

Rehri Bazaar 'drama' has flopped

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By Muhammad Asghar

LAHORE, June 16: The Rehri Bazaar drama of the city district government has flopped due to the non-cooperation of the Allama Iqbal Town tax collectors and reluctance of the 'rehriwalas' to shift to the bazaar due to the lack of promised amenities.

District Nazim Mian Amer Mahmood inaugurated the first of the 40 'rehri' bazaars planned by the City District Government near the studios on Main Multan Road on June 7. The tax collectors had gathered scores of 'rehris' from the nearby Allama Iqbal Town and Sabzazar Scheme Morris, Shahnoor Studios and Chowk Yateem Khana to give an impression of an overwhelming response to his scheme.

A similar drama had been staged when the first and last of the 'rehra markets' had been inaugurated outside the Chauburji Quarters again on Main Multan Road in 1980s. The number of 'rehras' at the spot has not exceeded half a dozen till date and no second 'rehra market' has been established anywhere in the provincial metropolis since then.

The District Nazim, apparently pleased with the success of his scheme, announced availability of electricity,

water supply and parking facilities for the bazaar meant for 100 'rehris'. He also announced that no rent would be charged from the 'rehriwalas' purveying

their merchandise in the bazaar. And last but not the least announced that no 'rehriwala' would be allowed to operate within a radius of the three kilometres

around the bazaar.

It was the last part of the announcement of the District Nazim that did not please the A.I.Town tax collectors patronizing hundreds of temporary encroachments around Chowk Yateem Khana, Sabzazar and Allama Iqbal Town Morris, Allama Iqbal Town Moon Market and around the studios on Multan Road, all situated within a one kilometre radius of the newly inaugurated 'rehri bazaar'. The pocket money they received for allowing the 'rehriwalas' to sell their merchandize at fixed spots and shopkeepers and vendors to encroach on footpaths and parking lots exceeds over Rs100,000 per month and they were not ready to part with it merely for the pleasure of the District Nazim.

The 'rehriwalas' brought to the CDG bazaar welcomed the announcement of the District Nazim because a ban on operation of 'rehris' in a three-kilometre radius around the 'rehri bazaar' meant that most of the people making their purchases from them would automatically come to the new bazaar and they would be saving hundreds of rupees being extorted by



AN inside view of Rehri Bazaar on Sunday. — Dawn

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the A.I.Town tax collectors from them every month for allowing them to park their 'rehris' at vantage points along the roads in addition.

The euphoria of the 'rehri-walas' happy over the idea of being provided a rent-free space for doing business did not last long as some of them started leaving for their favourite spots from where they had been brought to the bazaar soon after the departure of the District Nazim. The number of 'rehris' coming to the bazaar was disappointing the next day and the tax collectors drove many from the nearby spots to the bazaar, though half-heartedly, to show their efficiency. The continuing

presence of a sizable number of 'rehris' at the Allama Iqbal Town and Sabzazar Scheme Morris and around the studios, however, resulted in the gradual departure of those who had come to the bazaar site.

There were not even a dozen 'rehris' in the bazaar on Sunday. Only a few fruit vendors were occupying the space along the Multan Road. A garbage skip had been placed right in front of the bazaar site and arrangements for electricity, water supply and electricity were yet to be made. Finishing touches were being given to the tiled floor and last but not the least the brick-paved bazaar site had no shelter for saving the 'rehri-walas' and their customers from the scorching sun.