

PRATAPGAD FORT TO GET ₹13 CR FACELIFT

Funds will be released by the state in installments over four years. Renovation is expected to be complete by 2014

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THE Pratapgad Fort, where Chhatrapati Shivaji won the historic battle against Afzal Khan, will finally get a much-needed, state-sponsored facelift.

The state government yesterday released funds for the renovation of the fort, which was constructed by Shivaji between 1656 and 1658. The monument is in need of urgent repair and a few locals had taken the initiative to renovate it three years back.

A renovation proposal spread over 4 years and costing Rs 13 crore was accepted by the government and Rs 1.31 crore was immediately released for its first phase. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting chaired by Deputy CM Ajit Pawar at the Sahyadri guest house, attended by several ministers and



SLICE OF HISTORY: The fort was built by Chhatrapati Shivaji between 1656 and 1658

senior state government officials.

The government has agreed to fund the project in four phases. Rs 1.31 crore has been released for the first phase. Rs 4.37 crore will be released in the financial year 2011-12, Rs 3.56 crore in 2012-13 and the final installment of Rs 3.76 crore will be released in 2013-14, by when the renovation is expected to be complete.

"It is fitting that the historic fort should be renovated at a time when Maharashtra is celebrating 50 years of its formation. We are glad that the government is taking up this cause," said Kaustubh Butala, president, Pratapgad Jirnodhar Samiti, which has been renovating the fort using its own funds.

Butala said he apprised the Dy CM that his organisation had been carrying out restora-

tion work at the fort for the last 3 years using lime mortar. "The restoration work will be completed in four years. Our trust will also be contributing Rs 3 crore for it."

Many takers

Insiders who attended the 45-minute meeting told MID DAY that officials from state archaeological and tourism department contented that the fort was a heritage monument and should be restored.

District administration from Satara objected to this stating that the department had never made any attempt to restore any fort in the last 50 years.

They added, the Pratapgad fort is under the Satara collector's jurisdiction and is not a state archaeological monument.

State tourism officials also tried to convince Pawar that the fort was the private property of the the royal Bhosale family of Pratapgad, but the collector clarified and said that

the fort, excluding a temple premises near the lower fort, was acquired from them in 1958.

FACTFILE

>> Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated the first statue of Shivaji Maharaj at a fort here after Independence. He was so keen on visiting Pratapgad that a special road was constructed for his visit.
>> Nehru was reportedly very impressed after visiting Pratapgad and said that his visit made him realise how monumental the work carried out by Shivaji was. This is said to have influenced his decision for creating a separate state of Maharashtra.

>> The announcement of the creation of Maharashtra was made here by Yashwant Rao Chavan on May 1, 1960.