

MEDIA RELEASE

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**Baltit Fort (Karimabad, Hunza, Pakistan)
Awarded Top Prize in the UNESCO 2004 Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards**

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The UNESCO Regional Advisor for Culture in Asia and the Pacific announced today that Baltit Fort (in Karimabad village in the Hunza region of Pakistan) has been honoured with the Award of Excellence in the UNESCO 2004 Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation. The three Awards of Distinction went to Lakhpatt Gurudwara (Lakhpatt village in the state of Gujarat in India); St Ascension Cathedral (Almaty, Kazakhstan) and the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel (Mullewa, Australia). Five Awards of Merit and eight Honourable Mention prizes were also announced today.

The UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Awards recognize the efforts of private individuals and organizations 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 also have been in viable use for at least one year from the date of the Awards announcement. UNESCO believes that recognizing private efforts to restore and adapt historic structures will encourage other property owners to undertake conservation projects within the community, either independently or by seeking public-private partnerships.

A total of 37 entries were received this year from 12 countries and administrative areas in the Asia-Pacific region. A variety of types of projects were submitted for the Awards, including: seven religious buildings, fourteen institutions, eight residential buildings, three commercial projects, three urban conservation programmes, and two cultural landscapes.

A panel of international conservation experts in architecture, urban planning, heritage conservation and landscape design conducted the selection process. The jury panel noted that the range of proposals received this year point to the increasing momentum and level of conservation in the Asia-Pacific region. All winning entries demonstrated sound understanding of the issues of conservation in relation to the cultural, social, historical, and architectural significance of the building or complex. In addition, all award-winning entries had an important impact in terms of stimulating further conservation works and all made a contribution to cultural continuity in their respective communities.

2004 ASIA-PACIFIC HERITAGE CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The **Award of Excellence winner, Baltit Fort**, was praised for demonstrating that historic structures can be saved, restored and recovered for continued use in the community. The judges noted that this project exemplifies excellence in conservation practice applied to large-scale monuments and is a model for the revitalization of historic structures throughout the northern regions of Pakistan. The fort's restoration has fostered the local revival of traditional building trades while an associated handicrafts project provides improved livelihood opportunities in the area. In its new use as a cultural centre and museum, the Baltit Fort attracts thousands of visitors to the province and has contributed to reinvigorating the local community's pride in their heritage.

The **Award of Distinction winner, the Lakhpat Gurudwara**, was praised for the sophisticated understanding demonstrated in both technical and social aspects of conservation process and practice. The judges noted that the careful attention to detail and sensitive repair work have ensured the retention of this Sikh house of worship's historic character. The judges highly commended the emphasis on involving and empowering the community, thereby ensuring the long-term survival of the cultural traditions associated with this historic building.

The second **Award of Distinction winner, St Ascension Cathedral**, was praised for successfully restoring this historic and sacred building, returning this spiritual centrepiece to the Orthodox community of Almaty. The judges noted that the comprehensive studies of the 1907 cathedral's structure and history, undertaken before works began, ensured the authenticity of the restoration and thereby retained the structure's architectural value and historic significance. The judges commended the exemplary conservation practice, in particular the emphasis on the use of appropriate materials and techniques, attention to original details, and the methodical removal of incongruous additions.

The third **Award of Distinction winner, Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel**, was praised for restoring the distinct rustic character of this significant historic building, the focal point of the rural community of Mullewa. The judges commended the thorough scholarship about the local context and the collected works of the building's priest-architect Monsignor John Cyril Hawes, which guided the sensitive conservation approach. The judges noted that the careful restoration of the historic building fabric, including the magnificent stained glass windows, and the removal of inappropriate newer elements, has reinstated the building's intended spirituality and that the commendable technical execution of the project, along with its detailed documentation, sets a standard for the restoration of similar buildings in the region.

The five **Awards of Merit** went to:

Dadabhai Naoroji Road Heritage Streetscape Project (Mumbai, India)

The first of its kind in India, this ambitious streetscape project has revived the historic ambience of Dadabhai Naoroji Road of Mumbai through the restoration of shop fronts, signage and street furniture to reflect the area's Victorian Era commercial heritage. Starting with grass-roots advocacy, and continuing through stakeholder consensus, the project has succeeded in gaining commitment from the municipal government to adopt urban design guidelines for the entire historic precinct, setting an important precedent. Through its influence on urban policy and contribution to the commercial vitality of the neighborhood, this project sets the standard for future urban streetscape revitalization throughout India.

Dorje Chenmo Temple (Shey Village, Ladakh, India)

The restoration of Dorje Chenmo Temple and its superb wall paintings demonstrates the value of an integrated and inclusive conservation approach to preserving cultural heritage. A key catalytic role in the project was played by the village Oracle, who, working with the project management team, encouraged extensive involvement by the residents of Shey in the conservation work, resulting in the reintegration of the temple into community life and the renewal of an appreciation for traditional construction techniques and decorative arts as appropriate to the continuity of local heritage. This project is an exemplary model for best practice in the conservation of the extensive religious heritage of Ladakh.

