

2014

## Conservation of Azimganj Serai

---

Azimganj Serai is the earliest Mughal period Serai in Delhi currently standing within the boundary of Delhi Zoo and located in the north of Sunder nursery. It is a square structure with a huge courtyard of 111 meters x 111 meters with arcaded chambers all around. All the four corners of the monument have elegant octagonal Bastions. The square plan consists of 104 arched cells which are in an advanced stage of deterioration. The Serai clearly stood along the historic grand trunk road with its grand fort like appearance is of high historical and architectural significance.

The Serai stands in isolation within dense vegetation and not easily accessible for the visitors. Its ruinous remains clearly visible from Sunder nursery depict the original context and connectivity of the monument with the old grand trunk road. Azimganj Serai is just 600 meters away from the boundary of World Heritage Site of Humayun's tomb. The Project Outcome

Conservation works on the Azimganj Serai aim to revive the lost cultural significance and architectural integrity of the monument. The monument has seen significant loss of the architectural features such as chambers, arches and masonry walls in last fifty years due to loss of the connectivity and no maintenance. Conservation works will use traditional materials and craft techniques and also serve as a platform for training opportunities. It is expected that conservation works will require at least 250,000 man-days of craftsmen's work thereby generating significant employment.

Once conserved and collapsed portions are reconstructed, the Azimganj Serai will further enhance the Mughal cultural landscape of the Humayun's Tomb setting, making a significant case to expand the WHS boundaries to include the Serai.

*(Below) Azimganj Serai: before conservation in 2010. Conservation works on this monument, protected by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Delhi are also being carried out with their co-funding.*



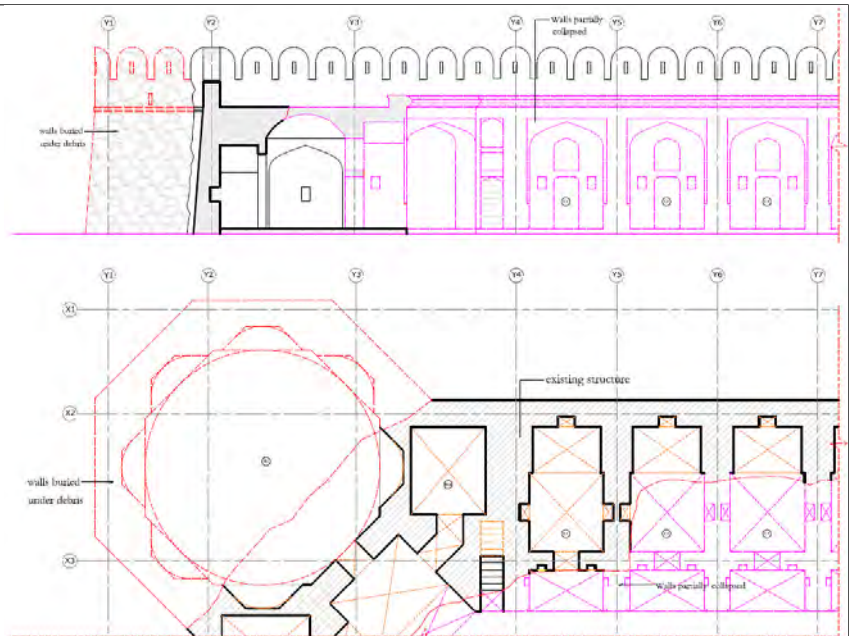
## Conservation of Arched Cells

### Action Taken:

- Documentation of the condition of the monument was done, as a precursor to any repair/ replacement as part of this conservation project.
- Excessive vegetation which lead to collapse of significant portions of the building with a large majority of the vaulted cells having collapsed. This unwanted vegetation was carefully removed under the supervision of experienced team of a conservation architect and engineers.
- 100 cubic meters of debris were carefully removed without damaging the historic structure.
- Scientific excavation was done at several locations within the monument to determine the original floor levels as intended by the Mughal builders.
- Deep filling was done to repair the structural cracks in the random rubble masonry to consolidate the existing structure.
- Conservation of six chambers on the south and three on the east side is ongoing. This required great precision and patience as nearly 40% of the structure had collapsed making the structure vulnerable to collapse.
- Customised scaffolding was made for conservation of arches, close inspection of each arch was done by team of conservation architect and engineer along with the craftsman.
- After the completion of conservation work the chamber walls were lime plastered using tradition tools and technique.
- The lime pointing of random rubble masonry on the exterior facade is also being carried out.
- The conservation process is an immense challenge for the on-site team as most of the architectural features such as chambers, arches and masonry walls have collapsed.

