

UNESCO'S ASIA-PACIFIC HERITAGE AWARD

Mumbai's JN Petit restoration project among 12 winners

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The restoration of the Jamshetjee Nessarwanjee Petit Institute and Library at Fort (JN Petit Institute) is among the 12 winning projects from five countries for the 2015 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards winners that were announced on Tuesday. The winning projects from five countries – India, China, Lao PDR, Australia and Thailand – were recognized in this year's Heritage Awards by a panel of international conservation experts met in June to review 36 entries from across the Asia-Pacific region.

"It is one of the happiest moments for us. The restoration begun about two years ago and is now among the best. We have been receiving a great response following this restoration," the administrator of JN Petit Institute said.

Conservation architect Vikas Dilawari who completed the restoration said it was the revival of libraries in Mumbai. "When reading rooms and libraries are getting out of fashion, this happens. It is a major achievement. The restoration was a very long and meticulous process. First the restoration of the exteriors was done and then the interiors," he told *Mumbai Mirror*.

The library has about 1 lakh books, including a rare copy of highly revered Persian poet Ferdowsi's 11th century work *The Shahnama*. The library also has a huge reading room with stained glass windows and portraits of the Petit family.

Tim Curtis, Chair of the Jury and Chief of UNESCO Bangkok's Culture Unit, said, "The jury was very pleased with this year's submissions, which included fascinating projects from across Asia-Pacific. This reflects a continuing trend over the years where we are seeing a broader diversity of typologies being submitted to the Awards coming from a wider geographical spread."

The UNESCO note said that the restoration of the JN Petit Institute has successfully extended the life of one of city's major Neo-Gothic landmarks and well-loved public institutions. "The meticulously executed restoration work has rescued the building from a state of serious decay, returning it to its original glory with the reinstatement of period decorative works," it said.

"The project ensures that generations of Mumbaiikars will continue to enjoy the institute's enhanced facilities, in particular, the splendid Reading Room, in years to come."



JN Petit Institute and Library at Fort