

# Remembering modern India's architect

SHUBHRA SHARMA

JAWAHARLAL Nehru needs no introduction. With the foresight of a great statesman, Nehru, the architect of modern India, created institutions like the Planning Commission, National Science Laboratories and also laid the foundation of a vast public sector for developing infrastructure for industrial growth.

His life is an inspiration for many and learning for all. Taking into account the same thought, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML) is celebrating a month-long festival called 'The Nehru Imprint' to mark his 120th birth anniversary on 14th November.

The festival includes a series of activities, including films, concerts and discussions on Nehru's philosophy, including socialism, its relevance in today's life, especially in the context of the global economic crisis. It has given a special focus to activities

related to children, like *Chal Chala Chal*, which includes art, music, theatre, museum tours and performances for children visiting NMML, *Karavaan*, which has film screenings, plays, creative writing and exhibitions in the Dastkar Nature Bazaar, various schools/colleges and communities to engage with the wider audience in the national Capital.

Through the screenings, discussions and a series of children-specific programmes, NMML hopes to reach as many as 35,000 to 40,000 children in the period.

"We all know how much Nehru loved children. He always saw kids as the future of India and believed that right kind of education and



values will make them capable of taking the nation at a different level. More than 5,000 kids visit Teen Murti everyday to see the museum, library and leave without gaining anything. We have designed programmes in such a manner that they do not just see these places but also learn from the life of this great leader and incorporate his values and ideologies in their lives", said Paramjeet Bernad, Programme associate of the Children Resource Department, NMML.

"It is great fun to be with these kids. They are taking great interest in all the activities. They are so eager to learn that sometime we wonder that how much we can deliver to them in such a short span. We are using a number of ways like stories, art activities, inter-active sessions to get across the necessary message", said Nisha, team member, Children Resource Department, NMML.

Many Government and Non-Government schools and organisations are participating in this festival everyday. It is just not about the members, who are having great time but the kids are also responding very well and enjoying to the limit.

"It was a very nice experience, we saw movie on Nehru and learnt about his life. I will definitely try to incorporate his values in my life", said Nirmanya Dhar from Blue Bells International School.

"We did some great stuff like writing greeting cards, discussions. It was an awesome experience and I will cherish it throughout my life", said Tanya Ghai, Blue Bells International School.

Organisers of this event do not see this festival merely as a ceremonial function which dwells on memories of an individual. They describe it as an opportunity to reflect on the current situations, our own stances, ideologies, collective aspiration through the Nehruvian prism and also look at the times and situations of Nehruvian era through the lens of our own understandings. They believed that values should be practised and not only something talk about.

"This is the perfect occasion to allow people to understand Nehru more than a political figure and know him as a



PBD photo by Gajendra Singh

man of values, culture and pioneer of modern India. Today we face a number of challenges - be it the global warming economic crisis, food crisis and violence all around. Now it is high time that we step out of our narrow confines of national,

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regional territories and interests and move towards some constructive ideas to heal this world. We need to change by re-looking at our stances, world views, mutual interests and conflicts and this festival is a perfect opportunity to seek answers in the wisdom and experience of our leaders and heritage," said Paramjeet, programme associate-campus.

"Nehru stands as a beacon of light who tries to balance the march of modernity with the rootedness of tradition and local culture. His struggles, conflicts, introspections and learn-

ings are important spaces to look at reflect up on. This festival is a perfect place to reminisce, reflect, respond, learn from, teach and share and move away from merely worshiping and condemning an individual", he added.

The films scheduled to be screened include *No do Gyarah, Sujata, Mother India, Mere Mehmoob, Pyaasa* followed by a seminar on films of the Nehruvian era.

Some great film scholars and academics like Madhav Prasad from JNU, Madan Gopal Singh, senior fellow from MNML, Ira Bhasker from School of Arts and Aesthetic and any more are participating in the proceedings and discussions on Nehru's contributions to institution building.

"We are getting some great response and a lot more to be happening yet. The major highlights of the event will be the November 19 musical evening by Shubha Mudgal, who will recite the works of poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Bal Mela on 27th, 28, 29th November, where a whole range of activity workshops, including theatre, poetry, Charka, radio, music, science games, paintings and a children book fair will happen", said Ayush, programme manager.

## Nehru Memorial Museum at a glance

- ❖ Area of Teen Murti campus: 44.74 acres
- ❖ Architect of Teen Murti House: Robert Tor Russel
- ❖ Foundation-stone laid on 23 March, 1929 and completed in 1930
- ❖ Plinth area of Teen Murti House: 5128.80 Sq. Mts
- ❖ Constructed as Official Residence of Commander-in-chief of British Army
- ❖ First Occupant: Field Marshal Sir William Birdwood
- ❖ Last Commander-in-Chief who lived here: General Sir Roy Bucher
- ❖ Jawaharlal Nehru occupied this house as PM in August 1948
- ❖ Nehru lived here until his death on 27th May, 1964
- ❖ Teen Murti House was converted as a Memorial to Jawaharlal Nehru on 14 November 1964 on his 75th birthday
- ❖ Museum Timings: 9 am to 5:30 pm
- ❖ Weekly holiday for the Museum: Monday

## Another attraction Nehru Planetarium



Another attractive and educative place on the Teen Murti Campus is the Nehru Planetarium. With its various innovative and informative shows-Our cosmic heritage, New Solar System, Life Story of a star etc, it enlightens its visitors about the mysteries of the sky. Since 1984, the Nehru Planetarium, has been playing a seminal role in disseminating knowledge about space and promoting education in astronomy.

