

**SAJID ABBAS** visits the old Tollinton Market, which is being repaired and conserved these days, and recounts history of the much-loved architectural monument

**F**or quite some time, various places of Lahore are receiving more than usual attention. Various quarters are being dolled up, streets repaved and buildings repaired and repainted. At the same time, the concerned authorities have taken in hand the long overdue repairs and conservation of the oldest purpose-built structure of modern Lahore – the much-loved old Tollinton Market situated on the Mall next to the Museum.

The edifice was not built as a market but as a museum, the first ever in this part of the world. The 1860s were a memorable time for Lahore. After the events of 1857, the new rulers had settled down to work. Lahore got its first Municipality in 1862, and its achievements in the first year of establishment were applaudable. The Authorities thought that it was about time that the newly acquired territory was introduced to the world. Consequently, the Punjab Exhibition was organised in 1864 where the artefacts, produce and manufactures of the country were displayed. The Exhibition was not a mere fun fair, it was an oblique statement also that this territory had the mark of a civilisation different to what had been seen elsewhere and a proclamation of the fact that it was culturally apart and independent of the place known as Hindustan. It demonstrated the idea of the natural boundaries of the Indus Valley Civilisation, then a nomenclature quite unknown; but recognised as one clearly separate from the rest of the areas of the Sub-Continent. The exhibits represented the crafts and resources of more or less



*The Punjab Exhibition Building when it was built*

# Once an Exhibition Centre

*Lahore Nation 20.10.02*

the present area of Pakistan including Kashmir and hill territories right up to the borders of China in the east and the Ganges valley and the edges of the southern deserts. The chronicles of the time also affirm, when reporting about the Exhibition, that it was 'primarily for the products of the Punjab including Kashmir and adjacent states and hill districts of Simla and Kangra as far as Spiti, Lahaul and the borders of Tibet'.

A building was especially constructed for the purpose and was the first ever grand structures in this part of the Mall. This building was especially designed to exhibit the culture, customs and occupations of the populace of this land. The design was made by Thomason Civil Engineering College, Roorkee, as the Lahore Technical Institute (later Mayo School of Arts and now National College of Arts) had not come into existence as yet. The structure was some sixty-six meters long covering a space of about five hundred square meters divided in two symmetrical halls – each a little over

seven and a quarter meters in height. Each hall had seven skylights in the northern and southern walls, and a three-and-a-half meters high skylight in the middle to admit light as usual, the halls were surrounded by a veranda with a tiled slanting roof three meters or so high. The entrance on the eastern side of the edifice was surmounted by the Royal insignia beautifully carved in wood displaying the Crown protected by the Lion and the Unicorn.

Things exhibited at the Exhibition then, may now seem to be insignificant, but it clearly shows that we were an industrialised nation. Unfortunately, we seem to have lost the art and, probably, the will also, to manufacture and progress. Apart from minerals mined and displayed in their original form, for example, salt from Khewra, there were samples of salt won from Sambhar, saltpetre manufactured in Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang and Gugaira. Crude soda from Sirsa and Gugaira, where it was made by burning saline plants,

ab  
tha  
inc  
dis  
ac  
kn  
ma  
co  
ars  
of  
an  
Ka  
co  
als  
and  
pro  
1  
pro  
cou  
dye  
wo  
gar

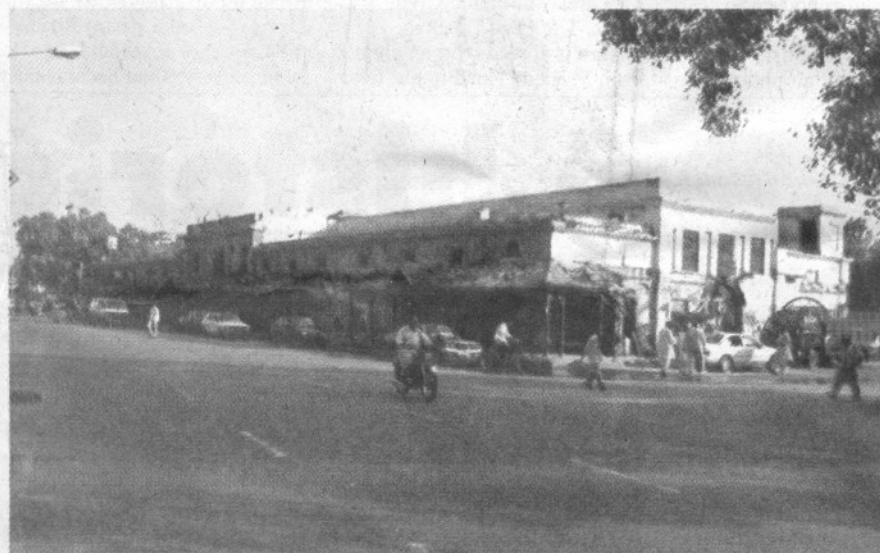
The  
exhib  
sold  
is, ap  
rupe  
Th  
their  
exam  
lungi  
Dera  
weav  
and p  
Baha  
and I  
work  
attra  
Th  
too, t  
the C  
after-  
today

