

Hampi ruins removed from UN danger list

New Delhi - The ancient ruins of Hampi in Karnataka have been taken off the list of world heritage sites in danger after a UN committee felt it was 'no longer under threat' following reduction in motor traffic around the site and the decision not to proceed with a planned shopping centre there.

Hampi, also known as the City of Ruins, is the site of the once-magnificent capital of the Vijayanagar Empire. Built between the 14th and 16th century, Hampi is among four world heritage sites removed from the danger list.

'Improved conservation has allowed the World Heritage Committee to remove Cologne Cathedral (Germany), Djoudj National Bird Sanctuary (Senegal), the Group of Monuments at Hampi (India) and Ichkeul National Park (Tunisia), from the list of world heritage in danger Monday,' a Unesco statement said Tuesday.

Being put on the danger list is aimed at encouraging support for the sites and for its preservation.

'Reductions in motor traffic and the decision to change the location of a planned shopping centre enabled the committee to determine that the Group of Monuments at Hampi, inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1986 and on the Danger List in 1999, was no longer under threat,' the statement said.

Spread over 25 sq km, the ruins include many beautiful temples and palaces.

In the case of Cologne Cathedral, the decision by the authorities of Cologne to scale down plans for the construction of new high-rise buildings and improved management of the site's surroundings, were responsible for taking the masterpiece of German Gothic architecture off the danger list.

For the Djoudj bird sanctuary, the bio-control measures to eradicate the threat of invasive plant species at the wetland site in the Senegal River delta was seen as a positive step.

Ichkeul National Park was put on the danger list due to the increased salinity of its water. The Tunisian authorities ceased using the lake's water for agriculture, which helped lower its salinity and brought back many bird species to the park.

The World Heritage Committee has also accepted the recommendations formulated by 50 international experts on ways to respond to the threat of climate change to many World Heritage sites, including Mount Everest (Sagarmatha National Park in Nepal), Australia's Great Barrier Reef and Venice (Italy).

The international experts had submitted their recommendations in March.

Ina Marciulionyte, chairperson of the World Heritage Committee and Lithuania's ambassador and permanent delegate to Unesco protect World Heritage in keeping with our responsibility to implement the World Heritage Convention. This is what we are trying to do by initiating more studies and sharing experience.'

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