

State's glorious culture to have new, befitting address

CM lays foundation of multi-crore *Tehzeeb Mahal*

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Jammu & Kashmir's rich art and culture will soon have a new and befitting address in the multi-facility *Tehzeeb Mahal*, the foundation stone of which was laid by Chief Minister Omar Abdullah near Tourist Reception Centre here today.

A colourful function, attended by a galaxy of writers, artists, intellectuals, members of the civil society and senior officers, was held to mark the occasion. Minister for Housing, Horticulture & Culture, Raman Bhalla, Minister of State for Industries & Commerce, Home, Tourism & Culture, Sajad Ahmad Kichloo, Member Legislative Assembly, Nasir Aslam Wani and Commissioner/Secretary, Tourism & Culture, Atal Dulloo were present.

The Chief Minister and other dignitaries were accorded traditional reception by *surmai* playing and drum beating folk artists and burning of *isband* (rue seeds).

With this, the uncertainty dogging the construction of *Tehzeeb Mahal* for decades has finally come to rest. A modern cultural centre to showcase rich art, cultural and literary heritage of the State was being planned since 1970s and in 1982, foundation stone of *Tehzeeb Mahal* was laid in the Emporium Gardens. However, the project did not move any further until recently when the Chief Minister approved its construction adjacent to the Tourist Reception Centre.

The *Tehzeeb Mahal* is a huge Rs. 64.89 crore project of the J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages. Another Rs. 23.47 crore will be spent on relocation of the State Road Transport Corporation at Nowgam and cost difference of the land to be paid to the Corporation as former owner of the present site.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said that the multipurpose cultural centre will be the hub of cultural activities in Kashmir and will also showcase the State's rich culture. He said it would also turn into a major tourist attraction. The project, he said, was a long cherished dream and its completion will enable the Cultural Academy to keep its treasure trove on display round the year. He recalled the Quranic manuscripts and calligraphy exhibition held by the Academy in August last and said it showed how rich was the collection of the Academy.

The Chief Minister said that the Tehzeeb Mahal will boost the talent of local artists. He appreciated Sajad Ahmad Kichloo for adopting the Tehzeeb Mahal as his dream project and assured that he would ensure smooth flow of funds for the completion of the project. "Money would never be a problem for the completion of the project within the stipulated time", he said. He asked the Tourism Department to work with J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages in organising cultural programmes during tourist season to highlight the State's rich cultural ethos.

The Chief Minister said that Secretary Academy had his government's full support for promotion of art, culture and literature in the State.

In his address, Raman Bhalla said that the government was keen to develop and promote cultural activities in the State and construction of the Tehzeeb Mahal was a significant step in this direction. He said that the project would cater to various cultural requirements in the state. He said for promotion of tourism and cultural activities peace was a pre-requisite and the Omar Abdullah lead coalition government was doing its best to promote peaceful atmosphere in the State. He asked the people to strengthen the hands of the government in achieving this objective.

Minister of State, Sajad Ahmad Kichloo said that he would personally monitor the Tehzeeb Mahal project and ensure its completion within the stipulated time. He said he would adopt the project and ensure that funds were no hurdle in its timely completion.

MLA, Nasir Aslam Wani also spoke on the occasion while noted poet and Jnanpith awardee, Prof. Rehman Rahi, on behalf of the writers and artists of Kashmir thanked the Chief Minister for his keen interest in the construction of Tehzeeb Mahal.

Earlier, in his welcome address, Secretary J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages, Khalid Bashir Ahmad said that the 3-storeyed *Tehzeeb Mahal* will be a modern cultural complex in traditional architecture with state-of-the-art facilities. The building, he said, will have special architectural finishes in tune with local heritage architecture including *maharaji* bricks, *deji dewari* look, *devri* stone cladding, *khatamband* ceiling, *pinjra* and *jaffri* work, paper machie and *sozni* work on walls and log bridge and heritage fort wall.

Khalid said the ground floor will have auditorium with a seating capacity of 600, Folk Replica Centre, Art Gallery, Administration Space and Intimate Theatre Studio with seating capacity of 200. The first floor, he said, will house Auditorium Balcony, Exhibition Hall-1, Handicrafts Display Room, Library and Conference Hall while the second floor will have Exhibition Hall-2 and Heritage Museum. An Open Air Theatre and Sculpture Garden will be other facilities available at the *Tehzeeb Mahal*, he said, adding, the basement of the building measuring 46,123 sq ft will be used for parking and housing services.

Khalid said the Academy has a rich collection of manuscripts, paintings, miniatures, sculptures, artefacts, reference books, photographs etc. which due to present limited space could not be displayed for public viewing except occasionally by holding limited exhibitions. The *Tehzeeb Mahal*, he said, will resolve this problem and make possible round-the year display of the State's magnificent heritage besides turning into the permanent and colourful address of the State's culture. "I can assure you that the Tehzeeb Mahal will be the hub of literary, cultural and artistic activities as well as a major attraction for tourists interested in knowing about the rich heritage and culture of the State", he said and thanked the Chief Minister for his keen interest in the prestigious project. He requested him to ensure smooth flow of funds for completion of the project within the stipulated 39 months. The project is being executed by J&K Projects Construction Corporation Ltd.

TEHZEEB MAHAL AT A GLANCE

Project Authority	J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages
Project Executing Agency	J&K Projects Construction Corporation Ltd.
Total area	1, 02,382 sq ft
Estimated cost	Rs. 64. 89 crore
Time for completion	39 months
Number of floors	Ground +2

Salient features

Basement	46,123 sq ft for parking & housing services
Ground Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Auditorium with seating capacity of 600 ii) Folk Replica Centre for display of traditional architecture iii) Art Gallery iv) Intimate Theatre with seating capacity of 200 v) Administration space
First Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Auditorium Balcony ii) Exhibition Hall-1 iii) Handicraft Display Room iv) Reference Library v) Conference Hall
Second Floor	i) Exhibition Hall-2

ii) Heritage Museum

Lawns

i) Open Air Theatre

ii) Sculpture Garden

Architecture

In tandem with local cultural ethos and heritage

i) *Maharaji* brick cladding of external walls with timber grid work

ii) *Divri* stone cladding and pathways

iii) *Khatamband* ceiling, *pinjra* and *jafri* work, ornamental panelling

iv) Paper-machie and *sozni* work on walls

v) Ornamental wood work

vi) Log-bridge and Heritage Fort wall
