

## Mock Exercise at Salar Jung Museum

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#### Resumen

##### **Ejercicio de simulación al Museo Salar Jung**

*En el marco del Simposio Internacional organizado por el ICOM sobre la prevención y gestión de desastres que pueden afectar al patrimonio natural, el museo Salar Jung de Hyderabad, la ciudad anfitriona de este evento, llevó a cabo un ejercicio de simulación de una situación de emergencia consistente en evacuar colecciones y visitantes del edificio tras una presunta alerta contra una bomba.*

*Este ejercicio de simulación fue el resultado de la colaboración entre los servicios de urgencia (bomberos, servicios policiales y sanitarios, etc.) y la dirección y el personal del museo, que pusieron a disposición varias salas de exposición. El museo se ha equipado con material de seguridad y ha efectuado los acondicionamientos necesarios en función de un plan con cuatro elementos prioritarios: seguridad en la periferia del museo, control manual y asistencia electrónica, sistema de vigilancia con vídeo y formación del personal.*

#### Résumé

##### **Exercice de simulation au musée Salar Jung**

*Dans le cadre du colloque international organisé par l'ICOM sur la prévention et la gestion des catastrophes qui menacent le patrimoine culturel, le musée Salar Jung de Hyderabad, lieu de la manifestation, a effectué un exercice de simulation consistant à évacuer les collections et les visiteurs du bâtiment lors d'une alerte à la bombe. Cet exercice était le résultat d'un travail de coopération entre les services d'urgence (pompiers, services de police et hospitaliers, etc.), la direction et le personnel du musée, qui ont mis à disposition plusieurs salles pour effectuer la simulation. Le musée s'est équipé de matériel de sécurité et a réalisé les aménagements nécessaires selon quatre axes prioritaires : sécurité dans la périphérie du musée, contrôle manuel et assistance électronique, vidéosurveillance et formation du personnel.*

Human actions and disasters, e.g. building dams, or natural disasters such as tidal waves, earthquakes, volcanoes and avalanches, affect areas and monuments belonging to our cultural heritage (both movable and immovable), destroying them either totally or partially.

As part of the efforts to protect monuments and museums of historical, cultural and heritage importance, the International Council of Museums

(ICOM) has now embarked upon a massive programme, establishing a network of specialists on movable heritage emergencies, disaster preparedness and response, and formulating the necessary guidelines and recommendations to meet heritage emergencies and disasters.

To facilitate a brain storming session for this purpose, an international symposium on "Cultural Heritage Disaster Preparedness and Response" (Hyderabad, November 23-27, 2003), with global experts on the subject has been organised.

In addition to extensive, in-depth discussion, the Salar Jung Museum organised a mock exercise simulating a bomb emergency where the collection and all persons were evacuated from the museum. The exercise brought a practical and participatory approach to the symposium. A debriefing and discussion session followed the exercise and highlighted and contrasted the different experiences of participants. The Salar Jung Museum gave generous support to ICOM, providing the services of professional staff, several rooms, areas and services, and general hospitality and contributions (lunches, visits, local transportation, cultural events, etc.).

Museums are the repositories of culture and tradition. In today's modern society the role of museums is very important as they disseminate knowledge through objects, but the archaeologists, museologists and historians, as well as museum personnel, have the professional challenge of preserving cultural property. Museums and historical monuments are prone to destruction in many ways; there can be natural disasters or human vandalism, as seen, respectively, with the Gujarat earthquakes and Afghan fanaticism. Disaster management is extremely useful to avoid such events or to reduce their impact. By introducing preventive measures in museums, losses can be reduced to a certain extent, and workshops on disaster management are more useful when potential problems are discussed thoroughly, covering all aspects, drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

### **Case Study of Salar Jung Museum**

Every museum today should have at least minimum security measures for unforeseen incidents such as fire, accident, burglary or vandalism. As a national museum, Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad is fitted with the latest security equipments and has its own security personnel. Salar Jung security arrangements have been made at four levels. First there is the outer periphery, built with pacca walls and barbed wire. The barbed wire fencing was recently electrified and is powered by a solar system which transmits a current through the wire, and alarms have been installed at regular intervals and alert security guards on duty.

The second level is manual checking by CISF personnel using electronic devices such as hand scanners, wireless systems and baggage checking scanners. The third level is CCTVs which have been installed at all important points and major galleries; these are monitored regularly by trained security staff. There are also fire-fighting instruments, smoke detectors, a hydrant system and burglar alarms covering both galleries and verandas. The fourth level is museum staff, who have been trained in the safeguarding of museum objects and in the protection of museum visitors.

When discussing disasters, in a museum for example, the responsibility of the museum authorities is not only to save the lives of the visitors but also to preserve the museum objects. With the human brain's capacity to think and analyse situations, human beings (i.e. visitors) can escape from an emergency, via security measures provided by the authorities, but for the museum objects, the staff of the institution has a great deal of responsibility in safeguarding and preserving them.

The preservation of objects starts with the arrival of an antiquity at the museum itself. Immediately after acquiring the object, it will be properly documented, recorded in the relevant registers and allotted a number. Photographs of objects are entered in the registers and also fed into the computer with digitisation. This type of documentation will help when restoring objects which may be damaged when a disaster occurs.



Defusing of bomb, mock exercise Salar Jung Museum

For the purpose of the exercise, temporary galleries were set up and bombs placed in them. On receiving information, the Director of the Museum alerted all museum staff to shift the museum objects to a safer place. The information was passed on to the police, bomb disposal squad, fire service, medical services, etc. After receiving the information, the bomb disposal squad reached the spot very promptly and placed the area under their control; they located the two bombs and defused them, and meanwhile a bomb exploded in a gallery where some of the staff members were shifting the museum objects to a safer place. The doors of the gallery were jammed and many members of staff injured and calling out for help. The rescue teams were immediately brought in; they cut through a wall of the gallery, some of the commandos entered the gallery along with a team of doctors for first aid. The injured staff members were sent to hospital for treatment and damaged objects were taken to the conservation laboratory.



Quick rescue team, mock exercise Salar Jung Museum

After taking the objects to the conservation lab they were verified against the ledgers. The original photographs were obtained from the documentation division where all the digital photographic records of the objects are kept. Damaged parts were restored to a certain extent.



Rescue team on operation, mock exercise Salar Jung Museum

Security arrangements are to be tightened, including arrangements for detecting explosives. The museum administration must have emergency numbers or mobile numbers of police, medical services, fire brigade, bomb squad, etc. in case an emergency occurs.



Quick rescue team, mock exercise Salar Jung Museum

Every museum must have a team of experts i.e. a Quick Reaction Team (QRT) when there is a need to rescue museum objects. All members of the museum staff, in particular gallery staff, must be trained in dealing with hazards. Most importantly, the documentation system recording the objects must be perfect, as this helps the museum authorities restore any objects which are damaged. If all artefacts are digitised, it will be a simple matter to provide copies of objects (on a CD or floppy disk) to the relevant authorities in the event of theft or other incidents.