

CENTRAL ASIAN MUSEUM LEH

The new cultural center of Ladakh



The 7th October a ceremony was held to celebrate the completion of the Central Asian Museum, Leh. The ceremony was attended by Ladakh communities representative, eminent scholar and concerned parties. The chief guest, Saleem Beg chairman of National Monuments Authority concluded the ceremony. The participants praised the work of Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) and Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI) and the generosity of Anjuman Moin-ul Islam society for provide the land for museum construction and to support the idea and concept of the museum as an important cultural centre for the Ladakh communities and visitors.

During the ceremony, two minutes of silence were kept in memory of late Andre Alexander, (1965-2012) co founder and chairman of the Tibet Heritage Fund who conceived, designed and build the Central Asian Museum in Leh.

Leh Old Town Initiative architect Yutaka Hirako and project manager Stanzin Dolker and the artisans and builders team were thanked for the quality of the work and dedication for the completion of the museum.

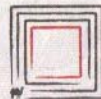
For centuries, Ladakh has been a crossroads of Central Asian Caravan trade. Like few other regions, Ladakh's culture has been shaped by the transmission of goods and ideas from Tibet, Turkestan, Kashmir and India.

The Central Asian Museum Leh has been set up to commemorate this important aspect of Ladakh history, and to educate the public about it. It is built in the Tsas Soma Garden, formerly the site of the Leh's caravanserai. The idea of the museum was launched in 2007 by then General Director of J&K Tourism Saleem Beg, and eminent Ladakhi historian Abdul Ghani Sheikh. The Anjuman Moin-ul Islam Supported the idea of the museum and kindly provided the land.

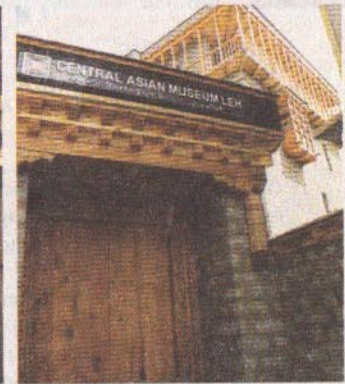
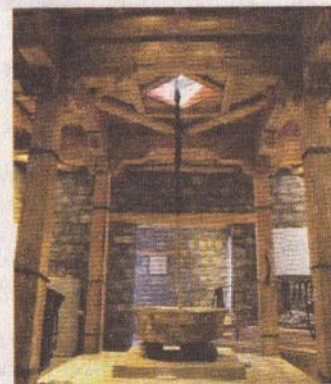
The project was sponsored by the Department of Culture and Tourism, J&K State with the generous amount of 1 crore and 2 lacs, which 89.6 lacs were used in the construction of the Museum, the balance of 32.4 lacs were kept for purchase of artifacts by the Museum and partly deducted by tax. Tibet Heritage Fund's kind sponsors Virginia and Wellington Yee, Maximillian Ma, Howman Wong, Rubin Foundation and Finland Embassy Kindly donate the amount of 1 Crore and 1 Lac. In total of 1 Crore and 90.6 lacs were invested in construction of the Central Asian Museum Leh.

THF and Leh old Town Initiative were ask to design and build the museum. The construction started in August 2008 and the complex was completed in 2015.

The Museum will be an important and dynamic cultural center for the Ladakhi communities, where local and international visitors can learn and experience the rich cultural and diversity of Ladakh.



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Central Asian Museum to display Baltistan, Ladakh, Kashmir, Tibet artifacts



Group photograph on the completion of Central Asian Museum

Stanzin Desal

LEH: The four-storey Central Asian Museum completion ceremony was held on 7th October at Tsas Soma garden in the Chutayrangtak area of the old town.

The Central Asian Museum is located right in the centre of Leh town. It is built in the Tsas Soma Gardens, the land where the caravans used to camp. The Ladakhi king Senge Namgyal gave permission to some traders to build Leh's first mosque on these grounds. The museum was designed and is being built by Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) / Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI).

Chairman, National Monument Authority Saleem Beg was the chief Guest of the occasion, Abdul Ghani Sheikh- President, Society for Preservation of Trans-Himalayan Art and Culture, Saif-ud-din- President, Anjuman Moin ul Islam, Dr. Mohd Deen, Executive member, Society for Preservation of Trans-Himalayan Art and Culture and many other eminent guest and scholars were present.

Speaking on the occasion, Saleem Beg said that it is a unique and major success, in today's world, museum is not about exhibit

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it's about the education and knowledge and it is very important to make use of the space as a place where knowledge is imparted and education is delivered. He suggested making space as a community centre, to carry interaction and many other things.

Abdul Ghani Sheikh, President, Society for Preservation of Trans Himalayan Art and Culture congratulated the THF for the invaluable contribution towards the construction of the museum. He said the dedication of Pimpim de Azevedo-Co-director Tibet Heritage Fund and Yutaka Hirako-Programme director/Project Architect, THF/LOTI is an exemplary. He said that this museum will refresh the memories of Past Ladakh, a time where every Ladakhi has an access to the Central Asian regions. Leh was an important trade centre for the Central Asia. "What Port Said is to the Suez Canal, Leh is to the Central Asian Trade road,¹ this is what a British Joint Commissioner, R.L. Kennion, posted in Ladakh at the turn of the 19th century," Sheikh says. He further added that the Central Asian Museum will play a key

role to depict the age-old relation of Ladakh with its neighbor.

The four storey gallery will display the artifacts of Baltistan, Kashmir, Tibet and Ladakh. For centuries, Ladakh has close trade and cultural relation with these neighboring regions. The idea was to inform about the Central Asian trade, of which Ladakh long has been an important crossroads, and which has had a long and lasting influence on the development of Ladakh's unique culture.

The museum was the idea of the Anjuman Society in Leh (the site owner), with whom THF had cooperated in 2007 to restore Leh's oldest mosque -the Masjid Sharif. The final concept and design for the site was made by Late André Alexander, based on traditional Ladakhi and Tibetan building types. The museum courtyard also includes a traditional styled Ladakhi Kitchen and a library.

On this occasion, many other guest and scholar spoke on the history, the importance of culture and about the Museum. A token of thanks was presented to all the workers and volunteers. The day called off with the visit of the Museum complex.