DIAMOND JUBILEE

HIS HIGHNESS THE AGA KHAN IV

[1957 – 2017]

The Diamond Jubilee

What is the Diamond Jubilee?

The Diamond Jubilee marks the 60th anniversary of His Highness the Aga Khan’s leadership as the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslim Community. On 11th July, 1957, the Aga Khan, at the age of 20, assumed the hereditary office of Imam established by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), following the passing of his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan.

Why is the Community celebrating His Highness the Aga Khan’s Diamond Jubilee?

The commemoration of the Aga Khan’s Diamond Jubilee is in keeping with the Ismaili Community’s longstanding tradition of marking historic milestones.

Over the past six decades, the Aga Khan has transformed the quality of life of hundreds of millions of people around the world. In the areas of health, education, cultural revitalisation, and economic empowerment, he has inspired excellence and worked to improve living conditions and opportunities in some of the world’s most remote and troubled regions.

The Diamond Jubilee is an opportunity for the Shia Ismaili Muslim community, partners of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), and government and faith community leaders in over 25 countries to express their appreciation for His Highness’s leadership and commitment to improve the quality of life of the world’s most vulnerable populations. It is also an occasion for His Highness to recognise the friendship and longstanding support of leaders of governments and partners in the work of the Imamat and to set the direction for the future. This would include laying foundations for and launching major new initiatives and programmes, founded upon partnerships based on the principles of ethics in action, peace and pluralism.

When will the Diamond Jubilee be commemorated?

This historic commemoration will begin on the 11th of July 2017 and conclude on the 11th of July 2018.

What are the major objectives of His Highness’ Diamond Jubilee?

Objectives for the Diamond Jubilee reflect His Highness’ continued commitment, demonstrated in landmark accomplishments over the past six decades, to improve living conditions and opportunities in developing countries in Asia and Africa, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized. Numerous new projects and initiatives will be launched during the Jubilee, encompassing coordinated programmes to alleviate poverty, increase access to finance for education, health and housing, early childhood development, and infrastructure (principally, water,
energy and telecommunications) projects in developing countries. Additional resources and capacity will be added to the institutions of the Aga Khan Development Network, including the Aga Khan University and the University of Central Asia. It is hoped that the Diamond Jubilee will also provide occasion to improve understanding of Islam and Muslim civilizations, as well as the contributions of Muslim communities, historically as well as in contemporary times, and to foster collaboration between different peoples and faith communities around the world.

Why is this such an important event?

The Jubilee marks 60 years of the Imamat of His Highness the Aga Khan. Over the last 60 years, His Highness has guided the Shia Ismaili Community, the Muslim Ummah and the societies within which they live towards addressing key challenges relating to human development. He has enabled successful collaborative endeavours among Muslims, across different faiths, and between developed and developing countries. The past six decades have been a time of turbulent change for the countries in the developing world where the majority of the Shia Ismaili Muslim Community lives. Throughout this time, His Highness’ guidance and efforts have enabled the Ismaili Community to establish institutions and to work collaboratively with others, to assure the security, welfare and progress of its members and those of other communities they live amongst. He has guided the Community in the practice of its faith and has worked to improve the understanding of Islam by others.

His Highness the Aga Khan

Who is His Highness the Aga Khan?

The Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam (Spiritual Leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. He is a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) through his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, the first Imam, and Ali’s wife Fatima (the Prophet's daughter).

He is Founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), one of the world’s most comprehensive development organizations. Guided by the ethics of Islam and the Imam’s hereditary mandate and responsibility to improve the quality of life of his community and of those amongst whom they live, the Aga Khan has been at the forefront of innovation in development during his 60 years as Imam.

What is the role of the Imam?

In Islam’s ethical tradition, religious leaders not only interpret the faith but also have a responsibility to help improve the quality of life of their community and the societies among which they live. For the Aga Khan, this has meant a deep engagement with the concerns of the developing world and efforts to improve living conditions and opportunities through the agencies of the AKDN.

What is the Imamat?

The Imamat is the institution (office) of the Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. In the Shia tradition of Islam, the Imamat is the hereditary institution of spiritual and moral authority established by Prophet Muhammad, when he designated and appointed his cousin and son-in-law Ali as the first Imam. With a history that spans over 1400 years, the Ismaili Imamat is a non-political transnational office, representing the succession of Imams since the time of the Prophet.
The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)

What is the Aga Khan Development Network?

The Aga Khan Development Network is one of world’s most comprehensive development organizations. It operates in over 30 countries, principally in Central and South Asia, Eastern and Western Africa and the Middle East.

Inspired by the Islamic ethic of compassion and responsibility to care for the needy, the AKDN works for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin, or religion, to alleviate poverty and foster self-reliance. The Network’s individual agencies have mandates ranging from health and education to rural development, microfinance, disaster reduction, the promotion of private-sector enterprise, architecture and the revitalisation of historic cities—all of which are catalysts for development. Together, they contribute towards building a vibrant civil society that addresses the needs of vulnerable populations.

AKDN spends US$ 925 million dollars annually on non-profit social and cultural development activities and employs 80,000 people.

The Network works in partnership with international and multilateral organizations (including the World Bank and agencies of the UN), development agencies of governments globally (including Canada, Europe and the U.S.), leading universities and private development organizations around the world, and local, state and national governments as well as the spectrum of civil society in each country where the AKDN is active.

The Shia Ismaili Muslim Community

Who are the Ismailis?

The Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims, known as the Ismailis, belong to the Shia branch of Islam. Like the wider Muslim world as a whole, the Ismaili Community encompasses a rich diversity of cultures, languages, and nationalities. Residing primarily in Central and South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe, North America and the Far East, members of the Community around the world are united in their spiritual allegiance to His Highness the Aga Khan as their 49th hereditary Imam.

For more information on the Aga Khan Development Network please see: www.akdn.org

For more information on the Shia Ismaili Muslim community, please see: www.theismaili.org

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