

# Heritage award kicks off with Park Mansions

Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey | TNN

**Kolkata:** The effort to renovate Park Mansions, the grand old building at the juncture of Park Street and Free School Street, will be officially recognized through an award.

In fact, the award — to be given out jointly by the KMC and Intach (the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) — will be made an annual affair to honour owners of private heritage properties for maintaining built heritage.

The formal announcement will be made during the World Heritage Week celebrations that start on Tuesday.

“The city is known for its heritage buildings and it is extremely important to enthuse



Debobrata Shome

The renovated Park Mansions

private owners to maintain them,” said Anindya Karforma, the director-general of buildings, KMC. “Hence, this

award has been instituted and we are happy to start with Park Mansions this year.”

It took a little over five years

for the Apeejay Group, the present owners, to restore this 103-year-old building that looked healthy from the outside but had suffered great damages inside thanks to a fire that ravaged it in the 1990s. The staircases, lobbies, internal wiring and walls had suffered huge stress imbalance because of the excessive heat. It had also weakened the building’s northeast corner.

Intach convener GM Kapur said: “Park Mansions is by far one of the best examples of a perfectly restored heritage building. Earlier the condition of the building and the signage were in a mess. Everything has been neatly re-done and the building has become an eye catcher, so we decided to start with this building.”

Architect Dulal Mukherjee sounded very happy that his effort at heritage conservation was being recognized. “Though the building looked sturdy from the outside, the inside was heavily damaged — the staircase had given way, loose wires hung all over, posing a fire threat and a great deal of harm had been done thanks to indiscriminate use of concrete patchwork. We have finally been able to take care of all of that. At the moment, we are doing up the central courtyard.”

Park Mansions was built in 1910 by Armenian jute merchant TM Thaddeus. The building had a central courtyard and a garden. The architecture is a mix of the Victorian and Indo-Saracenic styles.