



Speaker P. Sreeramakrishnan visits the exhibition stall held as part of Habfest to mark the 30 anniversary of Habitat Technology Group in Thiruvananthapuram on Thursday.

— A.V. MUZAFAR



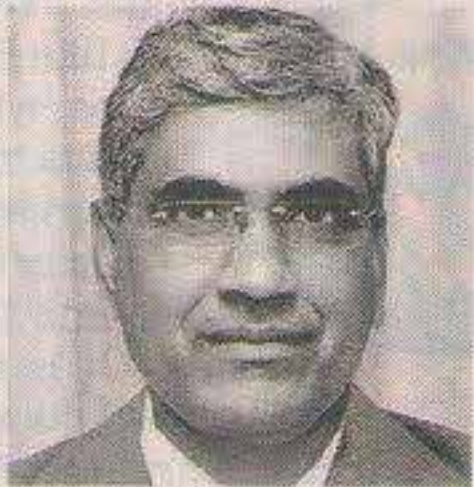
Chandra Dutt



Sunil Kumar



Kirtee Shah



W R Reddy

National Habitat awards for green architecture

Sustainable building solutions provider Habitat Technology Group will present national Habitat awards for green architecture to W R Reddy, R Chandradutt, Kirtee Shah, V Sunil Kumar and the Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS) as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will present the awards, comprising Rs 33,333 and a trophy, at the inaugural function of the anniversary celebrations at the Poojapura Ground on May 14. The winners were chosen by a judging committee chaired by former Kerala Chief Town Planner A Kasturi Rangan. Habitat Group Chairman G Shankar and Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Technology's Architecture Professor Binumol Tom. Chandradutt joined hands with former Chief Minister C Achutha Menon, economist Dr K N Raj and internationally renowned British architect Laurie Baker who made Thiruvananthapuram his home, to establish low-cost architecture system Costford, the Community Polytechnic Scheme and the Centre for Development of Rural Technology. Shah has in the past four decades been involved in low cost housing for the poor, town planning and slum development. Reddy is director general of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj. Asset Homes Managing director Sunil balances mega real estate projects with programmes aimed at the poor.



Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan says people associate their sense of home and belonging with their mothers

Habitat award for W.R. Reddy

Thiruvananthapuram: Habitat Technology Group's national Habitat awards for green architecture has been awarded to W.R. Reddy, R. Chandradutt, Kirtee Shah, V. Sunil Kumar and the Uralungal Labour Contract Cooperative Society (ULCCS). The awards, announced as part of its 30th anniversary celebrations, will carry a cash award of Rs 33,333 and a trophy. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will present the awards at the inaugural function of the anniversary celebrations on May 14.

'Baker's ideas should be brought to the mainstream'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Thiruvananthapuram: There are 12 lakh unoccupied homes in a state where there is a housing shortage of 4.5 lakh, said Chandra Dutt, Director of Centre of Science and Technology for Rural Development (COSTFORD). In a seminar titled 'Laurie Baker's Legacy' organized by Habitat Technology Group here on Sunday Dutt said, "Homes today are assets and speculative investments. This massive transformation is owing to the hyper-consumption by the middle class, outsourcing of design ideas to the West and capital flow from foreign countries to the construction sector".

Dutt, a renowned social activist who co-founded the non-profit housing model with Baker, former chief minister C Achutha Menon and eminent economist K N Raj said that Baker had predicted this transformation from community mode of architecture to commodity mode and called for the rejection of imported rating systems like LEED certifications in favour of traditional vastu shastra principles.

The tribute to Baker on his birth centenary was organized by Habitat Technology Group as part of its HabFest-30 exhibition event in Poojappura ground.

Inaugurating the seminar, director general of National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) W R Reddy said that Baker's pioneering construction techniques and traditional low-cost technologies need to be brought to the mainstream.

"Tendencies of wealth exhibitionism and seeking immediate comforts and conveniences have resulted in distorted architectural designs and practices, unsustainable housing initiatives and the inadequacy of hou-

Rich tributes were paid to Laurie Baker at a function organized as part of the HabFest-30 exhibition, by the Habitat Technology Group on Sunday. Baker's birth centenary falls this year

sing in both urban and rural sectors. There are widely held misconceptions about affordable housing being meant only for the poor and that a house must by definition be a concrete-cement structure," Reddy said.

Calling for an 'unlearning of such lessons', he said that the lessons left by Baker - creating living situations as close to nature as possible using locally available materials and ensuring minimal wastage in the construction cycle - could only be utilized by the construction sector after they had been enshrined as PWD and CPWD codal provisions.

Echoing this sentiment, architect and COSTFORD joint director P B Sajan advocated a community-based approach to construction that involved participatory planning, education and women empowerment.

