

Mumbai's Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Site

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MUMBAI: Mumbai's Victorian and Art Deco Ensembles has been inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This was announced at the Unesco world heritage committee meeting in Bahrain on Saturday.

The Heritage enclave is situated in South Mumbai's historic core and comprises an urban ensemble straddling two heritage precincts of the Fort Precinct and Marine Drive Precinct.

The Property consists of a 19th century collection of Victorian structures and 20th century Art Deco buildings. It includes the row of public buildings of the High Court, Mumbai University, Old Secretariat, NGMA, Elphinstone

College, David Sassoon Library, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Western Railways Headquarters, Maharashtra Police Headquarters to the east of Oval Maidan and the Art Deco buildings consisting of the first row of Backbay Reclamation scheme, buildings such as the Cricket Club of India and Ram Mahal along Dinshaw Wacha Road, iconic cinema halls of Eros and Regal and the first row of buildings along Marine Drive.



Indian delegation in Bahrain

The Eastern edge of the property is defined by Mahatma Gandhi Marg and

Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Chowk to the East within the designated historic precinct of Fort Area of Mumbai. This marks the edge of the 19th century fortified city of Bombay (now Mumbai). Though the fort walls were mostly torn down in the 1860s under the Governorship of Sir Bartle Frere, the name persists in public memory and is a protected heritage precinct under the Heritage Regulations for Greater Bombay 1995.

State urban development secretary Nitin Kareer, who is part of the delegation in Bahrain, told TOI: Inscription approved. We have the third world heritage site approved for Mumbai. I have dedicated the inscription on behalf of the Government to the “proud Mumbaikars who have always put great value to their heritage and worked consistently to protect it“.



The Nomination Dossier prepared by conservation architect Abha Narain Lambh has been a culmination of 14 years of work since she presented this idea at a UNESCO Conference on Modern Architecture held in

Chandigarh in 2014 where concerns on the lack of representation of 19th and 20th century heritage on the UNESCO list were discussed.

The idea found resonance with the local citizen groups - UDRI, Kala Ghoda Association, Oval Cooperage Residents Association, OVAL Trust, Nariman Point Churchgate Citizens Association, Heritage Mile Association, Federation of Resident's Trusts, Observer Research Foundation as well as the MMR Heritage Conservation Society and was actively endorsed by eminent Mumbaikars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Devendra Fadnavis and Shaina NC who wrote to the central government endorsing this nomination

The western edge of the property is defined by the Arabian Sea that lines the 20th century Art Deco buildings of Backbay Reclamation and Marine Drive. The Northern Edge of the Property is defined by Veer Nariman Road and the Southern Edge by Madame Cama Road.

Whereas Mumbai's dossier was waiting in the wings while India had submitted Delhi, Ahmedabad in the subsequent years, Mumbai became the official entry of India to UNESCO for 2017. This inscription and acknowledgement of the city's invaluable significance is a step closer to the Chief Minister's vision of making Mumbai both a financial and cultural capital and getting its due global position. This inscription gives Mumbai the distinction of having 3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Elephanta, Chhattapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus and the Victorian & Art Deco Ensemble) and Maharashtra leading the pack among states with 5 UNESCO World Heritage Sites (including Ajanta and Ellora).

Conservation architect Abha Narain Lambah, who is part of the delegation in Bahrain, told TOI: "From 2004 when I first presented this idea at the UNESCO conference on representation at Chandigarh it's been 14 long years to get all stakeholders, citizen groups and government on board to make this happen ...this inscription acknowledges Mumbai's position in the world as the finest collection of 19th and 20th century modernism and a city where heritage does not just include dead monuments but a living

breathing dynamic urban centre with buildings in active use by citizens. This is the first case in India's 37 world heritage sites where the nomination process was a citizen driven initiative."

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/mumbais-victorian-and-art-deco-ensembles-inscribed-as-unesco-world-heritage-site/articleshow/64804480.cms>