

# Ballabgarh's Rani Ki Chattri falls to neglect

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Haryana is known for its historical monuments and places of historical significance which attract domestic and international tourists. Ballabgarh township in Faridabad district is one such place where many monuments of historical importance like Rani Ki Chattri are located. However, such monuments have been neglected and need repair and renovation.

After AIIMS opened its branch here, this place witness a massive rush of patients and the monument got lost in the crowd. "People come and park their vehicles close to it. I requested them several times to not do this. But I realised I could be inviting trouble," said Hukum Chand, a tea vendor close to the monument.

Since Rani Ki Chattri is situated near National Highway-2, popularly known as Mathura Road in Ballabgarh, locals feel the place could have been turned into a tourist spot.

The state has introduced the concept of 'highway tourism'. The residents feel that in line with the idea of Highway Tourism, either the state tourism department could have developed the place on its own or the government assigned the task to the Archeological Survey of India.

"The industrial hub of Faridabad has several historical monuments that depict ancient art, architecture and culture and on such monuments is Rani ki Chattri," said Krishan Kant Gupta, principal Aggarwal College, Ballabgarh.

He said that Ballabgarh city was earlier a part of Bharatpur state and came into existence in 18th century. Raja Ballu (Balram) and his son Raja Nahar Singh were the popular rulers, who worked under the flag of Bharatpur state.

"Raja Ballu (Balram) had built a vacation home for his queen which is today known as 'Rani ki Chattri'. There was an internal passage from the mahal to the Chattri through which maharani used to travel to her vacation home," Gupta said. "In the ancient days the palace was a symbol of architectural excel-

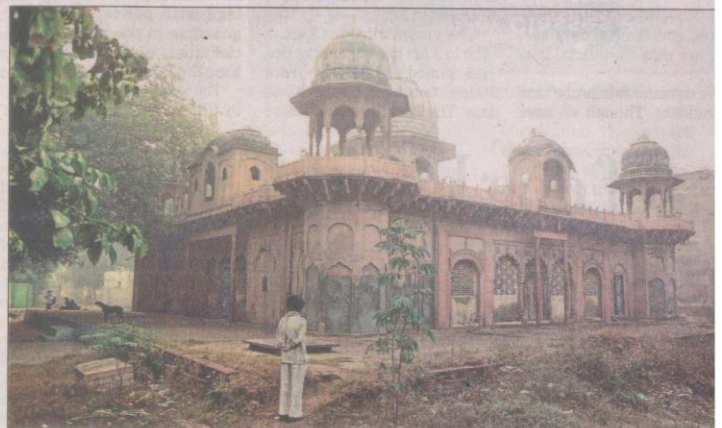


Rani Ki Chattri was built by Raja Balram for his queen. There was an internal passage from the mahal through which maharani used to travel to her vacation home. KAMLESH/HT PHOTOS

lence. Interspersed with a bathing tank, fountains and water courses, the palace was frequented by the royal ladies," he said. "The bathing tank with stairs all around was filled with water that flowed into it from the nearby Agra Canal. Today, this beautiful monument is lying in shambles. It is crumbling with the plaster peeling off and roofs leaking. The bathing tank and stairs have been damaged by overgrown bushes and grass." This grand monument, though in a bad state, can still be seen from the Delhi-Mathura Road by those travelling to and from Agra.

"There is a need for immediate steps by the administration to restore and repair this monument," said Edrick Chandra, who teaches history in GD Goenka School, Ballabgarh.

"By preserving this monu-



ment, we will be in a position to educate our younger generations about our past," he added.

"For a long time there was no project or planning regarding the renovation of this monument," said Priyanka Soni, outgoing sub-divisional magistrate, Ballabgarh.

"There was some renovation

project on Rani Ki Chattri, but that was long back," she added.

A short distance away from Rani Ki Chattri is a Shiv temple. It is believed that Raja Nahar Singh had taken a vow here to end the British rule in India. The locals find it disconcerting that such emblems of the area's rich historical and cultural

past, have not been declared protected monuments by ASI. "There is also a big problem with the back of this monument which can be dangerous for visitors especially during rainy season," said RM Naresh, a resident who along with a group of people visited the site recently.