

His Highness the Aga Khan



His Highness the Aga Khan, the 49th hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, will visit India from 20th February to 1st March 2018 at the invitation of the Government of India.

The visit is part of a series of commemorative events around the world to mark the 60th anniversary – the **Diamond Jubilee** – of His Highness the Aga Khan's accession to the leadership of the Shia Ismaili Muslims on 11th July 1957.

Driven by the ethics of his faith, including generosity, brotherhood, compassion, voluntary service, self-reliance, and an emphasis on the role of the intellect, as well as by the Imam's hereditary responsibility to transform the quality of life for his community and for those amongst whom they live, the Aga Khan has been at the forefront of innovation in development during his 60 years as Imam.

He is Founder and Chairman of the **Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)**, one of the most comprehensive development organisations in the world today. The Network is present in over 30 countries across South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and North America. It works in close partnership with governments, public and private institutions, international organisations, foundations and universities. In the areas of health, education, cultural revitalisation, and economic empowerment, he has worked to inspire excellence and improve living conditions and opportunities for people in some of the world's most remote and troubled regions, providing opportunity and touching the lives of millions of people of all faiths, in some of the world's most resource-poor and often, most remote regions.

The Aga Khan and his family have had a long history of commitment to humanity. The Aga Khan's grandfather Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan, as India's representative, served as President of the League of Nations in Geneva during 1937-38. In the Ismaili tradition, Jubilees often serve as occasions to commemorate new programmes and initiatives. The Silver Jubilee of His Highness saw the development of the **Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)**, which has now expanded to touch the lives of over 1 million people in Gujarat, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. During his Golden Jubilee, the Aga Khan launched the **Aga Khan Academy** in Hyderabad which imparts the International Baccalaureate curriculum to promising children irrespective of their faith or socio-economic status.

AKDN activities in India span the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh. In addition to the Rural Support Programme and the Aga Khan Academy in Hyderabad, the Network in India includes 28 schools and educational centres, the multi-faceted development programmes of the Aga Khan Foundation

headquartered in the nation's capital Delhi, a 162-bed multi-specialty acute care Prince Aly Khan Hospital in Mumbai, the restoration of a World Heritage site in the nation's capital and the Development Credit Bank (DCB) with 155 branches and 450,000 customers across 17 states and 2 union territories.

The Aga Khan has emphasised the importance of **education** as central to the development of both men and women. The first Aga Khan School was founded in Mundra (Gujarat) in 1905; today there are over 80 schools and educational institutions run by AKDN agencies. Its education programmes cover a wide spectrum of activities, from early childhood to post-secondary education, teacher training, literacy programmes, school improvement and educational policy reform.

Along with other AKDN agencies - Aga Khan Foundation and Aga Khan Agency for Habitat – jointly implement a **Comprehensive Sanitation Initiative** across six states in India. The programme is aimed at facilitating access to sanitation for 100,000 households along with improvements in hygiene practices over a five-year period. In 2017, AKDN agencies received national recognition from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) for their work on facilitating access to sanitation and excellence in water management and conservation.

The Aga Khan also believes that culture and development are inextricably linked, and that cultural legacies can become powerful catalysts for change and for alleviating poverty. In India, through the work of the **Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC)**, the development of the **90-acre Sunder Nursery** is part of a larger urban development initiative whereby the Aga Khan Development Network has implemented the conservation of 50 monuments across the 300 acres of project area, including the Humayun's Tomb. The conservation effort is now being culminated in the creation of a state-of-art site museum at the World Heritage Site.

In recognition of his exceptional efforts and contributions to the betterment of social conditions of societies globally, His Highness the Aga Khan has, over the past six decades, received numerous decorations, honorary degrees, and awards from institutions and nations across the world. In 2015, he was awarded the **Padma Vibhushan** by the Government of India, in recognition of the values of pluralism, sound ethics, and shared humanity that is so necessary for the world today.

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