Phra Racha Wang Derm (Bangkok, Thailand)

The restoration of this significant royal palace complex, Phra Racha Wang Derm, sets a new precedent for conservation in Thailand and demonstrates the enormous potential of private-sector-led efforts to save important parts of the community's heritage. The project has successfully preserved this valuable ensemble of structures which represent over 200 years of transformation, including the main core of palace buildings which were the centre of royal political and military power during the Thonburi Era. This multi-faceted and ambitious project has effectively incorporated the use of traditional methods and craftsmanship and has conserved important examples of royal decorative fine arts.

St Thomas Cathedral (Mumbai, India)

The restoration of St. Thomas Cathedral has rescued one of Mumbai's most important landmark buildings and has contributed to revitalizing the built heritage of the city's historic centre. The thorough documentation, the removal of incongruent elements and the restrained repair work display a sound understanding of conservation theory and methodology. The creative adaptive reuse of some buildings within the complex has reinforced the function of the cathedral as a place of community learning, while demonstrating the modern-day socio-economic viability of historic structures.

Vietnamese Traditional Folkhouses (Bac Ninh, Quang Nam, Dong Nai, Nam Dinh, Thanh Hoa and Tien Giang Provinces, Viet Nam)

Spanning six provinces in Viet Nam, this ambitious and outstanding project has successfully preserved several typologies of vernacular timber buildings representing a range of Vietnamese regional building crafts and architectural traditions. The project's emphasis on the transfer of technical know-how and teaching of conservation principles has upgraded the capacity of local builders and craftsmen in undertaking similar projects in their communities, thus ensuring the long term survival of their buildings and traditions. The geographical distribution of the sites promises to have a wide-ranging impact on the conservation of local heritage throughout Viet Nam.

Eight projects were given **Honourable Mentions**:

Elphinstone College (Mumbai, India)

The restoration of the façade of the Victorian landmark, Elphinstone College, was undertaken as a result of a community-led campaign and demonstrates best practice in collaborative private-public conservation. Setting the standard for conservation work on the Victorian buildings of Mumbai, the project's cautious and methodical conservation approach and in particular, its use of non-invasive techniques, have ensured the preservation of the building's fragile, historic fabric.

Female Orphan School (Sydney, Australia)

The conservation and adaptation of the Female Orphan School has revitalized one of the most important surviving buildings from the early period of European settlement in Australia, and has ensured that this historic structure will continue to be utilized for years to come. This project displays a sound technical approach in the conservation of existing significant fabric, while the preservation of all phases of the building's history captures in palimpsest its 190 year history of varied use.

Gong'zi'ting (Beijing, China)

The restoration of Beijing's historic Gong'zi'ting palace garden complex demonstrates a clearly articulated conservation strategy combining thorough research and minimal intervention undertaken within a well-developed theoretical framework. Through judicious use of traditional materials and methods, the buildings and grounds have been restored to reflect their significant historic status and cultural value.

Namuna Ghar (Bhaktapur, Nepal)

The restoration and revitalization of this archetypal Newari village farmhouse has successfully preserved a fundamental building type central to the traditional architectural vocabulary of the Kathmandu Valley. In the process, public awareness has been raised about the viability and affordability for modern use of such traditional vernacular structures.

Suzhou Warehouse (Shanghai, China)

The conservation and adaptation of this archetypal warehouse on the Suzhou River demonstrates the large-scale impact that an individual, pioneering restoration project can have in focusing public attention and policy-making on new conservation agendas. A minimalist approach has preserved the building's ambience, while the innovative adaptation of the warehouse for reuse as a design studio has demonstrated the feasibility of innovative and modern uses of industrial buildings.

Tak Seng On Pawnshop Museum and Cultural Club (Macao SAR, China)

The restoration of the Tak Seng On pawnshop and tower-keep has preserved a fine example of a unique southern-China building type and has thereby protected the cultural memory associated with the region's commercial and financial history. The conservation of original features has retained the key elements of the building's intended functional form while acknowledging the evolved state of the building over time by preserving evidence of previous renovation work.

Zargar-e-Yazdi House (Yazd, Iran)

The project exemplifies how authentic use of traditional materials and craftsmanship can contribute to the continuity of both architectural and socio-cultural identity. The adaptation of the Zargar-e-Yazdi house for use as a hotel has demonstrated to the local community the viability of using vernacular structures within a modern and commercial context and has enabled the wider public to gain understanding of and appreciation for Iranian built heritage while securing the future of this handsome building.

Zhangzhou City Historic Streets (Zhangzhou, China)

This restoration and revitalization of Taiwan and Hong Kong historic streets in Zhangzhou City has holistically preserved an urban ensemble comprising a range of important architectural styles. The project has provided the local residents with improved facilities and better living conditions while stimulating a significant increase in commercial activity in the area. The success of the project has led the creation of plans for similar works in other historic streets in Zhangzhou City, exemplifying the catalytic success such projects can have in producing conditions conducive to heritage conservation and in preserving historic urban identities.

Further information about the Heritage Awards and this year's winning entries can be found at the following website:

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