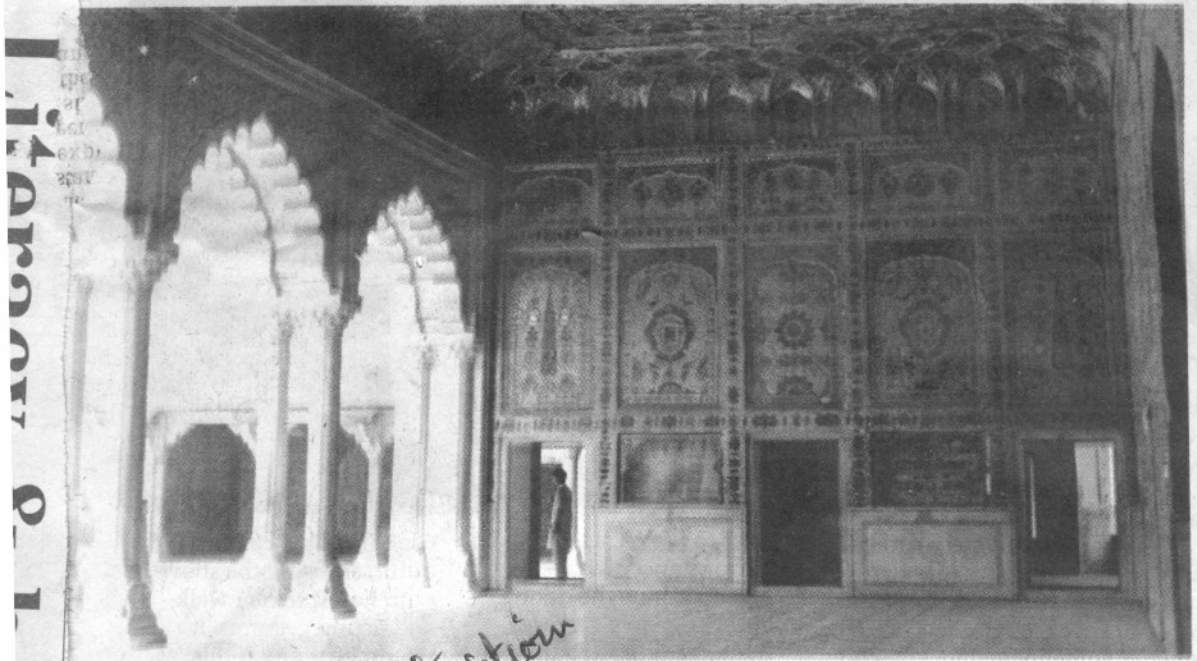


The price of preservin



by QURAT UL AIN SHAHID

Lahore
1-7-02 Nation

In the northwest corner of Lahore Fort, the Shish Mahal, is one of the most remarkable pavilions of its palace. Begun under Jahangir, it was completed by Shah Jahan. Its original purpose was to serve as a *shah burj*, where the sultan would discuss state affairs with his closest courtiers. Unlike its counterparts in the palaces of Agra and Delhi forts, the *shah burj* of Lahore is not a tower, but a pavilion protruding from the north wing of the fort. Known as the 'palace of mirrors', it consists of apartments roofed with cupolas and decorated in a mirror mosaic style, *ayina kari*, with thousands of small mirrors called 'Aleppo glass' by the Mughals. The central portion of the façade is composed of five cusped marble arches supported by coupled

columns in marble, with bases inlaid with precious stones.

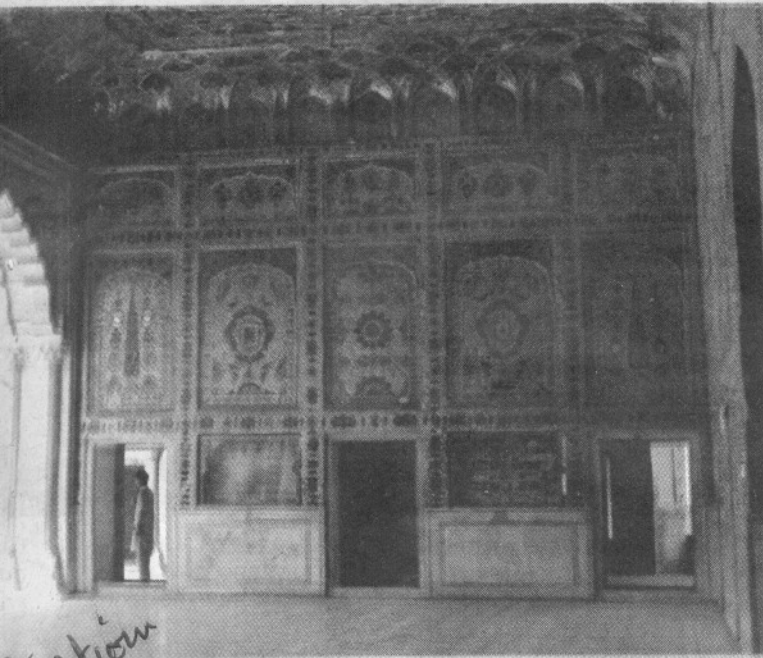
The Shish Mahal is one of the most precious heritage of Lahore. It faced neglect for a very long time but stood before the problems with courage and pride. The smoke from the nearby bus station and the pollution affected its beauty and its sparkling mirrors grew dull and dark with each passing day, still it provided the visitors a reflection of the splendour it used to enjoy during the Mughal reign. Due to not getting proper attention from the caretakers and the oldness of the building, the roof of this prestigious Mahal became weak and the Shish Mahal was closed down due to this danger.

Qasim Ali Qasim the director of Auqaf department said that they get funding from the government. They have at least 117

monuments under their supervision and the fundings the get are not enough. This year they got sixteen lacs grant from the government and that too for the whole 117 monuments and if this sum is divided on all the number of monuments it is equal to the *Zakat* amount the government takes out every year. So they select their priorities and then start working on them. That is why the working of our *auqaf* department is slow.

Fortunately the miserable situation caught the attention of the *auqaf* department and they started working immediately for its restoration. Pakistan's best constructor Dr. Mehboob from Multinational company is dealing with the roof problem of *Shish Mahal* now-a-days. Dr. Mehboob is a D.M. from UET and a PHD in steel structure. The construction of a temporary roof over

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Shish Mahal

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the falling roof of Shish Mahal is recommended by the committee formed in wake for solving this major problem and for saving the precious structure of the building with all its splendour. Renovation of this building is a very long process which will take its time. The roof has been plastered, it is a slow conservation process. In the process of plastering, the plaster is kept wet for six months so only those who visit the place occasionally will gather that the work is undergoing but those who visit after months complain that no work is being. Well,

this is not a fault at their part as they do not understand the procedure and the time these kind of things take. The initial faults have been sorted out but to get a more closer faultless opinion they have to open the roof from above Shish Mahal and find a way to put beams and holders.

According to the sources from the sight, the constructors are planning to put a roof above the original roof of Shish Mahal so that it not only holds the falling roof but the original handicraft and beauty of the it is saved too. ■

