UNESCO Bangkok Press Release

Thai Prime Minister to accept 2009 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Award on behalf of Suphanburi community

Awards Ceremony
Samchuk Community and Old Market District, Suphanburi
11 December 2009, 9.00 a.m.

Bangkok, 9 December 2009 – UNESCO Bangkok will recognize the outstanding restoration of the Samchuk Community and Old Market District in Suphanburi with the presentation of an award to Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva this Friday (11 December 2009), in the Old Market District, at 9.00 a.m.

The conservation of this significant heritage community received an Award of Merit in the 2009 annual UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards.

Dr. Molly Lee, Director a.i. of UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, will present an award plaque to Mr. Abhisit. Certificates of Recognition will also be presented to project team members, including academics, scholars, students and the Samchuk Community Committee.

The jury praised the project as follows: “Once in serious socio-economic decline, the Samchuk Community and Old Market District has been successfully revitalized through the far-sighted vision and cooperation of the local residents. The project will have a major impact in raising awareness about grassroots heritage conservation and is an important model for empowering other historic communities in Thailand.”

A total of 48 entries, from 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, were submitted for consideration. The conservation project entries include hotels, offices, cultural institutions, educational institutions, religious sites, public institutions, residential buildings and urban districts.

Sangiiin Dalai Monastery in South Gobi Aimaq, Republic of Mongolia has been honoured with the Award of Excellence in the 2009 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation.

The three Awards of Distinction went to the M24 Midget Submarine Wreck in Sydney, Australia; the Ali Gohar House in Hunza, Pakistan; and Hanok Regeneration in Bukchon in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
The four Awards of Merit include the Huai Hai Lu 796 in Shanghai, China; the YMCA Students Branch in Mumbai, India; the Waterworks Building in Auckland, New Zealand; and the Samchuk Community and Old Market District in Suphanburi, Thailand.

Four Honourable Mentions were also announced. They are the Academy of Visual Arts (Former Royal Air Force Officers’ Mess) at Hong Kong Baptist University in Hong Kong SAR, China; the Heritage Buildings in Cicheng Historic Town in Zhejiang Province, China; the YWCA Lady Willingdon Hostel in Mumbai, India; and the Tang Family Chapel in Hoi An, Viet Nam.

The 2009 Heritage Awards Jury Commendation for Innovation was awarded to the Maosi Ecological Demonstration Primary School in China. The Jury Commendation recognizes newly-built structures which demonstrate outstanding standards for contemporary architectural design which are well integrated into historic contexts. The 2009 Jury Commendation submissions include four projects (an educational institution, a mausoleum, an urban district and a residential development) from three countries in the region.

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 have also 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.

Thailand has actively participated in the awards programme through a series of outstanding conservation practices. In addition to Samchuk Community and Old Market District, six other projects from Thailand have obtained UNESCO Heritage Awards. These include: Wat Pongsanuk (Award of Merit 2008); Crown Property Bureau Building (Honourable Mention 2008); Amphawa Canal Community (Honourable Mention 2008); Tamnak Yai, Devavesm Palace (Honourable Mention 2005); Phra Racha Wang Derm (Award of Merit 2004); and Wat Sratong Temple (Award of Merit 2002).

Further information about the Heritage Awards and this year’s winning entries can be found at: http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=480

For further information, contact:

Culture Unit,
UNESCO Bangkok Office,
Tel: +66 2 391 0577 ext. 509
Fax: +66 2 391 0866
Email: culture@unescobkk.org