

433-yr-old St John the Baptist church set to open doors

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Thane: Four-hundred-and-thirty-three-year-old St John the Baptist church is all set to relieve its history and glory once again after it underwent one of the biggest restoration. The newly restored church will be open to public for a month, starting September 21 from 6pm to 8pm.

The church is known to be one of the surviving churches with Baroque-style architecture in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The newly restored church will be formally inaugurated by His Eminence Rev Cardinal Oswald Gracias on September 20 at 6pm.

The mammoth restoration project was undertaken by the conservation architect Vikas Dilawari who is known for his work (stained glass windows) on prestigious heritage projects. Fr Allwyn D'Silva, parish priest, said, "This is a dream come true. I always believed in an impossible dream."

Dr Fleur D'Souza, a professor of History from Thane, said, "From the roof to the floor, from May 2014 till this month, a team of roof specialists, masons, carpenters, electricians, polishers, light and sound experts, wood carvers, and gliders have worked tirelessly under the guidance of Dalavari. Rosmund D'souza was contracted to complete the civil work and Jitendra Chauhan supervised the project."

"In the last three months, the Sequeira brothers of Vasai were brought in to treat and glid the retables, work on the carved doors of the east veranda and recreate from old photographs the main door and missing canopy of the pulpit."

"The church has been restored at a whopping cost of Rs5 crore collected through donations by parishioners of Thane and residents. The restoration was started in April 2014 and now the church is ready to welcome people. Everything has been worked me-



The restored church will be open for a month, from September 21

Features of the restored church

It's one of the biggest fans in the churches across Maharashtra, it has 10-foot-long blade and five similar blades intact which gives wide circulation of air. Energy saving lights, CCTVs and TV screens have been installed

The white colour inside invites people and in explosion of shades golden being the prominent displays the rich look and heritage. The lighter blue shade is for the insides making it appear more peaceful and calm

The church has paid attention to the old and disabled parishioners with ramps and railings fixed at all the entrances. The church sound system has been brought in from UK-based Martin audio

ticulously; even the smallest detail has been put together to get this amazing new look which definitely has created new history," added Fr Allwyn.

A specialised team undertook the restoration of lime plastered walls, the masons attended to the flooring inside the church with new floor tiles to match the early 20th century encaustic tiles.