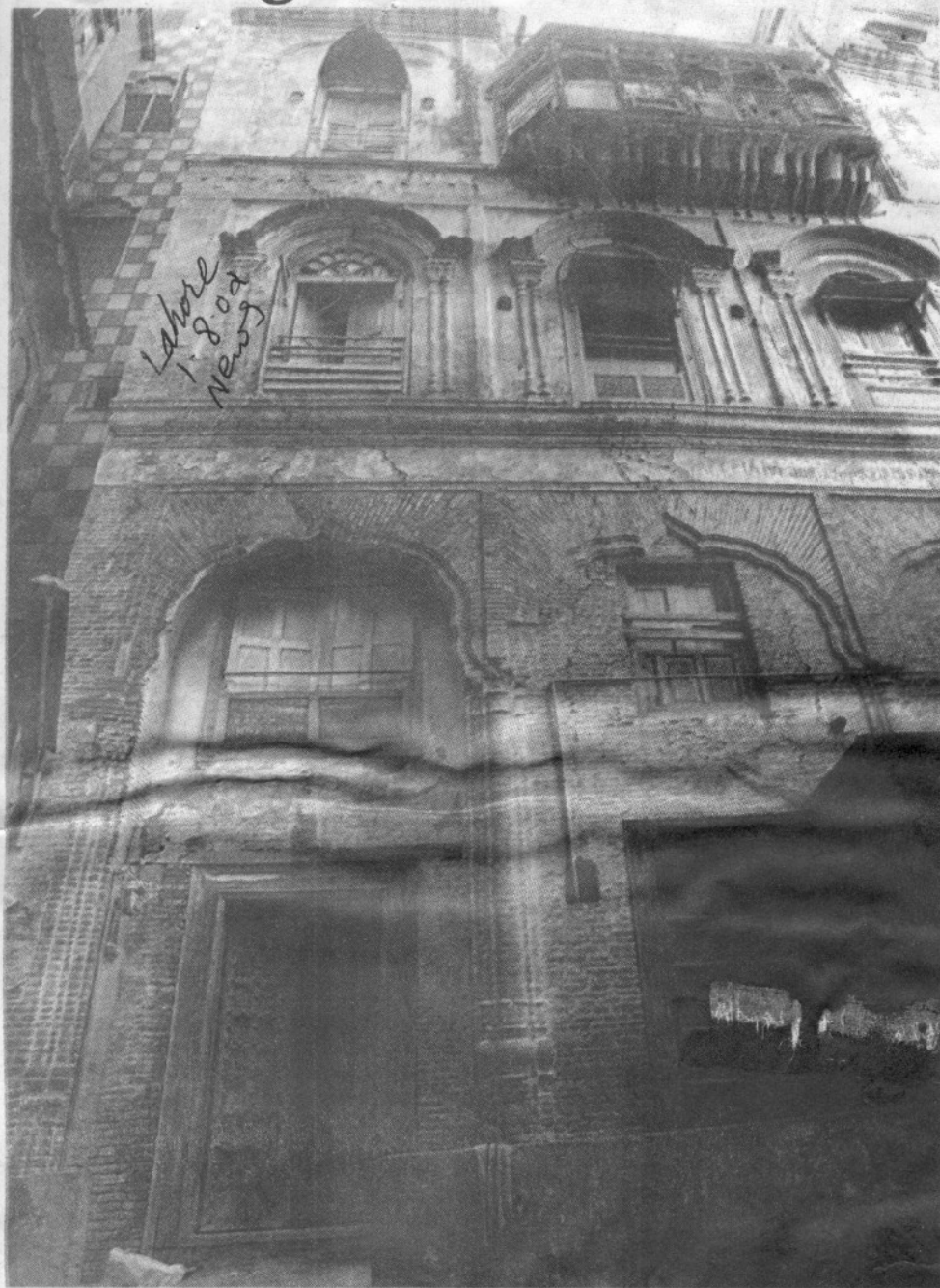


581 Walled City old buildings: a ticking bomb for the occupants



An old building in a dilapidated condition. —Photo by Mohsin Raza

By Khalid Malik

THE Planning and Building Control Department has marked as many as 581 Walled City buildings as "dangerous", 118 as "most dangerous" and the inmates have been issued notices again and again to vacate them. However, District Nazim Mian Aamir told *The News* recently that the city government cannot do

more than just issuing the notices.

"There is no law to help these people financially. The government can only send notices to vacate the buildings," he maintained. This means the poor residents are under constant danger of being buried under the 'debris' anytime. The department in its notices warned the occupants of these buildings to immediately vacate them as these

buildings will not be able to withstand the coming monsoon season and it may cause any mishap. A senior department official said none of these buildings have so far been vacated. Hundreds of people who live in these buildings are living with a risk of death as any time any of these houses can collapse. These houses, if collapsed, may cause a disaster and will also cause damage

to other buildings and humans living around and the passersby. The dangerous and most dangerous houses and buildings are located in Shah Almi Gate, Bhati Gate, Gumti Bazaar, Masti Gate, Kashmiri Gate and Lohari Gate. The residents of these houses say that they have no other place to live in. Many others, however, maintain that they had carried out repair works. Still many more are those who have no resources for repair. Shabbir, Suleman, Ilyas, Abdul Rehman and Ismail, the residents the "most dangerous" buildings - 'Guru Baba Shri Shawala' in Gumti Bazaar - are among this category. "We are poor and have no money for the repair work. We have no other place to live as well."

'Kucha Achariya' is another "most dangerous" building in Gumti Bazaar and all its four floors are occupied by at least ten different families. The condition of the building can be gauged from the fact that it is standing on the support of huge wooden and some iron rods. Kashif, a resident of this building, said he was there because he could not afford rent for some other place.

Another building known as 'Katri Taray Shah' in Masti Gate was also occupied by eight families. Residents of the building, when asked about the condition of the building, said the building was disputed and a case was in court between the two owners. They said that is why the residents are not spending any money on it. Despite being declared dangerous and most dangerous for years, the government departments concerned have failed to vacate them and the officials every year conduct surveys and issue notices to the residents. In some cases, the government managed to register FIRs against the inhabitants. According to the government procedure, the residents are first given legal notices. In the second phase, the department manages to register FIRs and in the final phase people are summoned in courts where they are awarded Rs 15,000 fine or imprisonment up to three years or both.

"Previous government made a plan to help these people and Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000 was decided to be given to each building but after that nobody cared about this serious matter," department planning officer Naveed Butt disclosed.