



## PROGRAMME

### 'The importance of conserving Leh Old Town'

An historical, architectural and community approach to preserving the last remaining Himalayan dwelling

Date: Wednesday 14-05-2014 from 9:30 – 19:00  
Venue: Central Asian Museum / Trans-Himalayan Research Library  
Organised by: Tibet Heritage Fund & Prince Claus Fund

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**Summary:** Leh Old Town is one of the last well-preserved Ladakhi style townscapes in the Himalayan region and a rare example of an intact historic Tibeto-Himalayan urban settlement. Due to the inhospitable terrain and widespread nomadic lifestyle, few urban centers ever existed in the Himalayas and on the Tibetan high plateau, and almost none survive today. Leh Old Town provides important insights into the high altitude cultures that adapted to the severe environment over the last five millennia. A maze of alleyways, the old town consists of roughly two hundred stone, mud and timber houses, including eight Buddhist temples and three mosques all within the remaining seventeenth-century city walls. Leh's historic urban fabric exemplifies traditional architecture with influences from the central Asian trade routes that once converged in Leh old town.

In the wake of modern times, Leh is changing fast. New high-rise buildings and development projects are transforming the face of the old town. There is grave danger this unique city will lose its historical and architectural value and with that, Leh's unique living heritage.

During the symposium, local residents, local and regional politicians, as well as NGOs working in the region, and international experts, will discuss the remarkable history and culture that Leh Old Town represents. Contributions from different perspectives will help generate combined insights in order to create a well-informed approach towards an overall understanding of Leh Old Town. Together we shall identify challenges and consider subsequent recommendations to developing a well-structured plan to preserve this unique historic site.

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## AGENDA

- 9:30 Venue open. Coffee, tea and cookies served
- 10:00 Opening by Rigzin Spalbar (Chief Executive Councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh)
- 10:30 Word of welcome by Christa Meindersma, director, Prince Claus Fund, with reference to André Alexander's life and achievements.
- 10:45 'Ladakhi cultural identities and importance of the Leh old town' by Nawang Rigzin Jora - Minister for Urban Development and Urban Local Bodies, J&K
- 11:00 'Historical introduction to Leh old town' by Abdul Gani Sheikh - Ladakhi historian and writer
- 11:15 'Cultural heritage value of the Leh old town' by Saleem Beg - Convener INTACH (J&K Chapter) Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, J&K
- 11:30 'Conservation efforts towards Leh old town' by 'Yutaka Hirako / Pimpim de Azevedo – Programme director / Co-director, Tibet Heritage Fund and Leh Old Town Initiative
- 11:45 Coffee & Tea break
- 12:00 'Culture Heritage Conservation challenges in the Himalayan region: Lessons learnt from Lhasa and Kathmandu' by Minja Yang, former vice-director, World Heritage Centre, UNESCO, Paris, and Director of the New Delhi Office.
- 12:30 'The architectural heritage of the Himalayan region and the Tibetan plateau' (reading of a short paper) by Professor Heather Stoddard, National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisations in Paris, France
- 13:00 Warm lunch for all participants
- 14:00 'On how to end the universally harmful stalemate between poor slum squatters and owners/developers that characterizes so many southern hemisphere cities' - A case study' by Ms Somsook Boonyabancha, General Secretary of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
- 14:30 'Heritage conservation: Widening Scope and Deepening Ownership' by Mr. Kirtee Shah Founder Trustee and Hon. Director of Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG)
- 14:45 'The importance of preserving historic old towns and the long term benefits: Heritage-based urban strategy for Udaipur: lessons learned from cooperation with Strasbourg – A case study' by Mr. Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, France.
- 15:00 Panel discussion on general challenges for preserving the history of Leh old town
- Panel members: (candidates)
- Rigzin Sparbar, Nawang Rigzin Jora, Simrandeep Singh, Tsering Murup, Community representatives and residents, THF/LOTI, Minja Yang, Saleem Beg, NGOs working in conservation. i.e. Sonam Wangchuk Kharzong- HCHF, Sonam Angchuk –INTAHC, Angchuk (enginer charge in the RAY scheme), Naveen and Manzoor (Public Works Department).

- 16:00 Open discussion with the audience: What are the challenges for Leh? Historic conservation/  
Touristic exploitation / Development of infrastructure.
- 16:30 Coffee & Tea break
- 16:45 A successful conservation project combining exploitation and re-use of a restored heritage  
structure in Leh Old Town. A case study. Yutaka Hirako / Pimpim de Azevedo.
- 17:15 Reception & drinks
- 19:00 End of programme
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#### Optional Programme 15-05-2014

Heritage walk for all participants who are still in Leh led by Tibet Heritage Fund. Visit to the case-study site and observation of structures that have perhaps already been lost or 'modernised', followed by a warm lunch at the Community Venue.

