

Finishing touches being given to Kalam memorial

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300 workers sweat it out round the clock at Pei Karumbu

The burial site of former president APJ Abdul Kalam at Pei Karumbu near here was buzzing with activity as more than 300 workers sweat it out round the clock giving finishing touches to the imposing memorial structure, set for opening on Kalam's second death anniversary on July 27.

Men and women, mostly from Jharkhand and Bihar were busy polishing granite floor, planting ornamental plants, fixing lights, painting, connecting wires and filling earth as Ajay Singh, Chief executive, civil works and estate, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) walked around supervising the works.

"Countdown 14 days" read a board inside the memorial on Wednesday as the workers raced against time to complete the works. "We have completed more than 95% of work and the memorial will be ready in time," Mr Singh told *The Hindu*. He was camping here with his colleagues Col B Choubey, chief construction engineer (CCE) and B K Singh, additional CCE.

The DRDO, where Mr Kalam spent good part of his career had taken up the task of building the memorial at the total cost of Rs 20 crore and it set to complete the work in record in nine months time. It had conducted the 'Boomi puja' on the occasion of Kalam's 85th birth anniversary on October 15, 2016, couple of months after the then Defence Minister Manohar Parikar and Urban Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu laid the foundation stone on Kalam's first death anniversary on July 27, 2016.

The DRDO has conceived and designed the memorial and the structure has come up in 2.11 acres with the total plinth area of 1,425 sq m. The main entrance with giant 'Chettinad wooden' doors has been designed on the lines of India gate and the main dome on the lines of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The place, where the mortal remains of Mr Kalam were laid to rest had a half doom structure and the life size bronze statue of the late President, which was installed in front last year, has been shifted behind. People who paid tributes at the burial site could see the statue through the glass panes.

There are display halls at the four corners of the memorial hall, depicting Kalam's stay in Rashtrapati Bhavan, his address in the UN Assembly, his association with ISRO and DRDO and his last lecture at the Indian Institute of Management, Shillong, where he collapsed and died.

There were also four courtyards with vegetations, providing greenery to the structure. If the 'Shekhawati paintings' added grandeur to the double height connecting corridors, the four pergola sculpture gardens and architectural stone pillars added beauty. At the outer arena of the memorial stood a majestic replica of Kalam's Agni, the intercontinental range ballistic missile.