Over a presentation on 'Slum free cities through community-building' that recalled a 1996 booklet by Baker titled 'Are slums inevitable', Sajan said, "The financial empowerment of women and education of children is the key to ushering in home ownership in the slums and ending the cycle of subsidy dependence."

Kudumbasree former executive director K B Valsala Kumari, technocrat G Vijayaraghavan, BJP leader C Sivankutty, Poojapurra councilor B Vijayalakshmi and film critic Madhu Eravankara were also present on the occasion.

Affordable housing solutions at Hab-Fest

Alternative technologies showcased at Habitat Technology fair

STAFF REPORTER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Solutions for affordable housing are the main draw of Hab-Fest 30, a four-day exhibition organised by the Habitat Technology Group at the Poojappura grounds to mark three decades of its work towards low-cost and sustainable construction.

A host of stalls offering cost-effective solutions for construction requirements such as roof and floor tiles, interlocking bricks, rainwater harvesting, solar panels, biogas plants, furniture, and loans have been put up at the fete.

Be it a traditional mud house, brick dome structure, laterite stone construction, or a bamboo house, the stall of the National Building Centre at the Rural Technology Park of the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Hyderabad, offers insights into various alternative technologies. It offers consultancy services in low-cost construction using locally available materials. It also works in the areas of rural sanitation, water harvesting, solar energy, and waste management, besides skill technology transfer to uplift the rural people.



Effective solutions for construction requirements are on display at Hab-Fest 30.

A stall of the Energy Management Centre has two equipment that help illustrate the need for illumination in a house. Using a lux meter, illuminance in a box that is partitioned into three and has sides painted in colours from light to dark is measured.

The lux decreases as the colours become dark, indicating that light paints make a room brighter. Another box has three different bulbs - 60 W incandescent bulb, 14 W CFL and 7 W LED. The LED bulb registers the most lux, indicating that LED bulbs help conserve energy the most.

A staff of Uravu from Wayanad showcases the uses of bamboo - from pens to furniture to concept art. An in-

teresting collection of bangles, purses, bags, masks, rainmaker, folders, penholder, lamp shades, trays, curtains, chairs and tables that underscore the diverse uses of bamboo can be seen in this stall. One can get to know about various types of bamboos used in construction and furniture, how bamboo can be bent, and see saplings of the bamboo plant here.

A stall of bamboo curtains -- of various types at various prices, depending upon the quality of work - by a Nedumangad firm also has an interesting product, vetiver ('ramacham') curtains.

A stall of earthen pottery has a host of products, right from big tandoors and water pots to 'kujas' and other pots

and pans used for cooking. Pots used for Ayurveda 'dhara treatment' vases, those for nesting birds and so on can also be picked up here. There is a stall of Ahimsa toys, with messages that stress on letting nothing go waste and discovering the true potential of every material.

A stall of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research offers solutions for cool buildings, helping in bringing down the use of air conditioners and thereby energy consumption too. Pigments that can help arrest infra red energy have been exhibited here. When buildings are coated with these cost-effective pigments, the heat is not absorbed, nor can it be radiated further. The council also has on display tiles that it has developed in association with the traditional tile industry in the State.

Prospective home owners looking for affordable and environment-friendly homes can also look up a prototype of a 303 sq ft model brick home built by Habitat that costs only Rs.3 lakh and can be put up in three weeks. It also employs locally sourced materials.

Low-cost housing solutions unveiled at Habfest exhibition

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Thiruvananthapuram: A house, which costs just about Rs 2.5 lakh is under construction at the Poojappura Ground. For those who are looking for affordable houses the model house offers low-cost solutions.

The 300 sq.ft house has been one of the biggest draw at the four-day HabFest exhibition held to mark the 30th anniversary of the Habitat Technology Group. The construction of the low-cost house, which requires around three-weeks, is expected to be complete on the concluding day of the event on Sunday. The exhibition will be followed by a year-long anniversary celebrations to be conducted by the Habitat Technology Group. Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate the celebrations at the valedictory event of the exhibition. He

The exhibition also includes an array of displays related to affordable and eco-friendly architecture methods

will also present the National Habitat Award to individuals and organisations which have adopted sustainable building methods.

Green waste management system with affordable alternative to industrial products, inefficient disposal processes was another attraction at the venue. From exhibits ranging from handcrafted kinetic toys to a 360-degree preview of a property was among the displays in the 60 stalls at the exhibition. A stall of toys made with recycled material such as

discarded plastics bottles and paper was setup by K S Subid, from Ahimsa Toys. A Technopark-based start-up has arranged a virtual reality experience that provides a 360-degree preview of the property on offer to a prospective homebuyer. The visitors can take a personalised tour of several virtual houses through VR Headset.

