



AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

Historic Cities Support Programme

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ONGOING ACTIVITIES



The Timur Shah Park has been reclaimed from the original *châhâr bagh* that once surrounded the mausoleum, as shown in John Burke's photograph from 1880

■ TIMUR SHAH MAUSOLEUM, KABUL

Photographs from the 19th century show that the original *châhâr bagh* in which the mausoleum of Timur Shah was built was even by then much reduced in extent. The modernization programme pursued by Amir Habibullah Khan resulted in 1904 in further transformations, as the first secondary school in Afghanistan, Habibia college, was built on land to the north-east of the mausoleum, as part of a range of neo-classical buildings stretching along both banks of the Kabul river. In 1965, part of this range was demolished to make way for a municipal park created between the mausoleum and the river. In time, this space was occupied by informal traders—mainly tailors and cloth-sellers—working out of cramped containers and small shacks, which were re-located by Kabul Municipality in 2005.



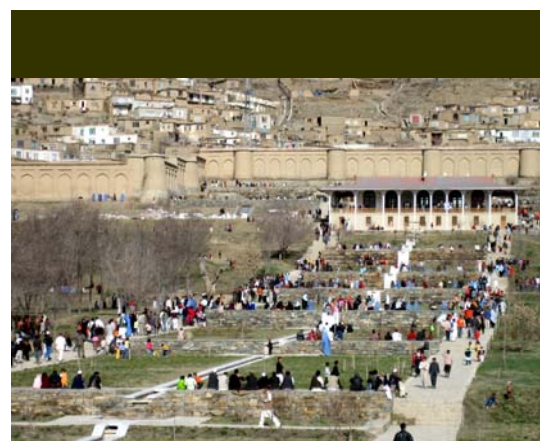
The new perimeter wall provides a barrier to the congestion along the river bank and areas to the north of the Kabul river

Having completed the restoration of the mausoleum, AKTC responded to a request from Kabul Municipality to enclose and landscape the newly-reclaimed Timur Shah park. This has entailed the construction of a brick masonry perimeter wall, extending more than 400 metres around the site, as a means of both ensuring tranquillity in the busy city-centre location, and deterring encroachments in the future. The wall had been designed in a manner that incorporates seating in niches, which form a colonnade along the riverside section, to provide a shaded, protected space for members of the public. In parallel with the construction of the wall, significant amounts of waste and rubble were cleared from the site, prior to levelling, digging of a deep well and installation of irrigation. Taking a cue from historic photographs of the original *châhâr bagh*, the central section of the site has been replanted with a glade of mulberry trees, which will quickly provide a canopy of shade across the park. Sets will be installed, and a network of stone pathways is being laid to facilitate public access to the mausoleum, to the east of which a new square or *maidan* has been created, adjacent to a popular cinema. Several historic graves that were found to the north of the mausoleum have been repaired, along with the area around the adjoining shrine. It is envisaged that the park will be re-opened to the public in late summer of 2007.

Together with the restoration of the Timur Shah mausoleum, the reclamation and re-greening of the surrounding park represents an opportunity for the regeneration of an area that is of critical importance to the city as a whole. **AKTC looks to the Municipality and others to build on this initiative, and develop a coherent plan for the area, including the busy commercial quarter of Mandawi.**



Planting and paving are currently under way in the reclaimed park around the newly-restored mausoleum of Timur Shah in central Kabul

