

SABZ BURJ CONSERVATION

Sabz Burj, built in the 1530's is amongst the earliest Mughal era monuments in Delhi. The building stands within a traffic island prominently at the entrance to the Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site. It is estimated 60 lakh cars cross the monument annually. Conservation works on this significant structure have been undertaken during 2017-21 with the support of Havells by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture in partnership with the Archaeological Survey of India.

On removal of 20th century cement during this conservation effort, a painted ceiling was painstakingly revealed by specialist conservators and found to have been painted in pure gold and lapis amongst other elements. This is now thought to be the earliest surviving painted ceiling for any monument in India and is indicative of the significance of the monument.

The Sabz Burj is a unique monument in Delhi that boasts of glazed tiles on the dome and the tall, elongated drum on which the dome rests. Tiles matching the physical and chemical properties of the 16th century tiles have now been restored on the dome as well as on the drum where these were missing. All surviving original tiles have been retained, even if these had lost their glaze.

Another unique feature of the monument that came to light during conservation works are the differing incised plaster patterns on each of the eight facades. Fortunately, fragments of each of these patterns had survived and it was possible to accordingly restore the patterns in full. Variations of these patterns on this monument include geometric, floral patterns and inscriptions created in incised lime plaster.

In undertaking the conservation, master craftsmen – stone carvers, masons, tile makers – have used traditional materials and building craft techniques favored by Indian craftsmen in the 16th century.

The Conservation of Sabz Burj marks the first ever conservation of a national monument with CSR funds and Havells have also provided illumination of the structure to enhance the night skyline of the historic Humayun's Tomb – Nizamuddin precinct.

Commenting on the conservation effort, **Mr. Anil Rai Gupta, CMD, Havells** said "Indian monuments represent one of the most outstanding facets of the multi-faceted Indian culture. Believing in this vision, it is our esteemed privilege to support Aga Khan trust foundation in their initiative to restore the cultural heritage of the country. It is imperative for us to preserve our heritage so that our future generations can stay connected to their roots. The conservation of Sabz Burj is a testament of our efforts in supporting livelihood of the local community and making the historical heritage more attractive. Havells will remain committed to conserve many more such priceless monuments of the country".

For further information please write to Ms Ujwala Menon, Conservation Architect, Aga Khan Trust for Culture at ujwala.menon@akdn.org or visit <https://www.facebook.com/NizamuddinRenewal>