

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

PRESS RELEASE

His Highness the Aga Khan arrives in New Delhi on Diamond Jubilee visit to India

New Delhi, India, 20 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) arrived in New Delhi today on a 10-day official visit at the invitation of the Government of India. He was received by Shri Sanjay Verma, Chief of Protocol and Shri Deepak Mittal Joint Secretary.

This visit is part of a series of visits that coincide with the commemoration of 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.

Tomorrow, Tuesday 21st February, together with Honourable Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, the Aga Khan will inaugurate Sunder Nursery a 90- acre city park in Delhi. The project is undertaken by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which for over a decade, has been engaged in undertaking a unique urban renewal initiative in the Humayun's Tomb – Nizamuddin area of Delhi.

The project draws upon the Aga Khan's conviction that cultural legacies can become powerful catalysts for change.

20,000 saplings of 280 tree species have been planted – making Sunder Nursery Delhi's first arboretum; over 80 bird species have already been recorded since the overgrown and decrepit nursery was replaced with green cover; six of the 15 monuments on the site have been designated as World Heritage Monuments following conservation and landscape restoration; and facilities such as an amphitheatre have been built and more are planned.

The conservation and development effort is in partnership with the Central Public Works Department, Archaeological Survey of India and the South Delhi Municipal Corporation. Sunder Nursery is the 7th park of urban scale developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

Other parks that have been developed by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture include those in Afghanistan, Canada, Egypt, Mali, Tajikistan and Zanzibar.

While in Delhi, the Aga Khan is expected to meet with Honourable President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind, Honourable Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. He will travel to Ahmedabad, Hyderabad and Mumbai where he will meet with the Governor and Chief Minister of Gujarat, the Governor, Chief Minister and Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana and the Governor and Chief Minister of Maharashtra.

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In 2015 the Aga Khan was awarded the Padma Vibhushan, one of the country's highest civilian decorations, for his contributions to social development in India.

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The *Ismaili Imam* and the *Aga Khan Development Network* (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.