

"Government of Punjab Launches Punjab Tourism for Economic Growth Project"

Planning & Development Department, Government of the Punjab launched "Punjab Tourism for Economic Growth Project" on 19.02.2018 (Monday). The project launch ceremony was held at the newly restored Wazir Khan Mosque courtyard in the Walled City of Lahore.

The launch ceremony marked the Planning & Development Department's five-year (2017-2022) collaboration with the World Bank Group to develop Punjab's tourism sector and subsequently increase overall economic growth. "With a total cost of USD 55 million, the project will support infrastructural development of eight sites selected on the basis of their heritage value, historical significance and tourism potential. These include the Taxila Museum, Katas Raj Temples, Uch Sharif, Gurdwara Rori Sahib, Gurdwara Sacha Sauda, Darbar Sahib, Janam Asthan and Ghulam Farid, mentioned by Ms. Sehryr Anis, Deputy Project Director during the launch ceremony.

'The project aims to promote tourism sector by strengthening institutional capacity through better skills development; increasing private-sector participation; and improving infrastructure services in Punjab', mentioned by Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan, Chairman P&D Board Punjab. He further highlighted that under the domain of the project, a tourism policy of Punjab has been developed that will represent the Government of Punjab's commitment to developing the tourism sector of the province along with setting the future direction for tourism and related activities.

During the launch ceremony, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Government of the Punjab and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was also signed by Ms. Vibeke Jensen, Country Director, UNESCO and Mr. Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, Secretary P&D Punjab, whereby UNESCO pledged to partner with Planning Department Punjab and provide technical assistance in the preparation of holistic frameworks for protection and management of selected sites along with enhancement of its technical capacity and engagement with communities to safeguard and conserve Punjab's heritage sites.

The chief guest of the ceremony, Mr. Malik Nadeem Kamran, Minister for Planning & Development, reiterated about Government's commitment to strategically reform the tourism sector of Punjab". Minister P&D acknowledged the World Bank and UNESCO's role in supporting the Government of Punjab to provide 'state-of-the-art tourism services across the province, while also mobilizing private investment in the tourism sector, specifically targeting heritage tourism in order to restore a tolerant, diverse and pluralistic image of the country to the World.

The launch was attended by Provincial Ministers, senior representatives of the Government Departments and the World Bank Group, foreign dignitaries and members of the private sector including activists, journalists and educationalists. Mr. Usman Ahmed Chaudhry, Project Director, Tourism Project applauded the efforts of project team and Walled City Authority for organizing the launch ceremony in a splendid manner.