

MEDIA RELEASE

For more information, contact:
Office of the Regional Advisor for
Culture in Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO Principal Office for Asia and the Pacific
P.O. Box 967 Prakanong
Bangkok 10110 Thailand
Tel: (66 2) 391-0577 ext. 502
Fax: (66 2) 391-0866
Email: culture.bgk@unesco.org

Ahhichatragarh - Fort of Nagaur Awarded Top Prize at the UNESCO 2002 Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards

Bangkok, xx September 2002 - The UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific announced today that Ahhichatragarh - Fort of Nagaur in Rajasthan, India has been honoured with the Award of Excellence in the UNESCO 2002 Asia Pacific Heritage Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The two Awards of Distinction went to The Australian Hall in Sydney, Australia and Yarikutz, Rupikutz, Kuyokutz, Mamorukutz Mosques in Central Hunza, Pakistan. Five Award of Merit and five Honourable Mention prizes were also announced today.

A total of 46 project entries were submitted from fifteen countries and administrative areas in Asia Pacific that included four cultural facilities, fourteen religious buildings, three educational facilities, five residential buildings, twelve commercial projects, two streetscape programmes, two memorials, and one botanical garden.

A panel of international conservation experts in architecture, urban planning, landscape design and heritage conservation conducted the selection process.

The jury panel have noted that all winning entries demonstrated sound understanding of the issues of conservation in relation to the cultural, social, historical, and architectural significance of the building. In addition, they all made an important impact in the surrounding environment; consequently contributing to the cultural and historical continuum of the community.

Ahhichatragarh - Fort of Nagaur in Rajasthan, India, Award of Excellence winner, was praised for its

minimalist conservation approach, resulting in varying levels of intervention, which responded to the range of damage incurred. The ambitious large-scale restoration of the abandoned 12th-century fort and palace complex has created a live research laboratory, providing valuable field education for conservation professionals and students. The physical preservation of the complex returns the largest open grounds in the region to the local public, as a venue for festivals, cultural performances, and religious events, thereby allowing for the continuity of the fort's rich history.

The Award of Distinction winner, The Australian Hall in Sydney Australia, was praised for its unique approach in restoring the colonial building of historic significance to an important event in history - 1938 Day of Mourning Conference. The technically-sophisticated restoration project has saved a social and architectural landmark from commercial redevelopment, thereby securing an important chapter in the history of the Aboriginal community.

The Yarikutz, Rupikutz, Kuyokutz, Mamorukutz Mosques in Central Hunza, Pakistan, the 2nd Award of Distinction winner, present an outstanding example of a community-led initiative facilitated by outside support. The restoration of four 300-year old wooden mosques has not only successfully revitalized the village "chataq", the traditional public heart of the Ganish historic settlement but also rebuilt community spirit in an authentic rural village, which has undergone major socio-economic change and natural disasters over the years. The restrained conservation approach has stabilised the buildings, while retaining the rich historic patina and accentuating the intricate structural details.

The five Awards of Merit are:

Cheng Hoon Teng Main Temple, Malacca, Malaysia, demonstrates high standards of technical execution and sets a worthy precedent for other conservation work in Malaysia and the region. The project successfully illustrates faithful use of original materials and integrity of artisan techniques, and has revived the historic building for the community as a centre of worship.

Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJMES), Singapore, represents a laudable effort in urban conservation. The success of the project as a lively urban hub underscores the valuable potential from both a commercial and heritage point of view in revitalizing, rather than abandoning, historic buildings.

Polsheer House, Jolfa, Isfahan, Iran, illustrates an exemplary conservation approach by adhering to all aspects of the conservation process, thereby maintaining the essence of the existing building fabric and exquisitely executing the restoration of the jewel-like interiors. The project team is to be highly commended as their efforts will set technical benchwork for conservation and give momentum to private-sector conservation in Iran.

Sydney Conservatorium of Music, Sydney, Australia, provides a new focal point for downtown Sydney while raising the standards for conservation in the region. The excellent documentation of the historic structures has been translated with great clarity in the conservation process, resulting in the rigorous restoration of the historic building fabric, the removal of unsympathetic additions, and the careful distinction between the new and the old.

Wat Sratong Temple, Khon Kaen, Thailand, demonstrates the high standard of conservation work, which can be achieved through grassroots approach. The cooperative approach taken by the project sets a model of local conservation initiative, which is worthy of emulation, particularly in the context of administrative decentralisation occurring throughout the region.

Five additional projects were given Honourable Mention:

Broken Hill Heritage & Cultural Tourism Programme, Broken Hill, NSW, Australia, establishes a conceptual framework that can be adapted by other communities in Australia and the region. The initiative of the local government in setting up associated programmes to conserve and manage the city's built heritage is not only noteworthy, but also demonstrates how municipalities can play an effective role in the conservation process.

Centre for Khmer Studies, Siem Reap, Cambodia, sets an encouraging example for the preservation of

non-monumental heritage in Cambodia and makes a persuasive case for the involvement of private sector institutions in conservation activities.

Jaisalmer Streetscape Revitalisation Project, Jaisalmer Fort, Rajasthan, India, represents a holistic approach to conserving the living public realm. With its basic gesture of harmoniously integrating infrastructural amenities, it has the potential to create the momentum to drive larger conservation projects, serving as a case study for other communities to learn from.

Kow Plains Homestead, Cowangie, Victoria, Australia, clearly demonstrates solid understanding of conservation guidelines set forth by the ICOMOS Burra Charter. The community's initiation and ownership of the project deserves praise for their collective efforts towards conservation.

No. 125 Huajue Alley, Huajue Alley, Xian, China, presents a noteworthy example for cooperation between an outside technical advisor and local residents, while setting a technical benchmark for conservation work in China.

--End--

<http://www.unescobkk.org/culture/heritageawards>

The Asia Pacific Heritage Awards recognise the efforts of private individuals and organisations that have successfully restored and conserved structures and buildings of heritage value in the region. Eligible projects must be more than 50 years old and the restoration must have been completed within the past 10 years. Buildings must have been in viable use for at least one year from the date of the Awards announcement. UNESCO believes that recognising private efforts to restore and readapt historic structures can encourage other property owners to start conservation projects within the community, independently or by seeking public-private partnerships.