

# Shalamar land occupation

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LAHORE, July 7: The Shalamar Town administration has occupied the land having the Shalamar Garden's hydraulic system on the pretext of saving it from grabbers.

Garbage trucks are parked on the land measuring three kanals situated in front of the historic Mughal gardens despite a protest by the archaeological department.

The remaining eight kanals are in the possession of people selling furniture and crockery. The archaeology department says that the occupation is illegal while shopkeepers claim they are

using it under a court order.

Shalamar Garden Conservator Assistant Mahmood Akhtar Alvi said that the town administration was of the view that the land would have been occupied by others if they had not brought it into use.

Shalamar Town Nazim Ashiq Dyal said the town had no place to park trucks. The Shalamar land would be vacated as soon as funds were made available for a parking lot, he said. He said the land in the possession of the shopkeepers would be reclaimed after the vacation of the stay order.

The occupied land housed a

unique hydraulic system for the Shalamar Gardens and was a part of the Inayat and Angoori Baghs built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1642. These gardens did not exist and houses and markets had taken their place.

During the British rule in 1938, the hydraulic system was disconnected from the Shalamar Gardens due to the construction of the GT Road.

According to a Shalamar Garden official, the Punjab government had, under orders from the then chief minister Shahbaz Sharif, demolished 50 per cent of the system to widen the road in



1998-99. He said an adjoining fountain built by the Lahore Development Authority at a cost of Rs750,000 was also demolished.

Ms Tanigochi of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Paris, and Sir Bernard Fielden, Pro Amateur and Consultant of UNESCO had requested the authorities concerned to stop the demolition but they paid no heed to the requests, he said.

The official said further demolition of the hydraulic structure had been stopped after the dismissal of the Shahbaz government. It was then decided that the government could not use the land to widen the GT Road without the permission of the archaeology department, allowing it to take care of the intact portion of the hydraulic system.

