



FACT SHEET



Consulate General of the United States – Karachi, Pakistan

About the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation

The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation supports the preservation of sites, objects, and forms of traditional cultural expression in more than 100 developing countries around the world. The fund is made possible by the U.S. Congress to protect at-risk cultural treasures. Projects include the restoration of ancient and historic buildings, conservation of rare manuscripts and museum collections, preservation and protection of important archaeological sites, and the documentation of vanishing traditional craft techniques and indigenous languages.

Since 2001 the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation has awarded more than \$54 million in grants in 128 countries. The U.S. Embassy has worked with federal and provincial government partners on 18 grants throughout Pakistan since the fund's establishment.

These cultural preservation projects emphasize our respect for the rich heritage and diversity of Pakistan. The fund is a centerpiece of U.S. partnership with Pakistan in the area of arts and culture, helping to preserve some of Pakistan's most at-risk treasures.

About Varun Dev Temple

Varun Dev, a Hindu temple dedicated to the Lord of the Seas (Varuna), is located on Manora Island on the outskirts of Karachi. Experts believe that the temple was built due to enhanced maritime trade activity in the Indian Ocean from the fourth to tenth centuries A.D. The current structure dates to 1917-18.

Today, the temple is in a dilapidated state. Humid winds are eating away at the structure, the rich carvings on the tower are heavily eroded, and subsequent unauthorized construction has affected the integrity of the temple and its grounds. The temple is not currently used for communal worship. The last formal ritual was held there in the 1950s.



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Manora Island, which is actually a peninsula, is a popular picnic area, weekend destination and tourist attraction because of the long sandy beaches along its southern edge. Manora and neighboring inlets form a protective barrier between Karachi Harbor to the north and the Arabian Sea to the south. Due to its unique ecology, Manora Island is home to precious mangrove forests, rare species of marine life and bird sanctuaries, and breeding grounds of endangered green sea turtles.

Manora Island is an example of Pakistan's religious diversity and a testament to interfaith harmony and peaceful co-existence. Many ethnic communities call Manora Island home, including Muhajirs, Punjabis, Sindhis, Kashmiris, Seraikis, Pashtuns, Baloch, Memons, Cutchhis and Christians. Also located on Manora Island are St. Paul's Church, a Sikh gurudwara, several mosques and a shrine to Saint Yusuf Shah Ghazi Maudi. Both Muslim and Hindu devotees come to pay homage to the traveling Saint Jhule Lal, who Hindus revere as the Lord of the Seas.

Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation: Varun Dev Temple Project

The scope of work at the Varun Dev Temple entails the following aspects: documentation and surveys; stabilization and intervention; community engagement; and a display case.

Documentation and Surveys: Detailed documentation is required, specifically to identify the needs and extent of intervention work to be carried out. Surveys using proper and technical parameters will be conducted by a conservation specialist, who will guide surveyors to document the structure with the required level of detail. The conservation architect will also ensure that the architectural details are recorded systematically, using coordinates to identify the overall structure and to obtain cross-sections.

Stabilization and intervention: The project will also address structural weaknesses of the temple's *sakhara* (tower) and *mandap* (entrance portal). The joinery of various stone slabs has been greatly affected in the *sakhara*. About 25



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percent of the *sakhara's* surface will require replacement of dedicated slabs of the same shape and size to replace the original slabs which have eroded. The dome of the *mandap* is close to collapse due to the loss of mortar and joinery. In addition, the roof, parapet walls, *marlons* (crenellations) and awning slabs all are badly weathered, requiring intervention and rehabilitation. The upper part of the *mandap* requires 60 percent intervention, mainly to replace damaged slabs with newly prepared pieces based on detailed documentation studies and survey work. Specific works will include the following:

- The *sakhara* will receive stabilizing measures while its surface, at least a part of it, will have 25 percent intervention through replacement of eroded pieces. The upper portion of the *mandap* will be replaced; its parapet wall and crenellations will have the proper required replacements for 50 percent of missing or dilapidated parts. The pathway surrounding the structure, done in various mediums, including rough mosaics set in white cement, will receive consideration so that a certain formal uniformity is achieved;
- Original access points to the site, which are bowing out, will be restored;
- Gates and doors will be restored and repaired, and obstructions and bad construction will be removed;
- Commemorative plaques and other devotional applications, such as tiles with depiction of religious themes, will be restored to preserve the social history of the region; and
- Recent construction intervention, such as the new entrance structure, will be removed to ensure architectural integrity with landscaping work provided to prevent erosion.

Community engagement and display case: The project will also work to save commemoration plaques, create a display case for devotional items and to document conservation work, re-establish the site as a gathering place for the community, remove recent construction efforts, train skilled craftsmen, engage in community outreach efforts.



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