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ICOMOS puts Louis Kahn's IIM-Ahmedabad campus on worldwide heritage alert

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AHMEDABAD: The advisory body to Unesco and an independent think tank in matters of world heritage, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), has issued a 'worldwide heritage alert' to amplify awareness on the threat to Louis Kahn designed Indian Institute of Management - Ahmedabad (old campus) buildings.

The alert, aims to draw an "urgent attention" to the "eminent risk of loss of the internationally significant buildings that make up the cultural landscape designed by Louis Kahn with his team of Indian architects and engineers," ICOMOS had announced on its website.

PRESSURES ON IIM-A BUILDINGS

➤ Need modern dormitories providing reasonable student comfort

➤ Challenges of acquiring new land for future expansion

➤ Responsibilities of long-term maintenance of the Kahn buildings

WHAT ICOMOS SUGGESTS

➤ Draw a comprehensive conservation management plan (CCMP) that also addresses issues

➤ ICOMOS points to conservation of the original dormitory room at the University of Virginia Academic Village, with intangible links to the values and heritage of the university

➤ IIM-A Old Campus shares qualities with the Jefferson Academic Village

Hailing it as an “international icon”, ICOMOS said it was ready to offer its full scope of expertise in support of preserving the exceptional Old Campus of IIM-A. ICOMOS had also communicated to the IIM-A Board of Governors (BoG) their concern, earlier this week.

‘Old buildings interconnected’

The country’s premier BSchool was dragged into a controversy after it issued an expression of interest last month inviting architects and designers to submit plans for reconstructing most of the student dormitories at the campus, designed by noted American architect Kahn. Following national and international outcry on the issue, the BoG cancelled the EOI.

Earlier this week, a letter dated January 12, addressed to the IIMA governing council chairman and leading industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla, ICOMOS commended IIM-A’s decision.

“All Kahn designed buildings on the IIM-A Old Campus are inextricably interconnected,” according to a letter signed by president of ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Twentieth Century Heritage Jack Pyburn and Secretary General of ICOMOS Mario Santana Quintero.

The letter adds , “The dormitory buildings are architecturally outstanding. However, absent the context of the larger Kahn planned campus and buildings, the significance of the dormitories is substantively diminished. Conversely, if the integrity of the dormitories as a group and individually is lost or diminished, the integrity of the Kahn campus plan, landscape and other Kahn buildings is likewise degraded,” the letter claimed.