



ONGOING ACTIVITIES



■ PARK E ZARNEGAR, KABUL

Taking its name from the palace in which the treaty ratifying Afghanistan's independent status from imperial British Indian Rule was signed in 1921 (and which was demolished in the 1960s) this park is on the site of orchards originally laid out by Babur's uncle Ulug Beg in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Apart from the imposing brick mausoleum of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (above) and adjoining mosque, the only evidence of the history of the site is the *gulistan-serai* pavilion built by Habibullah Khan in around 1910, and the tall plane trees that flank the stone-lined water channels that cross what is now a public garden.

Based on a rehabilitation plan agreed with Kabul Municipality in 2004, investments have been made by AKTC in the removal of accumulated waste and rubble, the installation of a piped irrigation system and re-grading of soil, the planting of more than 1,000 trees and the laying of pedestrian pathways and installation of benches. At the request of the Municipality, public toilets were also constructed. During the summer, Park e Zarnegar now provides a shady respite for a growing number of visitors to the centre of the city (below). The next stage of the works entail re-location of a petrol station and rationalization of the municipal carpark adjoining the *gulistan-serai*, which urgently requires preservation.

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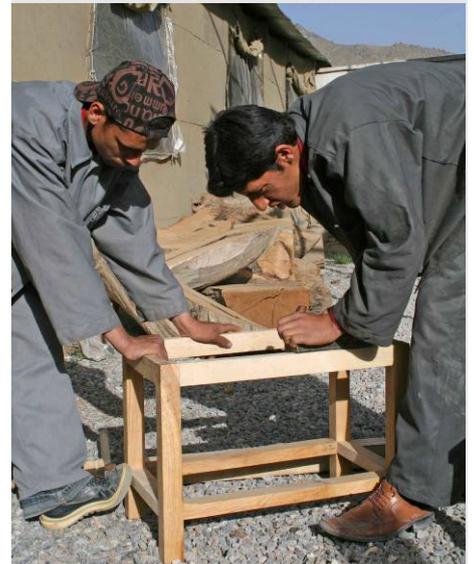


■ VISITORS TO BAGHE BABUR

Following the example of the 27,000 people who visited Baghe Babur over the Nawruz holiday, H.E. First deputy President Ahmad Zia Masood joined the Mayor of Kabul and members of the Kabul Old City Commission in the garden on 16th April. After reviewing the activities of the Commission, which coordinates urban conservation and development initiatives in the old city, H.E. Ahmad Zia Masood stressed the importance of safeguarding of the surviving historic fabric and urged that effective development controls be enforced for all new construction in this highly sensitive area.

■ VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN D7, KABUL

As part of ongoing efforts to promote socio-economic development in District 7, two workshops were established in early 2008 to provide residents with training in basic carpentry and tailoring skills. Experienced carpenters are providing instruction over 6 months to 20 young men from the district, in order to develop skills that will improve their chances of finding employment. In addition to furniture, the outputs of the training course include windows and doors for installation in the nearby Gozargah school, where 4,600 girls are taught in 4 shifts in a derelict private house and in tents. Individuals or organizations with an interest in placing orders with the workshop should contact Ghulam Sakhizada (0798 175 375) gmohd\_sakhizada@yahoo.com



In an adjoining compound, 20 women from the neighbourhood are receiving initial instruction over 4 months in tailoring. Based on an assessment of demand and skills at the end of the initial stage of the course, students will be supported in establishing home-based enterprises in the district.





Interior of the Chahar Suq cistern (photo Nick Danziger)

## ■ CISTERNS, HERAT OLD CITY

Two and a half years ago, preservation work began on the mosque and cistern complex adjoining what was once *Darwaza Malik* or the King's Gate to the old city of Herat. Across a courtyard from the summer and winter mosques, which date in part from the Safavid era, is a cistern built in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century by Ali Sher Nawai and described, and dated\*, in a 16<sup>th</sup> century verse (right):

As well as being one of the oldest surviving cisterns in the old city, this is unusual for its rectangular plan, over which pairs of transverse and cloister vaults have sections of the brick masonry laid vertically, with a small central dome. Following repairs to the superstructure and roof of the dome, the lime plaster that rendered the reservoir of the cistern waterproof has been restored in a manner that matches the characteristics of the original *saroje* finish. A mix of slaked lime, sand, ash, straw and water is beaten with a wooden paddle for 7-8 hours, after which the plasticity is tested by seeing if the mix bonds 2 fired bricks together. More straw is then added before treading by foot for 2-3 hours, after which the mix is ready for application to the walls as a base course. A second coat of plaster, in which bulrush fibres replace the straw in the mix, is then applied and smoothed with a round river stone, or a steel/wooden trowel. To date, some 200 metres<sup>2</sup> of lime plaster has been applied in this way to the Malik cistern, while the same technique is being used to repair damaged sections of the Chahar Suq cistern.

