

ARMY HERITAGE FOUNDATION

M. A. Azhar & M. Tahir Khan

Introduction

It is indeed a matter of great honour for me to address this august house and apprise the learned scholars about a new organization i.e. Army Heritage Foundation raised on the motto "**preserve the heritage, educate the future**". We carried out many deliberations, spade work and legal steps in order to raise this organization, but one thing was felt missing from the very outset – to exchange ideas with the scholars who are professionally associated with archaeology/museology. Today it is high time to avail the opportunity and exchange ideas with the expertise. There lies no ambiguity about the facts that study of history in general and Islamic military history in particular that too with special emphasis on the sub-continent provides guideline for our present and future generations. But stark reality of time holds mirror to us that our young generation is getting oblivious of the heroic deeds of our ancestors. Islamic military history is replete with outstanding achievements and heroic deeds of gallantry of our soldiers. There remains an exigent requirement to accurately project these in the true perspective to our present and future generations. Unfortunately, many historic martial sagas remain untold or lie buried in obscurity and some have got distorted with passage of time. This colossal national loss need to be redeemed through systematic organizational research and analysis.

Among the different methods of portraying and displaying history a museum is thought to be the best forum. Consequent to this consideration a serious thought process at various levels resulted in the establishment of Army Heritage Foundation for the reconstruction of Army Museum along with other theme parks of international level at Ayub National Park on the order of the Chief of Army Staff. It will tell the story of Pakistan Army's contributions to the nation, in peace and war, through parks, archives, displays, interpretation and electronic access to other facilities for the purpose of educating and entertaining the people.

Aim / Mission

To present the time honoured traditions and the glorious past of the Muslim armies in the sub-continent with particular emphasis on Pakistan Army through the establishment of heritage complex for creating awareness in an atmosphere of understanding and goodwill, attractive enough both for the people and the armed forces.

Objectives

- a) The establishment of a National Army Heritage Complex.
- b) An exhaustive chronicling of the history of Muslim Armies of the Sub-continent, starting from the Mohammad Bin Qasim era.
- c) The unbiased projection of historic facts before the Nation and International Community in particular, to correct the misperceptions created by the incessant

and deliberate distortion of events and history by our adversaries and dishonest historians.

- d) Informing and educating the people about developments in the military sphere of activities including armaments etc. over the years.
- e) Creating thematic activities to inculcate a strong interest in army affairs in the general public particularly the young, which apart from fostering a greater understanding of the forces would also significantly contribute to the younger generations viewing of army as a preferred career option.
- f) Portrayal of the similarities of the army culture and a typical Muslim culture that forever been the ideological mainstay of the Pakistan Army.
- g) Portrayal of the Muslim beliefs and principles of the Pakistan Army in its historical backdrop and its being a future oriented force, through a presentation of its present and planned activities.
- h) Creating comprehensive military archives that would serve as a centre of excellence for academic research etc.
- i) Projection of our martial exploits past and present as well as the Pakistan Army's peace time relief and assistance operations. This would help promoting Army's image as being a people friendly multifunctional force rather than erroneously being viewed as a mere fighting unit.
- j) Employing all available means and media to project the Army's image and objectives in keeping with the requisites of present and future.
- k) To undertake/promote programmes and other activities in order to create awareness of the desired image of Pakistan Army.

Plans

The existing arrangements can only meet the operational and maintenance requirements of the park. In order to implement the objectives defined in the Scheme of Administration of AHF i.e. the reconstruction and development of infrastructure would be undertaken as per programme given below:-

- a) Preparation of master plan with a state-of-the-art Army Museum as the main hub of activities in manner to create different environment depicting different phases of the Muslim Armies of the sub-continent, starting from the Mohammad bin Qasim era.
- b) Invitations to reputed consultants both local and international having experience in the field of developing museums and theme parks.
- c) Advertisement and invitation to local and international firms to tender for the various activities of master plan.
- d) Thus in the end, the establishment of an interactive Army Heritage Complex having a people ambience necessary for an effective magnification of the image of Pakistan Army as a multifunctional force committed to uphold national ideology.

Other Considerations

- a) Emphasis is to be on the stories of soldiers. Quite naturally, these stories will be in the context of battles, campaigns, and operations or even non-battle events but concerning army life. Typically, an era will be reduced to wars, campaigns, battles within campaigns, and finally to incidents within a battle.
- b) The museum will focus on the collection of facts/history/, not merely the collection of objects.
- c) The AHF Complex will offer something for everyone, Families, young people, researchers, veterans, national leadership seekers and other will find it both entertainment and of value.
- d) Appeal would be to all the senses, creating the perception of being part of that moment in history. This will require great sophistication in movement patterns and the use of lights, colours, and sounds to create an overall appreciation for the life of a soldier within the context of the Army's contribution to the nation. AHF also intends to introduce the concept of virtual reality in achieving the aforesaid.
- e) Where possible, displays would offer hand-on experience. Picking up the weapons, perhaps even shooting laser models in an indoor gallery; climbing on, into, and around tanks and artillery pieces in outdoor displays; getting the feel of flying a helicopter in simulated conditions; walking through encampments and listening to the fire effects; such things are all part of a memorable experience.
- f) The Army Heritage Museum Complex may be developed in phases. At first, this may only be a small facility as a preview centre. Next may come a museum or a panorama centre of sufficient size and scope to serve as attraction in itself. The theme for this initial gallery might be "Pakistan Army, the indomitable Fighting Force". The purpose here is not only to educate and inform but also attract the recruitment in the service. Master planning will be based on the development of Recreational Facilities Complex including theme parks, cultural and heritage attraction, restaurants, water parks, food courts, gift shops, and gymnasia.
- g) It is very much the intention of AHF to preserve the natural beauty of the Ayub Park. The grandeur and majesty of old trees will be preserved which so poetically symbolizes our heritage. The underlying objective of theme parks facility would be to harness the vast naturally contoured but grossly under utilized expanse of Ayub Park into a thematically planned recreational park, at par with international standards, but in total unison with the mood set by the museum complex.

Conclusion

AHF will prove to be a forum for the education edification and inspiration of the Armed Forces, the public and those seeking knowledge about the history of the Army. The public will gain a greater awareness of the part that Army played in shaping their heritage. Our nation is unfamiliar with the Army's role in its development. People must understand their Army in order to serve in its ranks as soldiers and shape its destiny as citizens. Establishment of a state-of-the-

art museum complex and the development of theme parks in the Ayub Park along with propagation and project of Army as a forward looking, people friendly, multifunctional force, are the core functions undertaken by this organization. Army Heritage Foundation will keep close liaison with the Department of Archaeology Museology in planning, designing, siting and if possible for the construction of Army Museum at Ayub National Park. At national and international level Army Heritage Foundation, Department of Archaeology and Ministry of Tourism can join hands in planning, coordinating and offering help and guidance regarding visits to old forts and historical buildings. To educate foreigners about our past history, tourists will be given special package by the Army Heritage Foundation with the consultation and cooperation of the Department of Archaeology and Ministry of Tourism. May Allah grant us courage and wisdom to fulfill this momentous responsibility with commitment and conviction (Ameen).