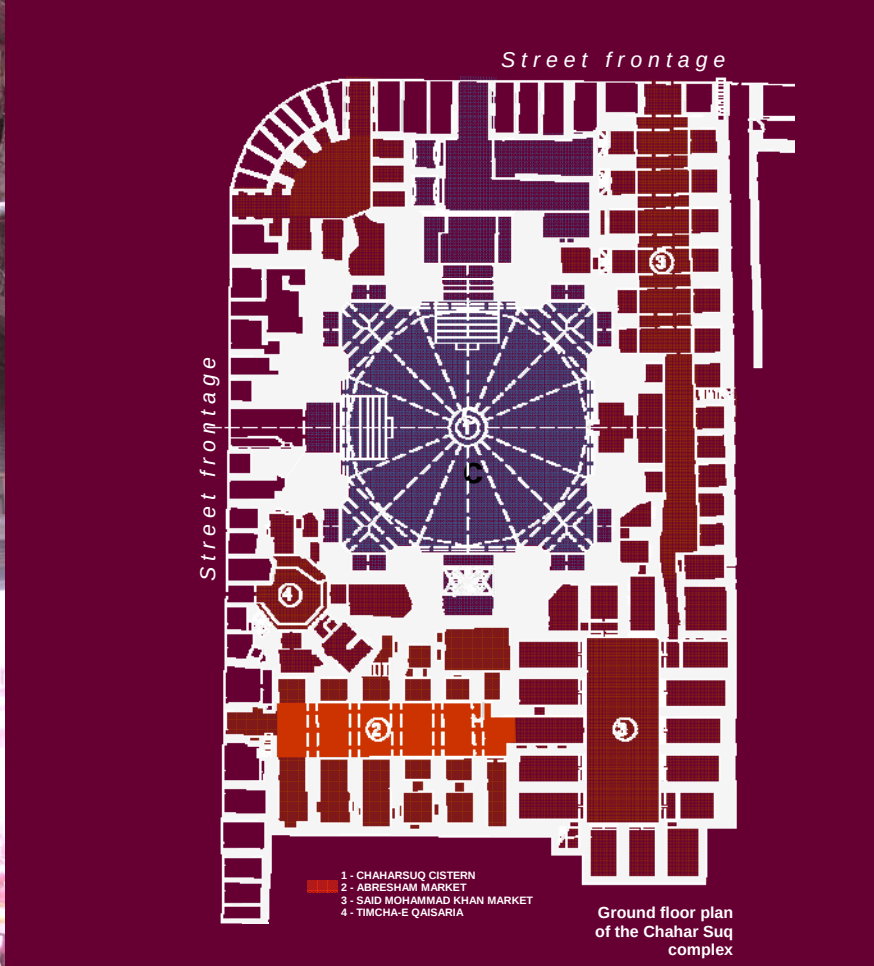


■ NAUROZ IN BAGHE BABUR

Thousands of people flocked to Baghe Babur during the traditional Persian New Year, or *Nauroz* holiday on 21st March. Many families chose to picnic under the shade of the orchards on the terraces, while others simply watched the world go by along the broad paths of the newly-restored central axis. The garden continues to be open to the public daily.



On-going rehabilitation of the interior space of the *serai*



Repairs to brick masonry vaults flanking the *serai*



Restoration of damaged *orosi* screens on the first floor of the interior space has provided an opportunity to train carpenters

THE REHABILITATION OF THE SERAI E ABRESHAM IN HERAT

The lofty spaces of the Serai e Abresham are some of the last vestiges of the extensive covered bazaars that once characterised Herat's commercial core. Adjoining the newly-restored Châhâr Suq cistern (which, as its name suggests, lay at the intersection of four such bazaars, and is shown in red on the plan above), this brick-vaulted complex has historically been the centre for trade in silk thread. One of only four surviving covered markets in the old city, the Serai e Abresham was in a poor state of repair when work began in 2005 on restoring the dome of the cistern. As work proceeded on the cistern, the need for repairs to the structure of this bazaar and the adjacent Timche Qaysari — a typical smaller commercial complex arranged around an open courtyard — became clear. Extensive repairs have been undertaken on the roofs and upper floors of both, including restoration of the distinctive timber screens (see left) separating the double-height space from the storage space or *hujras*. During the course of these works, the southern arch of the Châhâr Suq cistern has been re-opened, and a long-blocked staircase to the roof restored, enabling access to the extensive roof of the complex, which has been paved with fired bricks, and could serve as a public facility.

Together with other investments in the neighbourhood, the restoration of the Serai e Abresham complex is intended to contribute to the regeneration of the commercial heart of the old city, while demonstrating the potential for adaptive re-use of historic property.

ISSUES



The nomination of Herat on the [World Heritage List](#) now seems to hang in the balance. Under the provisions of an agreement signed between UNESCO and the authorities in Herat on 4th May 2005, a series of concentric zones were mapped in which special development controls (including height limits) were to be enforced. Despite efforts by members of the Old City Commission to ensure that the provisions of this agreement are adhered to, construction has continued unabated (see above) within all zones, with the tacit agreement of staff of the municipality and planning department. As long as this continues, it is highly unlikely that the preparation of the nomination dossier can proceed — which will be a significant loss of prestige to the city of Herat, as well as Afghanistan.

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