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## Preserving Quake-Resistant Vernacular Architecture of Kashmir

Srinagar, India, April 11, IRNA

India-**Kashmir**-Quake Resistant

The traditional Kashmiri construction technique of "dhaji dewari" and "taq" is the focus of UNESCO attention for its earthquake resistant properties, which it wants popularized and adopted in current modes of construction.

Taq consists of load-bearing masonry piers and infill walls, with wood "runners" at each floor level used to tie the walls together with the floors.

The second system, known as Dhaji-Dewari construction, consists of a braced timber frame with masonry infill.

The UN body is publishing a book on the subject by international heritage preservation consultant, Randolph Langebach, titled "**Don't Tear it Down**, Preserving the Earthquake-Resistant Vernacular Architecture of **Kashmir**."

The book is an important work on the architectural heritage of **Kashmir** to be published by UNESCO.

This is not the usual kind of work on architecture.

Its aim has not been to document the archaeological monuments of the Valley, but rather to make the case for the preservation of the traditional domestic architecture - buildings often of humble origins, that make up the urban form of Srinagar and the other cities in **Kashmir**.

The work is also unusual in that it makes the case for preservation, not in spite of the antiquated construction of these buildings, but because of it.

It is framed on the capacity of the best examples of Kashmiri traditional construction to resist one of Nature's most prodigious forces earthquakes.

This book documents an often ignored architectural heritage and a construction tradition that has demonstrated a level of earthquake- resistance that experts have even proposed as the basis of ideas for how to improve the earthquake performance of modern structures of reinforced concrete.

The book is a product of UNESCO's mission to advance scientific understanding.

It includes a detailed educational 'Primer on Structural Concepts of Earthquake Safety' and a lengthy section on how to maintain, repair and strengthen the heritage buildings of Srinagar and **Kashmir**.

However, it is more than a technical manual.

Its author, international heritage preservation consultant Randolph Langenbach, also brings to it a vision of how the heritage buildings of **Kashmir** can become an armature on which to help rebuild people's pride of place and form the basis for both economic and quality of life improvements to Kashmir's human environment.

This effort by Langenbach and UNESCO will open a new chapter in the practice of taq and dhaji dewari in **Kashmir** and help Kashmiris preserve their heritage.

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