The exhibition also includes an array of displays related to low-cost, eco-friendly architecture methods and traditional building techniques. A demo of sustainable and affordable building concepts and traditional building materials used for state of the art construction technologies, seminars on relevant infrastructure and capability building measures, free housing consultations, demonstration on up-cycling and recycling were other activities at the festival.

Govt will promote green buildings: Min

Thiruvananthapuram: Incorporating rural technology, the state government will explore all possibilities in rainwater harvesting, tourism minister Kadakampally Surendran said here on Friday. He was inaugurating a seminar on rainwater harvesting organised by Habitat Technology Group as part of its 30th-anniversary celebrations.

“The government would take all steps to promote green construction methods to protect the earth and water,” said the minister.

Fritz Porcheke, Director, Research and Development, WISY AG, a German organisation which has been a global provider and the leading manufacturer of high-quality rainwater harvesting systems, presented the theme paper.

Going all out to harvest rainwater

STAFF REPORTER

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The State government will explore all possibilities to harvest rainwater by incorporating rural technology, Minister for Cooperation Kadakampally Surendran has said.

He was speaking at a seminar on rainwater harvesting organised by the Habitat Technology Group as part its 30th anniversary celebrations.

Rainwater run-off in the State had assumed alarming proportions. The State did not collect even a quarter of the rainwater that an arid State such as Rajasthan did, he said.

The government would take all steps to promote green constructions that



Kerala does not collect even a quarter of the rainwater collected by Rajasthan

KADAKAMPALLY SURENDRAN

Minister for Cooperation

protected the earth and water. It would support organisations such as Habitat in its effort to conserve the environment by employing rural construction technology, Mr. Surendran said.

Fritz Porcheke, director, Research and Development, WISY AG, a German organisation that has been a global provider and leading manufacturer of high-quality rainwater systems, presented the theme paper at the seminar.

Habitat has revolutionised housing sector: Speaker

Habitat group has been pioneering in revolutionising the housing sector by standing up for sustainable and green architecture and for being a influential response to Malayali's fake vanity of luxurious houses, Speaker P Sreeramakrishnan has said. He was inaugurating 'Habfest-30', a four day event marking the beginning of the 30th anniversary celebrations of Habitat Technology Group, Kerala has become a graveyard of luxury houses, a mark of Malayali's unnecessary sense of exhibitionism," said the Speaker. "On one hand we have hundreds of homeless and on the contrary there are as many plush houses built , but unoccupied," Sreeramakrishnan said. "Over the years Habitat Group has been a guiding light for making us realise the concept of house is shelter and not a symbol of vanity," he added. "Habitat with their unique concept of affordable and ecologically sustainable building ways and also by utilising our traditional architectural wisdom and local materials has been leading a suitable alternative in shelter sector," he said. A M Ariff MLA presided over the function. Habitat Group founder G Shankar welcomed the gathering. The Speaker presented national Habitat award to renowned architect Kirtee Shah at the function.



Habitat Award for W.R. Reddy

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The Habitat Award was presented to W.R. Reddy, Director, National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan as part of the 30th anniversary celebrations of Habitat on Sunday. Actor Manju Warrier; Shashi Tharoor, MP; O. Rajagopal, MLA; and architect G. Shankar took part in the function.

ASWIN VN

"It has been a wonderful journey and I am glad I could help many thousands of people get safe shelter," says G. Shankar, a pioneer of sustainable architecture. Having built thousands of low-cost yet eco-friendly houses in India as well as in neighbouring countries, he is also a Padma Shri awardee.

Founder and chief architect of Habitat Technology group, he built the largest NGO in the shelter sector in India, which has carried out several major disaster rehabilitation and charitable housing projects in several countries. A Laurie Baker protégé, who practises brick-and-mud architecture, Shankar says his drive to bring social development as an architect was born during his college days in Thiruvananthapuram.

Connecting

After his schooling at Government Model Boy's High School in Thiruvananthapuram, when he joined for pre-degree at Government Arts College, which was in the same compound, it merely meant a change of building. But, he noticed one big difference. The vertical social division among the students was out in the open. "Several students from financially sound families could afford facilities such as tuition and tutorials. But there were many boys from marginalised sections who couldn't afford them. Being one of the few who was friends with many economically-disadvantaged students, I was able to understand poverty and the alienation associated with it," says Shankar.

The situation was the same at the College of Engineering Thiruvananthapuram (GET), where Shankar got admission for architecture. Engineering, he recall, was considered to be the forte of the 'elitist'. "But unlike the pre-degree days, we had a tool to fight that mentality – campus politics. I strongly believe politics was instrumental in making many meaningful interventions in professional college campuses, especially in fighting segregation," he adds.

