

Biz leaders taste a slice of Delhi's history

HERITAGE WALK Top CEOs and business leaders participate in 'As Old As History', a heritage walk at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, on Sunday

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NEW DELHI: In an effort to promote awareness about Delhi's past, Hindustan Times with India City Walks and Oberoi, Gurgaon, organised a heritage walk in the Mehrauli Archaeological Park on Sunday morning. The initiative was entitled 'As Old As History' and saw a great response from the corporate community. Many of the top CEOs and business leaders and their wives were present way before the starting time of 7.30am to be a part of this journey into Delhi's history.

Mehrauli archaeological park, located behind the Qutub Minar has over 100 monuments. The earliest settlements in the area go back to the time of the Tomar dynasty in Delhi. In the recent years ASI and INTACH have worked together to restore it.

"From the days of Lal Kot to the British agent Thomas Metcalfe, the area of the park has been layered with history. The walk aims to uncover the mystery and let people feel proud of the rich heritage of Delhi," Sachin Bansal, chief explorer India City Walks.

The tour was conducted by Nidhi Bansal of the India City Walks. She, along with Jawaharlal Nehru University's medieval history professor Nafaj Haider,

took the group to the four major attractions of the park. The walk started at the tomb of the Ghiyas-ud-din Balban, the ninth ruler of the Mamluk dynasty and traversed through Jamali Kamali, Metcalfe's Folly's and ended at Rajaon ki Baoli. Delicious refreshments prepared by the Oberoi Patisserie Gurgaon were served at Quli Khan's tomb.

Luca Fichera, executive VP, Nestle India, was surprised by the events of the day. "The walk has been wonderful. Jamali-Kamali was my favourite here. I loved beautiful carvings of floral patterns on the walls and ceilings there."

"But the best part about this place is that it presents a splendid combination of Islamic and Indian elements. Both the elements harmonize each other," he added.

Residents of Delhi were amazed as their foreign counterparts to be at the archaeological park. Vikas Mittal, MD, McCain Foods, said, "This visit has exposed us to history and to the monuments of the park. For me personally it has been an exploratory experience. We never knew such a gem was hidden right amidst us. I would love to bring my kids here soon."

David Mathews, general manager The Oberoi Gurgaon, said, "It is rare that you uncover so much history in your own backyard. I



■ CEOs and business leaders relax after the 'As Old As History' – a heritage walk at the Mehrauli Archeological Park in New Delhi on Sunday.



■ The leaders enjoy refreshments provided by the Oberoi, Gurgaon Patisserie after soaking in the cultural heritage of the city in the walk through the archaeological park.

think the day has been phenomenal. Where else can you take a 20-minute ride from home and see layers of history in front of you. This joint effort must be encouraged as more people, tourists and residents, will love to see this place".

Most of the CEOs praised the works carried out by the ASI and were impressed by the state of the monuments. Rajneesh Talwar, Head - Global Client Services Bank of America, said, "ASI has done a great job here. After coming here, I feel this is the heritage

hub of the city. The government and individuals should spread information about the place and let more people experience the beauty that is hidden here".

Another highlight of the walk was connecting people through culture and heritage. Nidhi Bansal said, "Our aim to get people out the office and reintroduce them to their roots. One will amazed to see the results of one such outing. We encourage colleagues to use this space to relax, de-stress and co-operation within the team gets better," she added.



■ Co-founder of 'India City Walks', Nidhi Bansal (C), interacts with the business leaders during the heritage walk. S BURMAULA/HT PHOTOS



■ CEOs and business heads marvel at the cultural heritage of Delhi at the Mehrauli Archeological Park.



■ Mother Dairy CIO Annie Mathew with her husband at the Mehrauli Archeological Park in New Delhi on Sunday.



■ Luca Fichera, EVP, Nestle, with his wife at the 'As Old As History' walk on Sunday.

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Above: Historian Najaf Haider (C) and Nidhi Bansal (R) of India City Walks at Balban's Tomb; Right: The CEOs and senior corporates pose for a group picture



HONCHOS WALK HAND-IN-HAND

Top CEOs soak in the city's cultural heritage at the Mehrauli Archaeological Park

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The early morning nip and lush greenery provided the perfect Sunday setting for the fifteen CEOs and their spouses who got together to take a guided tour of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park yesterday. The event, organised by India City Walks in association with Hindustan Times and The Oberoi Gurgaon, had top honchos soaking in the Capital's archeological richness — a much-needed breather from their daily grind.

David Mathews, General Manager, The Oberoi, Gurgaon, said, "We are delighted to be a part of this unique initiative that brings our history and culture alive. It was wonderful to engage with our discerning guests with breakfast goodies by The Oberoi Patisserie and Delicatessen, Gurgaon. We look forward to many more such engagements."

From understanding Persian poetry to the intricate inlay work at the heritage monuments and appreciating the motifs at the Jamali-Kamali tomb, the corporates were all eyes and ears during the tour.

Tom Albanese, CEO, Vedanta, was one of the first enthusiasts to reach the venue. "This is my first time at the Archaeological Park. All the friendly support and smiles will bring me back. I'll be getting my family next time. It's a wonderful way to spend a Sunday morning; I have been really enjoying myself, understanding the history of the place while walking."

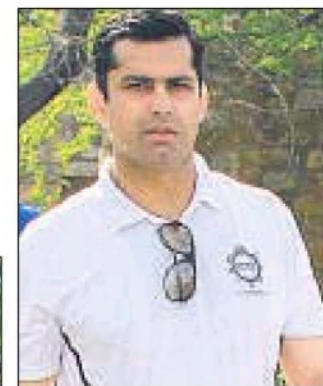
Paolo Briatore, CEO, Invista, said, "My wife Samantha Gafriano has been here before. It's very exciting to come here on a weekend, and understand the history. There are lots of interior parts in Delhi that can be discovered in a better way. I'll definitely share the experience with my colleagues."



David Mathews, GM, The Oberoi, Gurgaon, with wife Sonia



Vikas Mittal, CEO McCain Foods, with wife Shalini



Sachin Bansal, chief explorer, India City Walks



Making a stopover at a place we pass by so often, and to discover it all over again, feels great. Also, a guided tour really helps understand its history

Rajneesh Talwar, India Head Head - Global Client Services, Bank of America