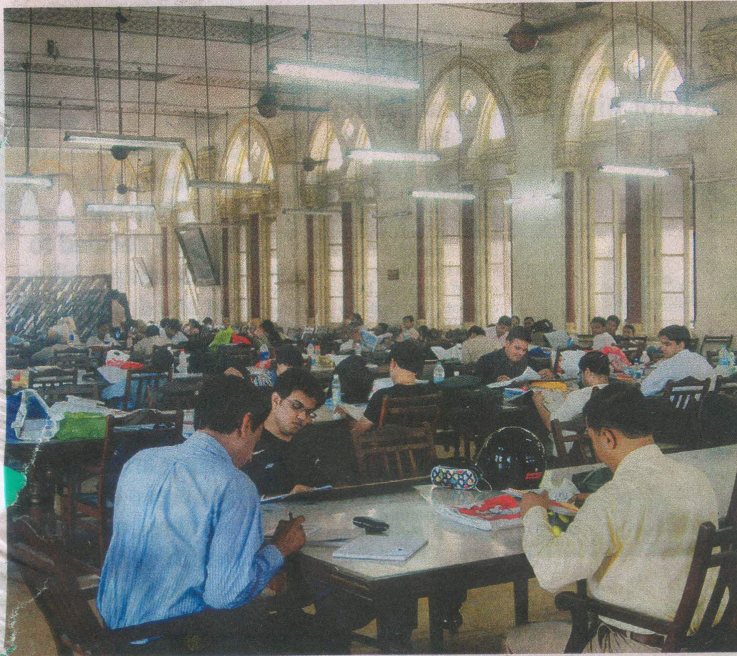


India wins top UNESCO award

India has won a top UNESCO prize, the Award of Excellence 2015 for its remarkable conservation efforts in preserving Kerala's Sree Vadakkunnathan Temple. The temple won the Asia-Pacific Heritage Award for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

Award of Distinction from UNESCO for JN Petit Institute

The restoration of one of the city's major Neo-Gothic landmarks has been recognised with an Award of Distinction in the 2015 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation



SILENCE, PLEASE! The newly restored library at the JN Petit Institute, Fort. PIC/SAMEER MARKANDE

TONA FERNANDEZ

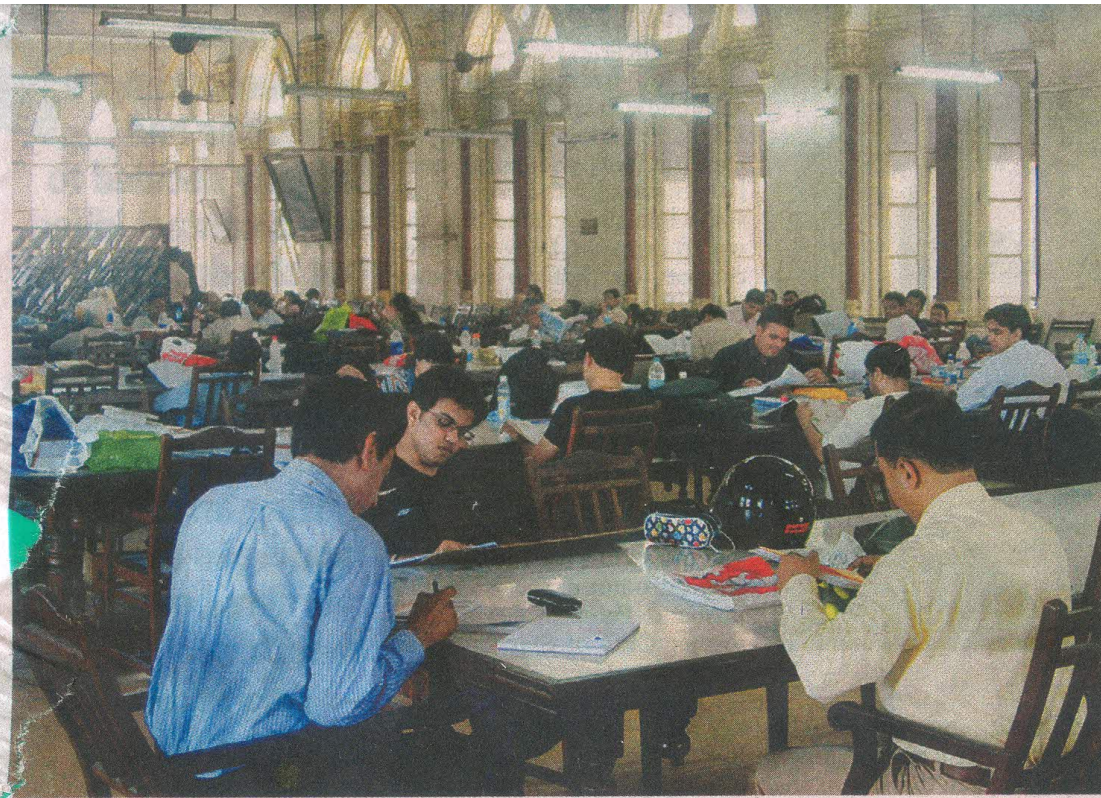
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“LIBRARIES are less in use and getting redundant, so this honour is great news for Mumbai,” admits Vikas Dilawari, conservation architect, whose efforts with his core team ensured that the stunning and iconic Jamsetjee Nessarwanji Petit Institute in Fort earned an Award of Distinction in the 2015 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation.

In the 2015 cycle, the Award of Excellence for the Conservation was given to Sree Vadakkunnathan Temple, Thrissur in Kerala while Pune’s Parvati Nandan Ganapati Temple, received an Honorary Mention.

Thirty-six projects from 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region were submitted for recognition in the field of progressing conservation in the region. Last year, Dilawari’s work at Esplanade House was

awarded with the UNESCO Asia Pacific Award (Honorary Mention).

Built in 1898, and extended in 1939, the building stands as one of the stellar examples of the Neo-Gothic style in Mumbai.

“We wanted to recreate the original grandeur of its interiors, its coloured glass, the detailing as well as the lighting inside the structure. It was important to integrate it with the surroundings,” shares Dilawari, adding that being a public building, it was necessary to ensure that rich interiors and exteriors were highlighted. He adds how this restoration will also help students who throng the library during examinations.

The actual work took over two years, and is Dilawari’s 11th project to have received recognition from UNESCO.

He spells out how they ensured that the restoration didn’t veer away from the original. “We used Plaster of Paris for the elaborate decora-

tive ceiling that needed tending to. Wherever glass was needed, we’ve used coloured glass to add to the Gothic flavour of the structure.”

Despite being a functional space, with a full working public library, Dilawari and his team ensured routines weren’t affected.

Bomi Umrigar, administrator at Institute is elated with the news, “We feel very proud with this recognition. Dilawari has done an excellent job in ensuring that the building retains its former glory.”

Umrigar also told us how members gladly offered to move from one section to another during restoration work, and thus made it possible to ensure that work continued.

“This project was like a root canal; it took longer than expected but the satisfaction of its completion, and now the recognition by UNESCO makes it worth every minute,” signs off Dilawari.