### Next Steps:

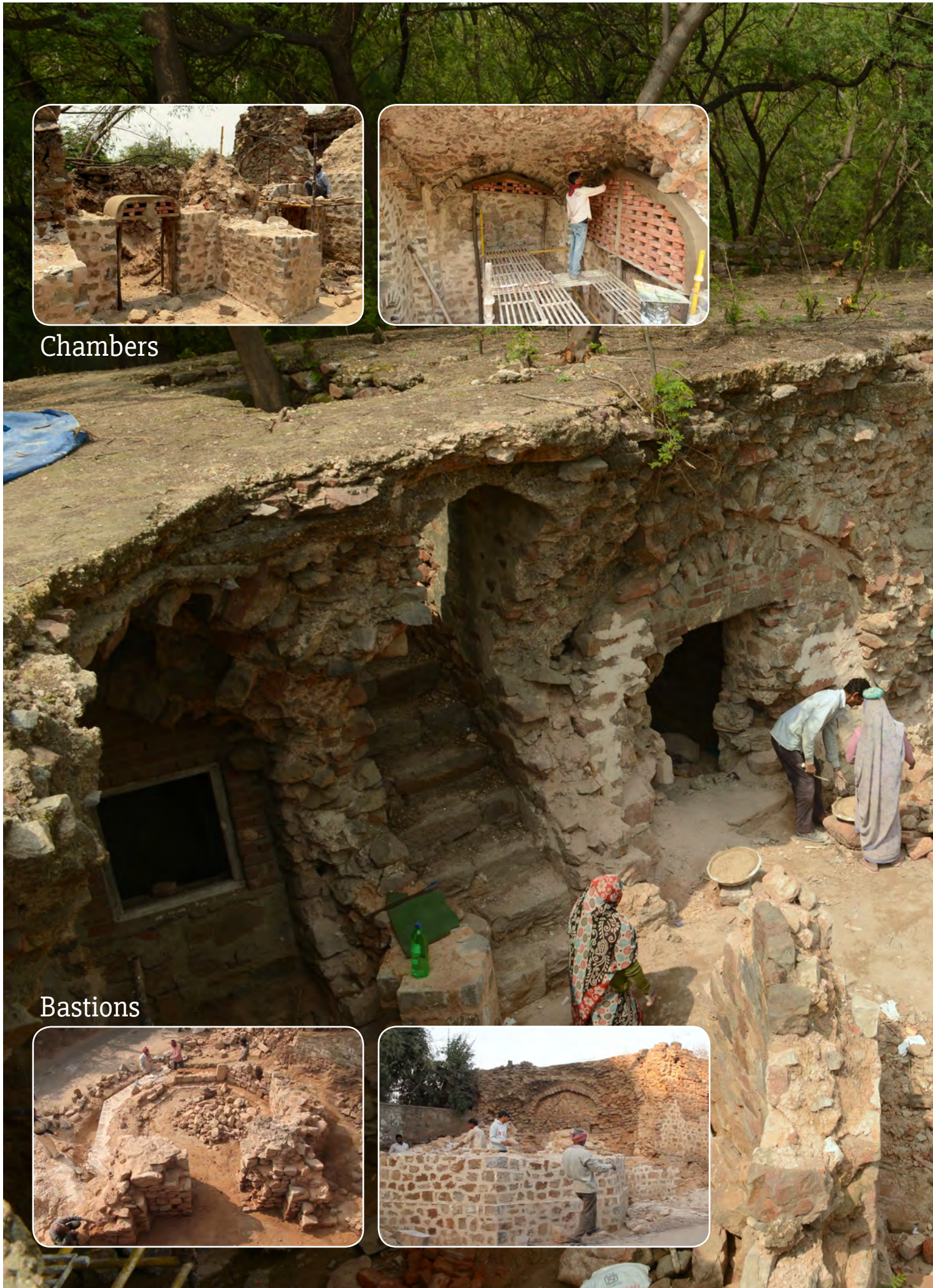
Conservation works will continue up till 2017 and will include conservation of the remaining chambers, arches, Bastions and gates on both eastern and western wings of the monument.



(Above) Condition Mapping and architectural documentation of the monument was carried out prior to commencement of conservation works;  
(Below) Site clearance and restoration work of chambers underway.



2015



Chambers

Bastions



# AZIMGANJ SERAI

Conservation | Landscape Development



Arcade Restoration



Supported by:



Department of Archaeology,  
Govt. of Delhi

## Azimganj Serai: Conservation & Landscape

Azimganj Serai is the earliest Mughal period Serai in Delhi and stands in the National Zoological Park, just north of Government Sundar Nursery. Years of neglect had led to major collapse and loss. Conservation works on the Azimganj Serai are being undertaken on behalf of the Department of Archaeology of the Delhi Government and include the reconstruction of the partially collapsed chambers.

### **ACTION TAKEN:**

- Conservation works in 2015 were carried out on 27 chambers in the South-eastern corner and 28 chambers in the North-western corner of the monument.
- Stone rubble masonry works for reconstruction of 52 of these partially collapsed rooms have been completed. This work required great precision and care as in some cells nearly 40 percent of the structure had collapsed and thus standing portions were unstable and was in urgent need of conservation.
- Conservation works on two gateways, one on the Western side and other on the Eastern side have commenced. Even though these gateways are located opposite to each other, their designs are very different.
- Deep filling and careful stitching with stone of large cracks in the structure has been done all across the structure.
- Specialised shuttering is being used for conservation of arches, vaults and domes, thereby ensuring consistency of profile and reducing time spent in scaffolding works.
- The structure is badly damaged due to dense growth of trees (invasive species like kikar and subabool) on the structure. The Forest Department on request of the State Department of Archaeology, permitted cutting of trees on the monument for the South-eastern and North-western parts of the monument.

### **NEXT STAGE:**

- Completion of conservation works on the South eastern and North-western parts of the monument.
- Conservation of remaining portions of the monument will commence as soon as Forest Department gives permission to cut invasive species trees growing on the structure itself and rendering it dangerous.
- A landscape plan to restore the large central courtyard will be developed and implemented.
- Connection with Sundar Nursery for visitor access is being sought.



*(Above) Collapsed portion of the Serai were carefully stabilized by master craftsmen building with techniques and materials used by the original builders.*