



DÉLÉGATION FRANÇAISE · FRENCH DELEGATION

### **Aga Khan arrives in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on second stop of his 10-day official visit to India**



**Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India, 22 February 2018** - His Highness the Aga Khan, Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, and founder and chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), today arrived in Ahmedabad on the second stop of his 10-day official visit to the country at the invitation of the Government of India.

During his visit to Ahmedabad His Highness met the Honourable Governor of Gujarat Shri Om Prakash Kohli, and the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Vijay Rupani.

This visit is part of a series of visits that coincide with the commemoration of His Highness the Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee, marking the 60th anniversary of his leadership as Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslim Community. The Aga Khan's Jubilees have traditionally served as opportunities to launch or advance social, cultural and economic development projects. These include the development of hospitals, schools, universities, cultural and financial institutions that serve people of all backgrounds and faiths.

On 21 February in Delhi, the Aga Khan, together with Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Vice President of India, inaugurated Sunder Nursery, a new 90-acre (36 hectare) city park in New Delhi.

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) has had a long history in India, and in particular Gujarat, where the first Aga Khan school was established in Mundra in 1905. The school was the precursor to the Aga Khan Education Services (AKES) which today manages close to 30 schools, and early childhood development centres in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Telangana.

AKES, in partnership with the Aga Khan Foundation and the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme, has recently commenced an initiative to improve access to early learning opportunities, working with *Anganwadi* centres (government child care centres) in the Devbhumi Dwarka district. Early childhood development is a core focus of the AKDN, reinforcing the belief that *'the way in which children are educated in their earliest years is a key which can unlock the doors of opportunity for the rest of their lives'*. Evidence has shown that an investment made in the earliest, pre-school years can bring enormous dividends as a child proceeds from one level of education to another.

## **Best Practice Model**

The three-year project in Devbhumi Dwarka district aims at improving the teaching and learning environment in 50 *Anganwadi* centres through training and support of *Anganwadi* functionaries and initiatives to increase community ownership of these centres. These model centres are emerging as demonstration sites for best early childhood education practices.

AKDN plans to use the learnings from the existing project to scale the model to other districts in Gujarat with an emphasis on training *Anganwadi* functionaries and community interventions to increase parental engagement, improving the quality of service delivery and the sustainability of these centres.

### **For more information please contact:**

Reshma Lakhani  
Communications Coordinator  
Aga Khan Council for India  
Email: [reshmalakhani@gmail.com](mailto:reshmalakhani@gmail.com)  
Cell: 9820757964

Lukhimai Linnebank  
Partnerships & Communications Officer  
Aga Khan Foundation (India)  
Sarojini House, 6 Bhagwan Dass Road  
New Delhi - 110 001, India  
Email: [lukhi.linnebank@akdn.org](mailto:lukhi.linnebank@akdn.org)  
Tel: 91-11-47399724

## **Notes**

The Ismaili Imam and the AKDN have a long and historic relationship with India, dating back 100 years to the first Aga Khan School in Mundra, Gujarat, which was established by the Aga Khan's grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, in 1905.

Today, AKDN institutions in India work in close partnership with governments and communities to address a broad spectrum of development priorities in the country, including cultural revitalisation, education, health care, drinking water and sanitation, agriculture and the environment, rural development and access to finance for less privileged communities. These initiatives include rural support programmes that have benefitted over 1.5 million people in over 2,500 villages, the creation of 6,600 community institutions, urban and rural education programmes providing education to 8,500 students every year, a comprehensive sanitation initiative in six states, the Aga Khan Academy in Hyderabad, and a 162-bed multi-specialty acute care hospital in Mumbai. AKDN institutions in India have been widely recognised for their work, which is frequently replicated by governmental institutions as well as other development organisations.

<http://www.akdn.org/press-release/aga-khan-arrives-ahmedabad-gujarat-second-stop-his-10-day-official-visit-india>