

A question on Kashmir✱

THIS refers to Anu Soman's letter (Nov 17) and Sayed S. Jehan, Zainab Zaidi and Khurram Haneef's letters (Nov 19).

Kashmir is not India's territory and nor is it a border or a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. Kashmir is a dispute in which the principal party is the Kashmiris.

The only solution to the Kashmir dispute is that the entire Jammu and Kashmir state comprising more than 84,000 square miles should be given to the trusteeship of the United Nations for at least 20 to 25 years and, after this period, the 15 million Kashmiris should be given their fundamental

right of self-determination and a plebiscite will be conducted on three options: (i) accession to Pakistan; (ii) accession to India or; (iii) independent status to the Jammu and Kashmir state, as provided to princely states according to the June 3 partition plan and/or the Partition of India Act, 1947.

According to the "UN's trusteeship scheme" the troops of both India and Pakistan will quit the Jammu and Kashmir state and an "international peace force" will take control of the area. Under the UN trusteeship, a UN administrator and a trustee's council will look after the affairs and administration of the state for

20 to 25 years.

The idea of UN trusteeship is more in favour of Pakistan than are the UN resolutions dated Aug 13, 1948 and Jan 5, 1949. According to these resolutions, Pakistan has to withdraw its troops from Jammu and Kashmir and a reasonable minimum strength of India's army will remain deployed in the state to assist the "local authorities" and/or the "United Nations Commission" as per the terms of the UN resolutions.

The division of Kashmir has been proposed on several bases. It has been proposed on the basis of rivers (northern Kashmir and southern Kashmir), according to which

the northern part of Chenab goes to Pakistan and the southern part of the river to India.

It has been proposed on the basis of the Line of Control and division of the Jammu and Kashmir state into three parts according to Sir Owan Dixon's plan or Senator Solaraz's formula: (i) Azad Kashmir and Gilgit and Biltistan to Pakistan (ii) Jammu and Ladakh to the India, (iii) a semi-independent autonomous status to the "Valley of Kashmir" under the joint-supervision and/or control of India and Pakistan like Ireland's Mitchal's plan. But none of these is a solution to the Kashmir dispute since the people of Jammu and Kashmir are

the real, principal and major party to the dispute and the division of the state will not be acceptable to the 15 million Kashmiris.

The division of Vietnam, Germany and Korea proves that division is not the final solution. SAALIM SALAM ANSARI
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Readers are requested to restrict their comments to a maximum of 400 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for reasons of clarity and space. Letters, including those by e-mail, should carry the complete postal address of the sender.—Editor

Historical monument victim of govt apathy

By Rafique Jalal

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Dawn
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KARACHI, Sept 29: Frere Hall, one of the few historical monuments in the city, has been losing its grandeur and decaying fast, thanks to the apathy of the city and provincial governments.

Besides, tight security arrangements that have been put in place to provide protection to the American Consulate and the residence of the US consul-general have also contributed to the poor condition of the Frere Hall located between these two "sensitive" roads.

The scene at the Frere Hall building is pathetic, to say the least. On the left side of the first flight lie some broken, abandoned pieces of furniture. On the middle landing, right on the front wall a plaque meets your eyes; it says the grand edifice was built way back in 1865.

Further up, the first floor, accommodating an art gallery and an office, speaks volumes for the neglect with which the place is being handled.

Almost all of its [20-foot-tall and 4-foot-wide, approximately] doors and windows are broken. Nevertheless, some of these artistically made doors and windows have been repaired to the extent that they are holding together. The false ceiling has many holes and a faded carpet does not have a spot without a bird dropping! Welcome to the gallery named after Pakistan's greatest artist and muralist, Sadequain.

Frere Hall, made with yellowish stones in the middle of a lush green lawn, is one of the places Karachi can be proud of. In the late '50s, authorities set up a rich

library after the name of Pakistan's first prime minister Liaquat Ali Khan on its ground floor. Sources said there were some 30,000 books in the library, but arrangements are not adequate to run it.

In 1986-87, Sadequain started calligraphic work for one of the ceilings of the art gallery. Death, however, did not permit him to complete the work. The place is also used for official and unofficial functions. For the past many years, a weekly old books bazaar is held on the spacious cemented floor in front of the main building, drawing a large number of booklovers from all parts of the city.

Keeping in view the importance of the building, the city government should have chalked out a programme

decades ago to preserve it. However, as is our attitude to other such monuments, no one felt the need for such a measure. In the year 2002, a powerful bomb explosion in front of the American Consulate opposite the Frere Hall struck a serious blow to its fittings and fixtures. Most of the doors and windows broke down and fell. Bookracks collapsed. Windowpanes shattered. Panels of false ceiling fell off their frames.

Following another bomb blast near the residence of the US consul-general a couple of months back, the administration tightened security in the area, making it virtually impossible for the general public to access the Frere Hall garden freely — now known as Bagh-i-Jinnah. Less visitors means less com-

plaints about the poor condition of the building and less complaints mean there is nothing that needs urgent attention.

Soon after the blast in 2002, the city nazim had inspected the damage and issued orders for repairs. The engineering and works department of the city government prepared a Rs1.7 million estimate for restoring the building to its pre-blast status. However, for reasons best known to the department concerned the work has not been initiated yet, neither is there any sign of it getting started any sooner.

Talking to this reporter, Iqbal Zubedi, in charge of the city government's Community Development Department, admitted that there had been inordinate delay in the start of the repairs. He, however, did not explain the

reasons for this delay. In reply to a question, he expressed the hope that the renovation work would start during the current financial year.

Another senior official of the city government said: "It was in 1986-87 when last major repairs were carried out in the Frere Hall." Answering a question, he said instead of carrying out the repair of the damaged parts the government should launch a project to renovate the entire building in order to restore its lost glory.

The annual Sadequain Award competition will be held on Oct. 1 in which artists from all over the country will participate. The government will only take appropriate steps to announce the launch of the renovation project on the Oct. 15.