\*Attributed to Sayyid Ikhtiyar in *Majalis al-nafa'is*, the chronogram in the last four words of the verse add up to 897 AH or 1491/2 AD

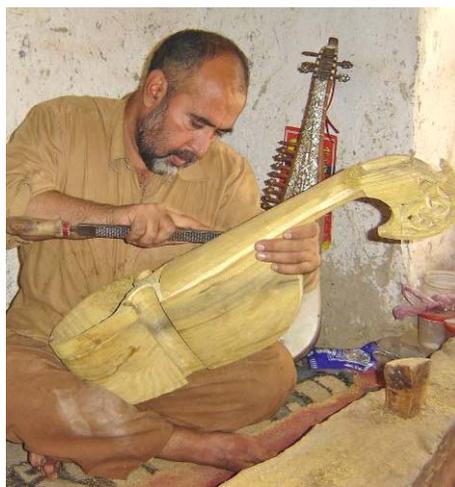
حوض که خواهم از صفایش گویم  
صد بار دهن آب سیوان شوم  
هر خدی که هست نقش چشمه خضر  
تایرخ روی از ساقی کوثر جویم  
خط: ابرو محمدی

*Let me speak of the purity of the cistern which I desire*

*Let me wash my mouth a hundred times in its water of life*

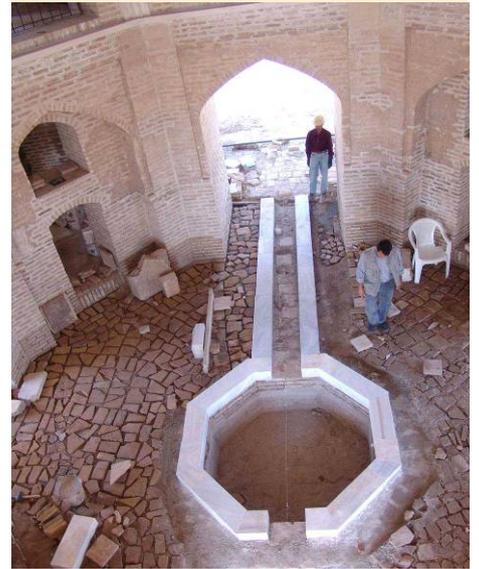
*So much more that its source is the spring of Khizr*

*I seek its date from the cupbearer of Kauthar.*



## ■ GAZORGAH, HERAT

As the preservation of the superstructure of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Namakdan pavilion reaches its final stages, careful documentation has taken place of traces of a marble lined water-channel that ran through the building and a small octagonal pool that lay at its centre. Together with historic photos, this work has enabled the reconstruction of a system through which water will again flow under the newly-preserved dome of the pavilion, over a small marble cascade, and to the garden to the west. Along with the stabilization of the adjoining Abdullah Ansari shrine, this work is co-funded by the German government.



## HERAT COMMISSION

■ H.E. Abdul Karim Khurram, Minister of Information and Culture, attended a meeting of the Herat Old City Commission on 14th April, with H.E. Governor Sayed Hosayn Anwari and the Mayor of Herat. The need to ensure more effective controls on new construction in the old city were discussed, and measures taken to divert traffic away from the minarets of the Musallah complex were reviewed.

## MAKING MUSIC

■ From April, the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia (AKMICA) initiated training in the old city of Kabul in the making of the traditional musical instrument *rubab*, carved from mulberry wood, and that continues to be widely played in the region. Five students are currently receiving instruction from *Ustad Azim Qadri* (left) as part of a course that will last for 18 months.

For more information about AKTC's programme in Afghanistan, contact us in Qala Moeen Afzal Khan, Gozargah street, District 3, Kabul or Qala Ikhtiyaruddin, Herat information@aktc.akdn-afg.org