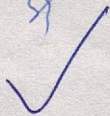


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HT 16/9/02
Bird sanctuary on the anvil

Chetan Chauhan
New Delhi, September 15

THERE IS good news for bird lovers. Exotic birds may soon visit Delhi if the city's first bird sanctuary to be developed by the Delhi Tourism and Transport Development Corporation (DTTDC) comes up in the Najafgarh area of south-west Delhi.

The sanctuary will cover an area of several kilometres along the Najafgarh drain. Trees would be planted to transform the area into a thick forest belt to attract birds.

The corporation's managing director Rajeev Talwar said the government has appointed Indira Gandhi Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) as consultant for the project.

"They have already sub-

mitted their preliminary report. The report give suggestions on the type of trees and vegetation that can be grown alongside the drain," Talwar said.

Officials say the Najafgarh drain is a rich catchment area for birds.

The flora and fauna in the area attracts migratory birds from Central Asian countries and Siberia.

"The drain is just a stopover for these birds. We want to improve the flora around the drain so that birds can stay there for a longer period," an official said.

The project entails to develop the area into a tourist spot. One can't enter deep into the green belt as there are no approach roads. The otherwise few roads are muddy and inaccessible during rains.

But DTTDC with INTACH plans to change it. "Roads will lead deep into the green belt where one can see exotic birds. Once inside the forest visitors will forget that they are in Delhi," an official vouched.

However, project implementation is not easy. Trees will be planted in a phased manner and improvements will be done so that natural ambience of the area is not disturbed.

"Tree plantation work has already started," the official informed.

The Najafgarh project is the second wildlife project of the Delhi government. A wildlife sanctuary has already come up in Asola region of the southern ridge.

The Environment Department is developing several kilometre area as part of the project.

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Plans to create bird sanctuary

By Gaurav Vivek Bhatnagar

NEW DELHI, MARCH 3. A wildlife safari and a bird sanctuary in Delhi! While this may sound strange considering the Capital's struggle with urban growth, Delhi Development Authority has drawn up plans for creating such a facility over an 800-acre area in the Wazirabad area of North Delhi.

The plan, which is expected to materialise in phases, would in the first part witness the creation of a Biodiversity Park, which would be built by the DDA in consultation with the Department of Botany of Delhi University.

This would be one of the major "city-level" projects to be undertaken by the civic agency, which has on its hands the task of not only making urban structures but also providing the greens, that make areas more habitable.

"The need for the Biodiversity Park was felt as Delhi does not have any botanical garden of its own. As such the civic agency and the Delhi University decided to undertake the project jointly," according to Director (Landscape), Savita Bhandari.

But when the two departments got down to the planning table, they decided that this would not only be another project for development of a botanical garden but much more. As such it was

decided to have a Biodiversity Park with both flora and fauna. "This project would help in maintaining the ecological system and plant development and would be of great educational value to both college and school children. In the end, it is expected to boast of about 5,000 eco-systems comprising 35,000 plant and animal species." The systems would depict complete life cycles and show to the students how various food chains work. It would help in understanding of the interdependence of various flora and fauna on each other.

The park will possess all the regular features associated with such parks the world over such as laboratories, poly-houses and chick houses.

While the construction and overall planning would be done by the DDA, the Botany Department would be responsible for identifying and bringing in the various eco-systems to the place. For the purpose of development of the Biodiversity Park, 200 acres of land has already been acquired.

"Along with the development of this park, there is a plan for acquisition of about 600 acres more for building the safari and sanctuary as that would allow for optimum utilisation of the available flora and fauna. That would also help in exploiting the wetlands in the region."