



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Humayun's Tomb Site Museum launched by India's Minister of Tourism and Culture and Aga Khan



Delhi, India, 7 April 2015 – His Excellency Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Minister of Tourism & Culture, and His Highness the Aga Khan today launched construction of a site museum at the Humayun's Tomb Complex, one of the 25 Adarsh or "model" monuments recently designated by the Government of India's Ministry of Culture. Construction is expected to take 30 months.

In his speech at the ceremony marking the laying of the foundation stone, His Highness the Aga Khan remarked that it "stagger the imagination" to think of what was created here during the Mughal period, on a scale and with a splendour that had not existed before. And its accomplishments have continued to inspire subsequent generations."

The need for a museum and visitor centre at this world heritage site became apparent in recent years. Two million people visit the Humayun's Tomb complex annually, including over 500,000 children. An even larger number of pilgrims – from across the world and of many faiths – visit the adjoining Dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, the 14th century Sufi saint.

In response to the dramatic increase in visitors, the Archaeological Survey of India called for the creation of a Site Museum. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) – which has undertaken conservation works on over 50 monuments in Delhi, including the restoration of Humayun's Tomb – proposed the construction of a state-of-the-art site museum to be built at the entrance to the World Heritage Site. The Ministry of Tourism has pledged Rs 49 Crores (US\$ 8.0 million) towards the construction cost of the Site Museum.

India's Minister of Tourism & Culture, Dr Mahesh Sharma, said that the project was "a classical example of synergy between the government and a non-profit organisation in preserving the heritage of the country and taking it to the world."

The Museum's aims include a better understanding of Mughal architecture and building craft traditions, but it will also shed light on the development of the Nizamuddin area over the last millennium. Perhaps most significantly, it will highlight the area's pluralist cultural traditions, which defined Hindustani culture for at least five centuries.

His Highness the Aga Khan also remarked that the Museum will allow visitors to learn more about how the Mughal "legacies were built, how they served the court and society more generally, and what they have meant since. They will also be able to share in the lessons that have been learned as these sites have been restored -- in ways that have enhanced the social and economic life of the surrounding communities. New jobs have been created, new skills have been mastered, new commercial opportunities have been opened, and new environmental protections have been fostered."

The Site Museum will include a permanent exhibit, galleries for temporary exhibits, an auditorium for film screenings, a souvenirs shop and a café. Live demonstrations of building crafts such as stonework and plaster work, as well as other prominent Mughal crafts, will be a permanent activity.

The Museum is also expected to serve as a starting point for tourists interested in touring other prominent monuments of Mughal India, including the Taj Mahal, which was built after – and inspired by – Humayun’s Tomb.

The sunken, low-profile design, which was inspired by the traditional baolis of northern India, ensures that the visual aesthetics of adjacent 16th century monuments, such as the Sabz Burj, Isa Khan’s Tomb and Sundarwala Burj, will not be disturbed. For more information about the Site Museum, please see the Humayun’s Tomb Site Museum brief.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) has been carrying out conservation work in the Humayun’s Tomb area for nearly 15 years. Its engagement began with the Humayun’s Tomb Garden revitalisation project, a gift to India made by His Highness the Aga Khan on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the country’s independence.

Through a subsequent Public-Private Partnership (PPP) created at the invitation of the Government of India, the Aga Khan Trust for Culture’s engagement in the area expanded. Under the PPP, a broader urban revitalisation project was created to encompass an urban renewal initiative in Nizamuddin Basti, the redevelopment of the Sundar Nursery - Batashewala Complex into a 100-acre city park, significant improvements to the quality of life for the residents of Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti, the conservation of Humayun’s Tomb itself, and the restoration of associated structures.

The aim of the PPP, as with all such projects undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, is to revitalise historic urban centres in ways that can spur social, economic and cultural development. In Nizamuddin, for example, AKTC projects include a wide spectrum of programmes, from early childhood development to adult vocational training, from sanitation to waste management, housing improvement to street upgrading, from the landscaping of neighbourhood parks to the revival of cultural traditions. In each endeavour, AKTC has worked in partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the Central Public Works Department.

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Read online at: <http://www.akdn.org/press-release/humayuns-tomb-site-museum-launched-indias-minister-tourism-and-culture-and-aga-khan>