abound in the deserts. Exhibits showed that Lahore was a centre of chemical industry. Manufacturers had proudly displayed products, such as, sulphuric acid, nitric acid and even aqua regia known to dissolve gold. Lahore chemical manufacturers displayed copper sulphate, copper acetate and salts of mercury, arsenic and lead. There were specimens of salts of heavy metals from Amritsar and Jagadhri, iron sulphate from Kalabagh and Pind Dadan Khan. A company, Punjab Indigo Company, had also been formed to produce indigo dyes and to compete with and overtake producers of such products in Bengal.

There was a range of diverse natural products, collected from all over the country-side, for example, vegetable dyes, oils, gums, rosin and turpentine, wools and silks. A sample of 'Tel gandhak' from Rawalpindi too was



*View of the building (Tollinton Market)*



*The existing condition of Punjab Exhibition Building*

exhibited, which was crude petroleum sold for only three rupees per maund, that is, approximately twelve kilograms for a rupee!

Then articles from cities known for their speciality were also exhibited, for example, cotton goods from Jullandhar, lungis from Peshawar, carpets from the Derajat, Multan and Bahawalpur. Silk weavers of Lahore displayed their striped and plain silks along with those of Bahawalpur. Pashmeena from Amritsar and Ludhiana beside zari and gold thread work from Lahore and Delhi were a big attraction.

There was a reminder about one craft, too, that had suffered immensely when the Government changed here and the after-effects of which are being felt even today. That was the making of arms.

Lahore was a grand centre of production of weapons and armour before it was occupied by the East India Company.

After the occupation, craftsmen left for places such as Nizamabad and Kotli Loharan as they had lost their patrons, but their skill and ingenuity was displayed while exhibiting their works. On display were guns cast here, for example, 'hoths', smoothbores nine times long as its calibre, 'obchis', howitzers capable of throwing a ball or shell filled with 'kapanchas', that is, shrapnel, weighing ten, fifteen, twenty or twenty-five seers (little lesser than a kilogram). Zamboorahs', light two pounders, transportable by camel-back and 'zambooraks', still lighter affairs, suitable for mountain warfare and towed by a man or a goat – yes a goat, a very useful

animal, at its best when negotiating hilly tracks. Also shown were muskets of different kinds, 'jazails', long muzzled affairs fired from the shoulder, 'jauhardars', rifles wrought from spirally wound strands of iron, 'phaldars', another family of rifles with their barrels quenched and hardened.

Articles brought here by way of trade were not ignored. One could find wool, raw silk, jade and lapis-lazuli from China, furs from Russia, asafoetida from Kandhar, saffron and herbs from Yarkand, turquoises from Iran. It all proved that ours was (and is) an independent civilisation manufacturing and producing majority of articles of need here and carrying on a large international trade. Fine arts and allied activities were not disregarded, many specimens were on display, some commissioned especially for the occasion.

Whatever the import of such commentary, it is regrettable that many of us fail to realise the importance of the event in 1864 and the place. It was in this building where, unconsciously, the seeds were sown of the idea that we, the people of the Indus Valley belong to a Civilisation different from the rest of the Sub-Continent. It was here, that somebody realised, that here live, culturally, ideologically and politically a different people. This edifice represents the spot where the first brick was laid to make the road to Pakistan. Let us join hands to save this monument which is a landmark of our struggle back to the path of the Independence. Tollinton is a place where the idea of Pakistan took its roots. ■