

Encroachers occupy Gen Allard's tomb

Lahore

By Zulqernain Tahir

Dawn 18.1.04

LAHORE, Jan 17: Encroachers have recently occupied the area of the tomb of Gen M Allard, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's French officer, and his daughter, Marie Charlotte, near the Old Anarkali.

Despite prohibition of any construction within 200 feet of a protected monument, quarters and law chambers have been built next to the tomb by three people, two of them lawyers. Besides, a doorway leading to the tomb from the Old Anarkali has also been encroached upon.

The only way left to reach the tomb is entrance from the Ghani Building, as its another door towards the Income Tax office had been closed long ago. Now a visitor may never reach the tomb unless accompanied by an archaeology department official.

Asghar Amratsari, an elderly man residing near the Ghani Building, informed this reporter that the French ambassador and other officials occasionally visited the tomb.

He said a French navy officer, who is said to be from Gen Allard's family, had also recently visited the tomb. "The archaeology department staff also faces problems due to the closure of the main entrance."

They must trace a new one," he

said, noting with regret that no one can easily trace the tomb even with a map in hands.

On the other hand, the federal archaeology department (North Circle) officials have expressed their inability to take action against the encroachers, who have reportedly obtained a stay order.

The officials said they were encountering the same difficulty in securing land encroached upon around other historic monuments. Other than encroachments was waste being dumped at the site.

The officials said the department had meagre funds for repairs and maintenance of the monument. It could not even afford to have gardeners and watchmen on each tomb in the city, they added.

They said there was no visible damage to the tomb's structure because of its fine quality material.

Gen Allard was a high-ranking officer in the army of Napoleon Bonaparte. After facing defeat in the Waterloo war, he fled to Iran from where he reached Lahore in the guise of Pathan in 1822.

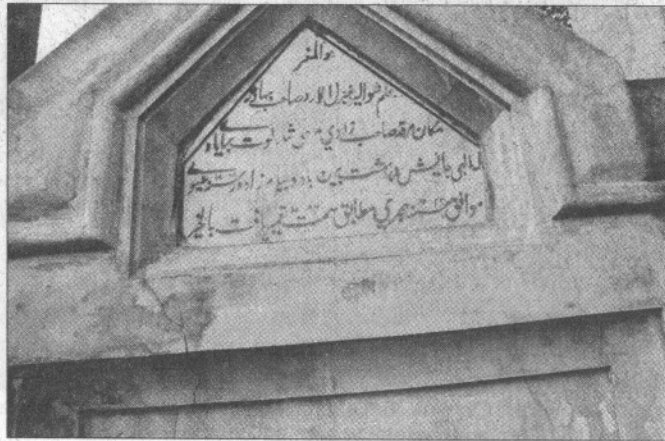
He joined the army of Ranjit Singh for Rs2,500 a month and was given a residence at the Old Anarkali along with Gen Ventura, another officer in the Ranjit Singh's army.

Gen Allard's beloved daughter, Marie Charlotte, who died in

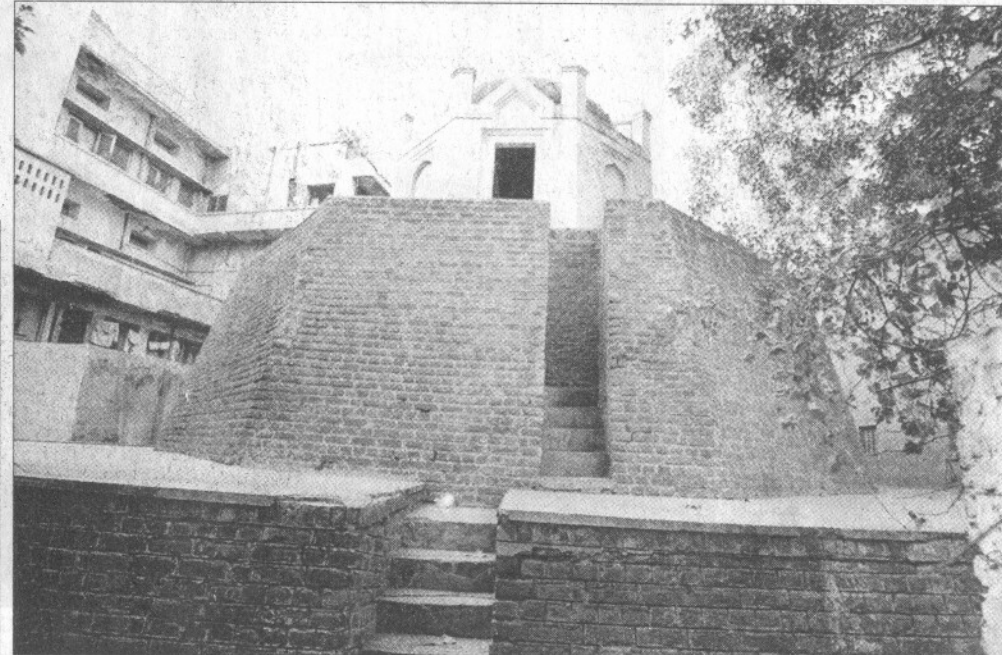
her childhood due to illness in 1827, was buried in the garden where his house was located. The garden became known as "Kuri Bagh" because a kuri (girl) was buried there. When Allard died in 1889 of a cardiac arrest, he was taken back to

Lahore and was buried along with his daughter according to his wish.

The writings outside the tomb are in Persian and inside in French, recording facts about the lives of Gen Allard and Marie and a prayer for the latter.



THE year Marie Charlotte died is written in Persian outside the tomb.



THE tomb of M Allard and his daughter, Marie Charlotte, near Old Anarkali. — Photos by Azhar Jafri

