: The illegal settlement came up over the years. It is extremely unlikely that it would have happened without the collusion of politicians and authorities. As pointed out earlier, ASI must be more vigilant and proactive in spotting such developments. Delay in action magnifies the problem and ends up creating a difficult situation for all.

croached and new construction should not happen in prohibited areas. She said ASI needs a mechanism to monitor protected buildings and take

feedback from its caretakers on the status of heritage under their care.

Officials claimed they have a proper set-up for physical verification of protected monuments and that was why they could identify the total encroached area inside the fort premises. But due to "non-cooperation" from other departments, encroachments were not removed earlier. A senior official said after the recent court order, all agencies provided adequate support.

According to Liddle, in the 1860s, shortly after it was formed, ASI had decided to conserve Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's tomb, next to Tughlaqabad Fort. When it discovered it was encroached, it decided to move those people into the fort. "The ASI of that era was itself responsible for encroachment of this place," she claimed, adding there was no law at the time.

A legal battle began after a PIL by SN Bhardwaj in March 2001 sought protection of the fort premises. In February 2016, the Supreme Court declared the entire Tughlaqabad Fort as protected and directed ASI to stop land-grabbing and encroachment.

Similarly, Delhi HC also categorically stated in an October 2016 order that no further construction or encroachment should be made in the fort. In 2017 and 2022, it further directed that there shall be no property transaction in respect of land within the fort's outer walls. On November 24 last year, HC granted six weeks as "last indulgence" to ASI to remove encroachments in and around Tughlaqabad Fort.

However, construction and encroachments within the walls of the fort area have been carried out by some individuals in blatant violation of SC and HC orders.

On January 11 this year, ASI pasted 1,248 notices on encroached properties in Bengali Mohalla, directing residents to vacate within 15 days, failing which their houses would be demolished. On April 24, HC directed ASI to remove encroachments within four weeks.

As Tughlaqabad Fort, its walls, gateways and bastions are 'protected' monuments, no one is permitted to construct there or use the area in any manner without the central government's permission, said officials.

DELHI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

LIBRARY

PRESS CLIPPING SERVICE

millenniumpost

WEDNESDAY, 3 MAY, 2023 | NEW DELHI

DATED

Tughlaqabad anti-encroachment drive plunges residents into despair

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: There was a scene of destruction, despair and helplessness, people were seen carrying their belongings and seeking shelters in safe places in the Tughlaqabad Fort area. The incessant spells of rain taking over the Delhi's roads and spaces have added to their woes. Days after the Delhi High Court direction, authorities on Sunday carried out an anti-encroachment drive at the Archaeological Survey of India's Tughlaqabad Fort.

The action was taken days after the Delhi High Court directed the ASI to remove encroachments in the historic fort. The drive was carried out under the supervision of a team of officials from the South East Delhi district administration, MCD, Delhi Police and the ASI, sources said.

The encroachment included various structures such as dwellings, shanties and shops which had sprung in the period of the last several years, he said. The Supreme Court on Monday refused to stay a demolition drive to remove encroachment



from the Tughlakabad area in South Delhi.

Agreeing to hear the matter on the issue of rehabilitation, a bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice M M Sundresh issued notices to the Centre, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and the Delhi Development Authority on the plea filed by some residents.

"Come tomorrow. We will take it up as the first item. Let them say if they have land. If you are ready to go to Narela side, we can tell them. "Let notices be served on the Central government, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), and the Delhi Development Authority. We are not staying,"

the bench said.

About "250 bigha of land was reclaimed at the Fort site in 2000," the source said.

A senior police officer said, "Under the supervision of district authorities, the demolition drive was conducted on the land of ASI, as per the court order. Police force was deployed for the protection of officials to ensure that there was no obstruction to officials in charge of carrying out their work."

The Delhi High Court on April 24 had directed the ASI to remove encroachments in the historic Tughlaqabad Fort within four weeks, saying it cannot be a "silent spectator" on the issue.