

# ROLE OF IMAM



Photo: AKDN/Zahur Ramji

My role in human development stems from my position as Imam or spiritual leader of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, as designated by my grandfather in 1957. In all interpretations of Islam, whether they are Shia or Sunni, are required not only to lead in the interpretation of the faith, but equally to contribute to improving the quality of life of the people who refer to them.

**Mawlana Hazar Imam  
Nobel Institute  
Oslo, Norway  
April 7, 2005**

Speech at [AKDN](#)

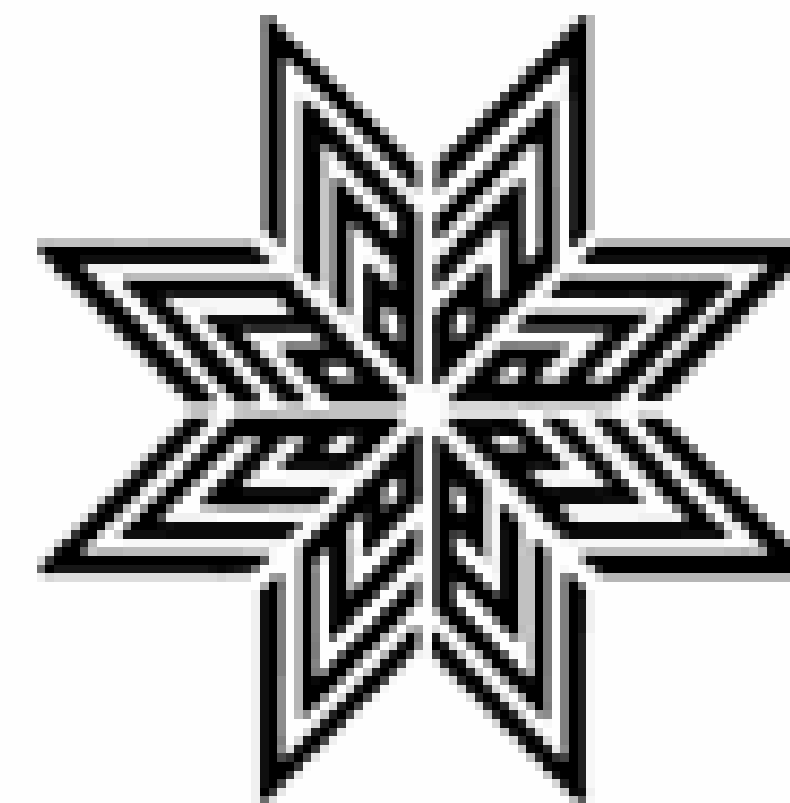
The Imamat is a Muslim institution with a history going back over 1400 years. As Imam of the Ismaili Muslims, I am to be concerned with the quality of life of the community and those amongst whom it lives. Over many centuries and decades, that responsibility of the Imamat has entailed the creation of institutions to address issues of the quality of life of the time, and it today includes a number of non-governmental organisations, foundations and economic development agencies....

To the Imamat the meaning of “quality of life” extends to the entire ethical and social context in which people live, and not only to their material well-being measured over generation after generation. Consequently, the Imamat’s is a holistic vision of development, as is prescribed by the faith of Islam. It is about investing in people, in their pluralism, in their intellectual pursuit, and search for new and useful knowledge, just as much as in material resources.

**Mawlana Hazar Imam  
Opening of Alltex EPZ Limited  
at Athi River, Kenya  
December 19, 2003**

Speech at [AKDN](#)

Compiled by Nimira Dewji



Since succeeding to this office as the 49th Imam in 1957, I have been concerned with the development of the Ismailis and the broader societies in which they live. The engagement of the Imamat in development is guided by Islamic ethics, which bridge faith and society. It is on this premise that I established the Aga Khan Development Network. This network of agencies, known as the AKDN, has long been active in many areas of Asia and Africa to improve the quality of life of all who live there. These areas are home to some of the poorest and most diverse populations in the world.

**Mawlana Hazar Imam  
Leadership and Diversity Conference  
Gatineau, Quebec, Canada  
May 19, 2004**

Speech at [AKDN](#)