## **Guest speakers list**

### **Rigzin Spalbar- Chief Executive Councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh**

After completing his education Spalbar became a social and political activist. He worked as the General Secretary of Ladakh Buddhist Association Leh (1985-1995) and as General Secretary (1995-2000) and President (2000-2010) of the Leh District Congress Committee. He was elected as a member of the first LAHDC Leh (representing Lower Leh) in 1995 and served as a councillor. During the second term of LAHDC (2000-2005), He became Executive Councillor (Education) and then Chairman/CEC for one year. During the third term of LAHDC (2005-2010), he represented Skyu-Markha constituency. In 2010, he led his party to a fourth term (2010-2015). He won a majority and became Chairman/CEC. Spalbar is the National General Secretary of Bhartiya Federation of Smaller States.

### **Nawang Rigzin Jora- Minister for Urban Development and Urban Local Bodies, Jammu & Kashmir, India**

Nawang Rigzin Jora, Born on February 2, 1958 in Nimmu village of Leh, a graduate from St. Stephen's College, New Delhi, Mr. Rigzin was elected unopposed to the Legislative Assembly in the year 2002 from Leh constituency. He has been elected from the same constituency for the second time consecutively. He is currently Minister for Urban Development and Urban Local Bodies. Before that he was Minister for Tourism & Culture.

### **Christa Meindersma- director Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development**

An international lawyer, Christa Meindersma (1962) most recently held the position of Deputy Director at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS). She has extensive experience with international collaboration and diplomacy and has held, among others, the positions of Negotiator and Senior Political Adviser at the United Nations and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Christa was involved in peace talks in East Timor, Nigeria, Cameroon, Kosovo and Darfur. She has also worked for the UN in Nepal, Congo and New York.

### **Minja Yang- UNESCO consultant on Culture & Development**

The president of the RLICC (Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation) is Prof. Minja Yang, a renowned cultural heritage management consultant from Japan. She was formerly Director of the UNESCO Office in New Delhi and was responsible for special projects on Urban Heritage for Development. She also had key responsibilities at the World Heritage Centre and was coordinator for World Heritage Cities.

### **Heather Stoddard- Head of Tibetan studies in the National Institute for Oriental Languages and Civilisations, Paris**

Heather Stoddard studied Tibetan and Chinese, and has frequented India, Nepal, Japan, China, Mongolia and the Tibetan world since the mid-1960s. Her fields of research are Tibetan history, literature, art history and modern Tibetan intellectual life. She has published numerous articles and three books. Between 1994 and 2000, with the Shalu Association, she carried out eight small-scale restoration projects in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, in co-operation with the Bureau of Cultural Relics, to help save early artistic and architectural remains.

**Somsook Boonyabancha- General Secretary of Asian Coalition for Housing Rights**

Somsook Boonyabancha is director of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights and of the ACCA programme. She was also director of the Community Organizations Development Institute from 2001 to 2010. This is unique in that it is a central government agency that channelled funding and support to community organizations and networks to support their own community-driven upgrading and negotiation for land tenure. This is also one of the largest upgrading programmes in Asia. Somsook has been developing innovative support mechanisms for grassroots-driven development and upgrading at scale for thirty years. The Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA), that she directs, represents a radical departure from conventional development funding. Over the last three years, it has made small grants available to around 1,000 community organizations spread across over 160 cities in 19 Asian nations.

**Kirtee Shah- Director of Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG)**

Kirtee Shah is the President at Habitat Forum (India) and the Chairman at KSA Design Planning Services PVT. Ltd. He is the Founder Trustee and Hon. Director of Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG)

(1971—1995: Full Time; 1995 onwards: on a part time, full responsibility basis) Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), conceived as a platform for young professionals seeking to work for an 'alternative' client (primarily the poor and disadvantaged groups in villages and cities) and a different professional challenge, is a non-government, non-commercial, non-profit organization run by concerned professionals committed to utilizing their skills for public causes in general and the poor groups and the disadvantaged sections in particular. For the past 40 years professionals with different specializations – in urban planning, social science, architecture, engineering, management, economics, child care, social work, rural development and urban development – have joined hands to undertake field projects (on shelter for the poor in tribal, rural and urban areas; child care and development; disaster reconstruction; poverty alleviation and community development); consultancy (on housing, urban planning, architectural design, and low-cost-construction); studies; networking (among NGOs and professionals); advocacy (on slums, sustainable urban development, participatory planning, role of the civil society in development, etc.), NGO representation in policy making initiatives and bodies and institution development