PBD graphic by Tarakant Tiwari

# Kirti Nagar parks: A picture of neglect

SOFIA MASSEY

IT is true that Kirti Nagar is known for its industrial area. But, it is interesting to learn certain facts about its residential area. If the available answer of the residents of Kirti Nagar is anything to go by, it is the parks, being 'maintained' by the Delhi Development Authority, which are in a shambles, that need immediate attention.

"The Delhi Government is leaving no stone unturned to complete the task of beautification of significant structures like the metro stations around the Capital. In the meantime, our parks have turned multi-purpose for the worse. All residents of the G-4 extension block of Kirti Nagar want the concerned authorities to take stringent action in this regard at the earliest," says a septuagenarian resident, Amarjeet Singh.

Coming to the 'multi-purpose' use of parks in Kirti Nagar, the first purpose is to serve as public utility. Owing to G-4 extension's proximity to both the wood market and the furniture market, the carpenters and other workers find it 'convenient' to use the park as an open toilet."

In order to get a clear picture of the block of G-4 extension, it is important to know that it comprises of a good number of bungalows surrounded by the DDA parks of all shapes and sizes from all

sides.

The foremost view that we witness in the mornings is that of the carpenters, rickshaw-pullers and other such people using the surrounding parks as open toilets. It is most disgusting to view that from the balcony of one's home, according to a 78-year old resident, Gurcharan Singh.

Gurcharan Singh further says, "Despite repeated requests to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and DDA to take action in this regard but to no avail. As a last resort, all residents of this block decided to construct a wall and obstruct the entrance to a particular park all on our own to save the parks."

The second issue is of encroachment on these parks. The rickshaw-pullers and workers from the nearby market, mostly belong to the neighbouring states, besides those from Delhi. For them, these parks are home away from home. As Amarjeet Singh says, "Except on Mondays when the furniture market is closed, you may find these workers even using the parks for repairing cars and other petty works."

Coming to the part played by the concerned authorities, MCD did come forward and created a wall haphazardly, as the residents put it. "The Municipal Councilor of Kirti Nagar is Usha Mehta and she did listen to our cries and got



PBD photo by Amit Shrivastava

a wall constructed but it is only half the work done," says another resident.

He further adds, "Owing to the frequent thefts in the area, we had requested the authorities to erect a boundary wall around the houses. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi did the work partially, thereby making the residents prone to frequent thefts."

The water motors meant to

create a pressure and get more water are frequently stolen. The authorities must do something to curb this nuisance is what all the residents of Kirti Nagar say in unison.

But is the situation all grim. The answer is not in totality. The residents of this area are some of those lucky few who do not have to go through the water and electricity supply hassles like other Delhiites do.

"The water and electricity supply with no major hassles involved makes us not to be so pessimistic about the other problems. This is one positive aspect for sure," says Amarjeet Singh on a cheerful note.

Talking about cheerful attitude, a 20-year old youth Malika says in an enthusiastic manner that, "I am able to pursue my Chartered Accountancy from ITO only because of the

Delhi Metro facility made available to us."

The Kirti Nagar metro station definitely has added a reason to cheer and for the authorities to pat their own backs.

As a housewife Neetu Malhotra puts it, "Traffic has eased for better with Delhi Metro in place now. Many commuters from the vicinity choose to go in a metro and leave their cars at home so as to be able to reach their destinations in time."

While a 'shopoholic' businesswoman Nishu says, "Delhi Metro is a saviour. Now my favorite shopping destination Karol Bagh is just minutes away. This gives me the liberty to shop some more and also the hassles of finding a parking are also spared."

Another resident of the area Nand Kishore Sharma is in agreement with the efficacy of the Delhi Metro and the help that the nearby metro station provides as he says, "It used to take me an hour to reach my office at the ITO owing to the insane traffic snarls but now that it is only a matter of 15 minutes to reach there."

It seems that the Kirti Nagar metro station is a blessing for the residents and others alike. With the residents of Kirti Nagar having serious issues to deal with, a sincere effort on the part of the concerned authorities is the only thing that the residents are hopeful of.

# Councilor speaks

I am well aware of the fact that the residents of Kirti Nagar have some serious issues to deal with, particularly the G-4 extension area but the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has done its part.

After we got a boundary wall constructed on the insistence of the residents for almost three parks, then Delhi Development Authority (DDA) came to claim our work as its own. Thereafter, we have decided to leave the rest of the construction work to be completed by them.

As it is very clear that, the parks are in a state of utter neglect, it has become obligatory on the part of the DDA to improve the maintenance.

These parks demand greater attention of the DDA. The MCD has no role to play in the non-maintenance of the parks now.

Coming to the developmental projects in the pipeline, she expressed the opinion that there is a multi-level parking coming up for the residents of the Kirti Nagar to help ease their parking woes at least, but the project has been postponed for an indefinite period till the most important projects connected with Commonwealth Games are satisfactorily completed. We are trying our best to make this place best for everybody.