Shankar's batch was the first to start a cultural union at CET. The late 70s was a time of political turmoil, and their first event was a reminder of that. "We hosted a poet's gathering on the campus as our first event, for which we got arrested. We were

seen as some kind of extremists by many. Those were some of the most memorable days of my life," he recalls with a chuckle.

Shankar chose architecture as it was the perfect field to explore his creative avenues while doing his part in the country's social development. "We had some great teachers who imbibed all the joy and spirit of architecture in us. But the architecture I was taught at CET was not for people with a big family and a limited budget," he adds. So, after he completed his B.Arch, he did his master's in sustainable housing at Birmingham City University (formerly University of Central England), UK.

He was keen to learn there as it was where British-born Indian architect

The highest technical qualification blended with revolutionary aspirations, create the best out of individuals.

Laurie Baker studied. "The course changed my perception about architecture. It was probably the first time I was handling construction material. Students were taught masonry, carpentry and all the other works that were part of constructing a house," says Shankar. He topped the course and soon got a call from an-

other university in the U.K. to join as a faculty member at its newly-formed department of sustainable architecture. He admits that he was tempted to stay in the U.K. as he enjoyed life there.

Shankar adds, "I wanted to practise what I studied and help people with it. India was the perfect place to do so as our country was facing a severe housing crisis back then."

For Shankar, education must first aim at creating good, caring individuals. He stresses on the importance of imparting deep and precise technical

knowledge on the subject. "I have always believed in Che Guevara's perception that the highest technical qualification blended with revolutionary aspirations, create the best out of individuals. India has the most number of talented people in the world. But our system is not able to shape them well. That should change," he says.

His own work, Shankar says, is based on Gandhiji's philosophy that no matter what you do, think about the poorest of the poor and ask yourself how your act is going to touch their lives.

Touching lives

Master mason and people's architect G. Shankar has tried to bring about social development through architecture



Pioneer: Drive to bring social development through architecture.





CHIEF GREETINGS

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan exchanges pleasantries with Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, actress Manju Warrier, and Sugathakumari during the 'Habfest' in Poojappura in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday.

— PEETHAMBARAN PAYYERI



Architect G. Sankar introduces a cost effective structure to Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan during the inauguration of Habfest on Sunday in Thiruvananthapuram on Sunday.

—PEETHAMBARAN PAYYERI

AFFORDABLE AND ECO-FRIENDLY: THIS MODEL IS A HUGE DRAW

Express News Service

For prospective owners looking for an affordable house, installed inside Poojappura ground is a model that offers practical solutions to today's construction concerns.

The 303-sq ft model brick home, designed and built by Habitat Technology Group, only costs around Rs three lakh and can be set up in as little as three weeks. It incorporates locally sourced eco-friendly materials and uses just 10 bags of cement—despite a floor plan that finds space for a spacious multi-purpose hall, a bedroom with attached toilet, a kitchenette and dining area.

"It is also durable. Once textured over with red mud, epoxy and sand paste, the brick structure will not give any cause for worry for about 30 years provided one maintains the home well. In contrast, the average house built today has to be painted over at a cost of at least Rs two lakh every four years or so," said Sreeranjith, a site engineer with Habitat.

The prototype is one of the main draws at the Habitat's four-day exhibition on affordable housing that began here on Thursday. Held as part of Hab-Fest 30, a celebration of the group's 30-year history of sustainable, green interventions, the exhibition runs till Sunday, May 14.

The structure uses approximately 1,750 interlock bricks—a 'green' mud brickwork system that significantly reduces cement mortar use, cools down the interior and decreases electricity consumption while withstanding temperature and weather variances.

"When the cement and sand use is reduced, one can cut down on the costs. With skilled labour, the home can be built in three weeks. Also, the use of locally available wood like mahogany and jack fruit tree for doors and shutters, will



Pic: Manu R Mardil

further reduce costs," Sreeranjith said.

The flooring uses Plain Cement Concrete (PCC) with cement plastering and colouring agents like red oxide while the sloped module panel tile roof uses the filler slab system, which decreases total ce-

ment load and weight as well as steel consumption by leaving spaces between the slabs.

"Since heat gain is highest from the roof, the use of filler slabs allows for passive cooling where the hot air from outside is cooled down by the hollow spaces. Besides improving air circulation inside the structure, this also reduces envi-

ronment noise coming into the house," Sreeranjith said.

Besides the house itself, Habitat is holding live demonstrations of cost-effective household technologies that can be such as a waste management system. Free housing consultations with Habitat experts besides expert discussions and seminars will be on throughout the exhibition.