**Roland Ries - Mayor of Strasbourg**

Roland Ries (January 11, 1945 in Niederlauterbach, Bas-Rhin) is a French politician from Alsace holding several posts on local, regional and national level since 1997. A member of the Socialist Party and mayor of Strasbourg since 2008 Ries also serves as the first President of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict's Council since 2010. Ries had already been the mayor of Strasbourg (and the President of the Urban Community of Strasbourg) between June 1997 and January 2000.

**Ghani Sheikh – Historian**

Abdul Ghani Sheikh is one of the leading Ladakhi writers and historians of his generation. In Ladakh and Kashmir he is perhaps best known for his work in Urdu, but he is also prolific writer in English. This book assembles a collection of English-language essays since late 1970s.

Born in Leh in 1936, Ghani Sheikh has an MA in History from the University of Rajasthan, and began his career as a teacher in Temisgang in Lower Ladakh. He then joined the Indian Information cadre, and worked as a journalist in Kashmir, New Delhi and at the All India Radio station in Leh. After taking early retirement from government service, he resumed his educational career as principal of the Islamia High School in Leh for two years before retiring once again to concentrate full-time on his writing. Ghani Sheikh's Urdu works include two novels, more than 70 short stories, and a biography of Sonam Norbu, the prominent Ladakhi engineer and political leader. As far back as 1980, the Jammu & Kashmir Cultural Academy honoured him with the 'Best Book Award' for his novel Dil hi to hai.  
(by John Bray in Reflections on Ladakh, Tibet and Central Asia)

**Saleem Beg- Convener INTACH (J&K Chapter) Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage, J&K**

Saleem Beg, after retirement in April 2006 as Director General Tourism, took over the responsibilities of Honorary Convener INTACH J&K chapter on full time basis. This chapter has now become a leading organization for preservation of natural and man made heritage in the country. The chapter was founded in 2004. From April 2002 – April 2006, Saleem Beg worked as Director General Tourism, Government of J&K. Responsibilities included superintendence, planning, monitoring of all tourism infrastructure projects in the state of J&K.

**Yutaka Hirako - Programme Director Tibet Heritage Fund / Leh Old Town Initiative.**

Yutaka Hirako was born in Japan in 1974 and is a qualified Japanese architect. His first visit to Tibet was made by bike in 1997 and 1998 when he completed a solo ride over 4000 km across the regions of east and west Tibet, reaching his destination, Lhasa, on two occasions. In 1998, he joined the International NGO Tibet Heritage Fund, as logistics manager, becoming involved with the 'Lhasa Old City Conservation Project'. From 2000 onwards he worked on various projects as China Programme manager. Some of the major projects carried out: 'Beijing Hutong Conservation Study', 'Restoration of the Ragya monastery-Jokhang temple', 'Reconstruction of Ragen Stupa', 'Serkhang Monastic Complex Conservation Project' etc. He has also been actively involved in the 'Sangiin Dalai Monastery Restoration Project' in Mongolia. Since 2012, he is working as Programme Director for the THF. His work won several awards from UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage.

**Pimpim de Azevedo - Co-founder / Co-director Tibet Heritage Fund**

Pimpim de Azevedo is a Tibetan architecture conservationist and co-founder of Tibet Heritage Fund (THF). In the 1990s Azevedo joined the Lhasa Archive Project (LAP) founded by André Alexander in the 1990s to document the historic buildings in Lhasa old city. In 1996 together with André Alexander, Pimpim co-founded and managed the Tibet Heritage Fund in Lhasa. From then on Pimpim worked with André to preserve the old city of Lhasa using a community based approach, but also worked in architecture conservation projects in Amdo, Kham, Mongolia, China and India. Major conservation projects were Lhasa old city conservation, Leh old town conservation, Beri monastery (Kham), Yundroling temple (Kham), Ragya monastery (Amdo) and Sangiin Dalai monastery (Mongolia) which won the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Culture Heritage Award of Excellence in 2009. Pimpim has been studying and researching Tibetan architecture, traditional technology and materials through her career learning about different building techniques and materials used in traditional Tibetan houses and temples. She is co-author of various publications on Lhasa old city conservation, Beijing and Mongolian architecture.