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City architect for Jane Jacobs medal

- Special Correspondent



Architect P.K. Das at the Carter Road promenade.— Photo: Vivek Bendre

Award for P.K. Das is from Municipal Art Society of New York

Architect and urban planner P.K. Das, known for his contribution to participatory urban planning in Mumbai, was named the recipient of the Jane Jacobs International Medal and a \$100,000 (approx. Rs. 67 lakh) cash prize by the Municipal Art Society of New York on September 20.

The Jane Jacobs award was instituted in 2007 by the Rockefeller Centre to recognise individuals who create new ways of seeing and understanding cities, and creatively use the built environment to make cities places of hope and expectation.

This year, the cash prize was opened to international nominees for the first time to mark Jane Jacobs's 100th birth anniversary. The award ceremony will be held in Ecuador in mid-October.

This global search for recipients, according to the Foundation's website, "offers an opportunity to highlight and celebrate local leaders working in cities around the world to advance the Jacobsean principles of fostering local economies, building social capital, creating dense, liveable neighbourhoods and promoting urban innovation through self-organisation."

Ms. Jacobs, who died in 2006, was a writer and activist who championed new, community-based approaches to planning. Though she had no formal training as an urban planner, her 1961 book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, which chronicled the inner workings and failings of cities, became hugely influential for architects and urban planners around the world. Jacobs was well-known for organising grassroots efforts to protect existing neighbourhoods from slum clearances and reckless urban development. Her book argued that urban renewal did not respect the needs of most city dwellers.

Mr. Das has worked for several years to establish a close relation between architecture and the people of Mumbai, by involving them in a participatory planning process. The principle of participatory planning, which he had argued for decades, was finally included in the city's draft Development Plan for 2014-34 and is today an important part of the planning process. He has also worked on the Restoration of waterfront spaces such as the Bandra Bandstand project and restoration work of public spaces such as Land's End, Juhu Chowpatty, Dadar Chowpatty. He is also actively involved in organising slum dwellers for better living and evolving affordable housing models through the organisation Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti.

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