



A customary open air performance of the *attan*, the Afghan national dance, in Bagh-e Babur accompanied by drums.

NAWRUZ AT BAGH-E BABUR

For many families from Kabul and surrounding provinces, Bagh-e Babur was once again the focus of celebrations during *Nawruz*, marking the beginning of the Persian year 1390. With more than 40,000 visitors to the garden on the first day of festivities alone, an unprecedented number since rehabilitation of the site concluded in 2008, the garden continues to attract residents of Kabul and visitors alike during important social and cultural events. Additional enhancement works to the natural landscape, currently under way in the garden with support made available by the US Embassy, will provide additional areas for seating and family picnics.

VIEWS OF KABUL

The photographic exhibition *Views of Kabul* was held between 5-28 March in the Queen's Palace of Bagh-e Babur. The exhibition presented works produced during a series of photojournalism workshops given by British photographer Simon Norfolk to a group of young Afghan photographers in late 2010. Supported by the Tate Modern museum (UK), the exhibition explored the city's identity today. The display featured work by Nasratullah Ansari, M. Hassan Zakizadeh and Fardin Waezi alongside 19th-century pictures of Kabul by John Burke and Norfolk's own photographs. The exhibition attracted more than 27,000 visitors during the three weeks it was on display.

KABUL UNIVERSITY

As part of its ongoing teaching support, aimed at building Afghan technical capacity in conservation and planning, AKTC staff and consultants delivered two intensive Winter Courses at the architecture department of Kabul University. The first course focused on architectural drawing skills, while the second course introduced planning & conservation concepts in historic cities to students of the department. The courses are part of an extra-curricular 'Urban Conservation Training' program with the aim to expose students of Architecture to concepts of urban planning and conservation, with an emphasis on issues they are likely to encounter in subsequent professional practice in Afghanistan. The courses are supplemented by lectures and short-term seminars, which are open to students and recent graduates, delivered by Afghan and International practitioners throughout the semester.



H.E. Minister for Information and Culture, Sayed Makhdoom Raheen and US Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, during the inauguration of the rehabilitated *madrasa*

ULYA MADRASA, KABUL OLD CITY

Following the completion of comprehensive restoration works, the Ulya madrasa was handed back in mid-March to representatives of the Shor Bazaar community in the Old city of Kabul. The project, part of AKTC's multi-year conservation programme in the Old city of Kabul (See Newsletter #17, "Road widening in the Old city'), was undertaken with resources made available by the US Embassy and included extensive repairs to the decorated brickwork, the metal roof, and the two distinctive rectangular minarets at either end of the structure. These two three-storey minarets constitute a visual landmark in the Old City, showing a characteristic mix of neo-classical architectural motifs that survive in other buildings of the time.



Students practicing their skills in drawing and planning



Young visitors discussing the images on display at the Queen's Palace



QALA IKHTYARUDDIN, HERAT

With consolidation works nearing completion, AKTC has focused its conservation activities on stabilizing and protecting vulnerable areas of eroded *pakhsa* (compacted mud) walls, which support the base of the brick perimeter ramparts in the upper citadel. The remains of earlier constructions in the area have also been cleaned during this period and, in order to prevent further damage, work continues to stabilize the structures using brick and lime mortar. Discussions are underway with staff of the Department of Historic Monuments aimed at preparing an operations and maintenance plan for the citadel, with technical support provided by AKTC where appropriate. Once fully operational, it is expected that Qala Ikhtyaruddin will become an important place for organizing cultural functions in the city.

Work to conserve the murals painted in the hammam located in the upper citadel were completed. The murals were painted with water soluble pigment onto gypsum plaster



Guldasta-e Kharabat orchestra performing at the Gul-e Surkh

MUSIC FESTIVAL IN MAZAR

As in previous years (see *Newsletter #24*), ten musicians of the Guldasta-e Kharabat orchestra of the Agha Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) participated in the 8th International Festival of Gul-e-Surkh in Mazar-e Sharif. Also known as *Gul-e-Surkh* or red flower, named after the abundant red tulips that grow wild around the city, this international Music Festival is held annually in Mazar-e-Sharif under the auspices of the Foundation for Culture and Civil Society (FCCS). The AKMI musicians performed over three consecutive days in front of packed audiences of 600 to 900 spectators at venues such as the auditorium of the Balkh medical faculty and the Gul-e Surkh auditorium. With over 2000 visitors from many parts of Afghanistan, the Nauroz festival offered an opportunity to showcase the art and variety of traditional music and contributed to the dissemination and preservation of Afghan musical heritage.

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



FOLK MUSIC FROM HERAT & BADGHIS

The Afghan Folk music documentation project continued in 2011, under the auspices of the Agha Khan Music Initiative (AKMI) and supported by the Governments of Norway and the US. Afghan musician and researcher Vaheed Kaacemy and the AKMI team travelled to Herat to record music from this region. The researchers identified and interviewed more than 35 practitioners, recording over 4 hours of broadcast quality music. With the aim to raise awareness of Afghanistan's rich musical traditions, fifteen musicians from these two regions travelled to Kabul and performed in front of 700 Afghan and International guest during two days of public recitals held in March. As part of the program, a collection of CDs containing more than 6.5 hours of music recorded during the first stage of the documentation program in Badakhshan in 2010, were distributed to cultural organizations with an interest in preserving traditional Afghan music and to local media for dissemination to a wider public.