

A neglected jewel of city

Lahore

LAHORE, March 23: The Hazuri Bagh's Bara Dari between the Lahore Fort and the Badshahi Mosque is in a state of disrepair.

Some of its mirrors and tiles have been dislodged and several others are about to fall. Besides, its beautiful white marble is turning yellow and black and there has been holes in its gauze.

The federal archaeology department has done no conservation work on it in the recent past. However, the preservation of the fort is going on with a foreign aid. Around Rs36 million would be spent on the Badshahi Mosque this year.

An archaeology department official told *Dawn* that it would allocate funds for the preserva-

tion of Bara Dari in this year's budget. He said the Parks and Horticulture Authority had installed lights in the garden and also improved its condition.

The Punjab Archaeology department, which was given the control of the fort and the Shalamar Gardens, has sought the control of the Hazuri Bagh for its proper conservation.

The Hazuri Bagh was built by Maharaja Ranjeet Singh in 1813 to celebrate the possession of the world's most precious diamond — Koh-i-Noor. The 1.5-inch-long heera (diamond) was snatched from the deposed king of Kabul, Shah Shujah, son of Ahmad Shah Abdali, according to Muhammad Tufail's book, *Naqoosh*.

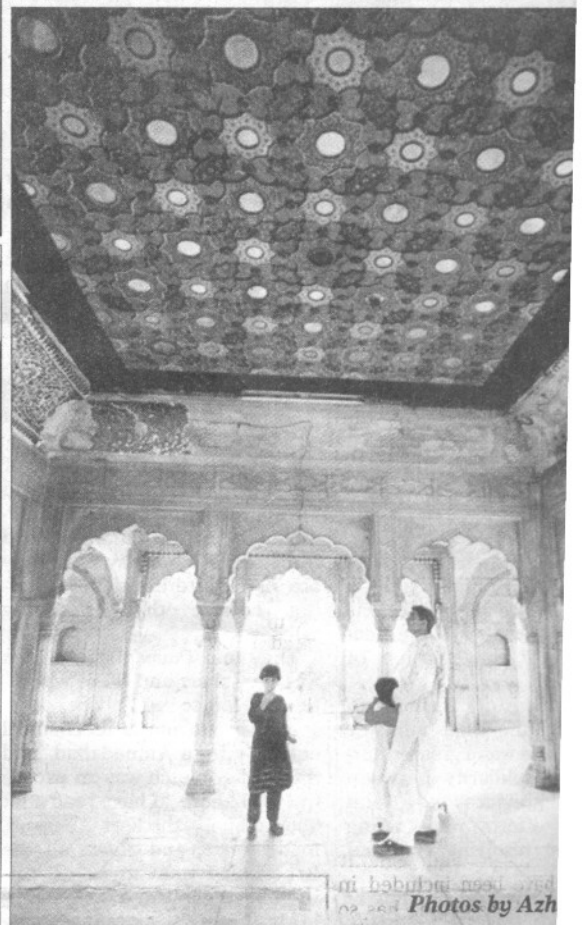
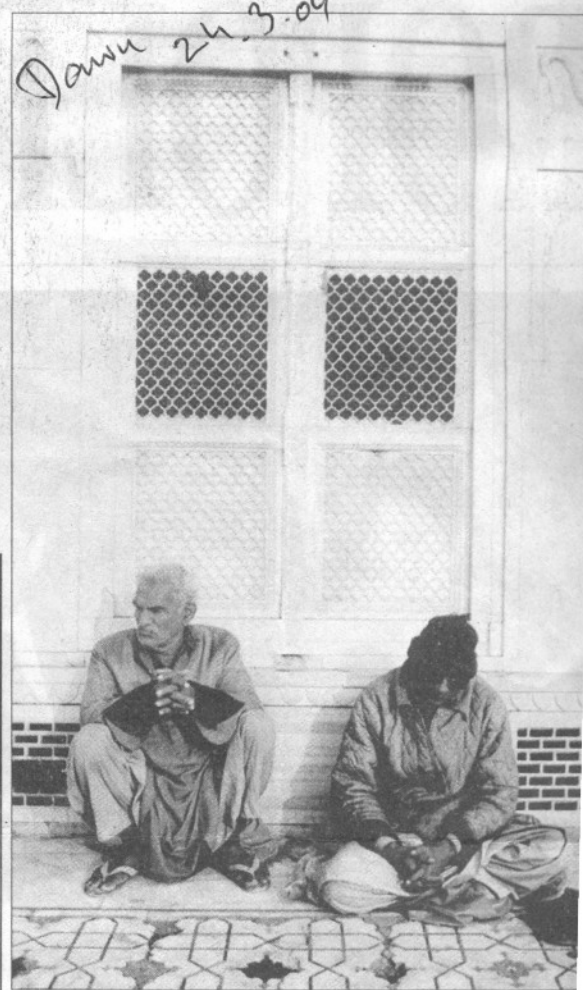
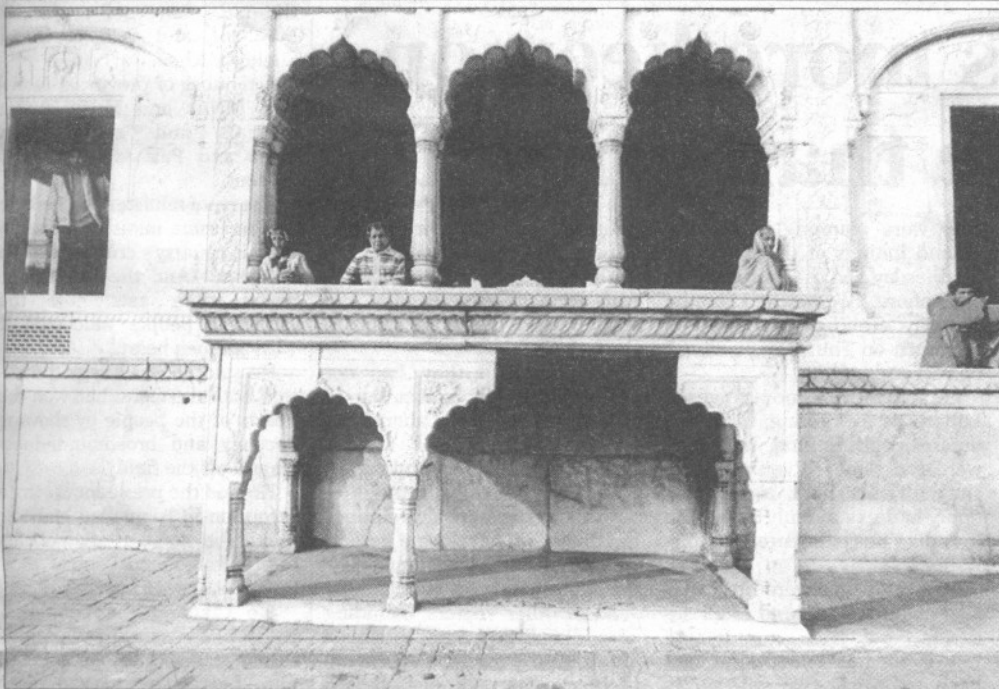
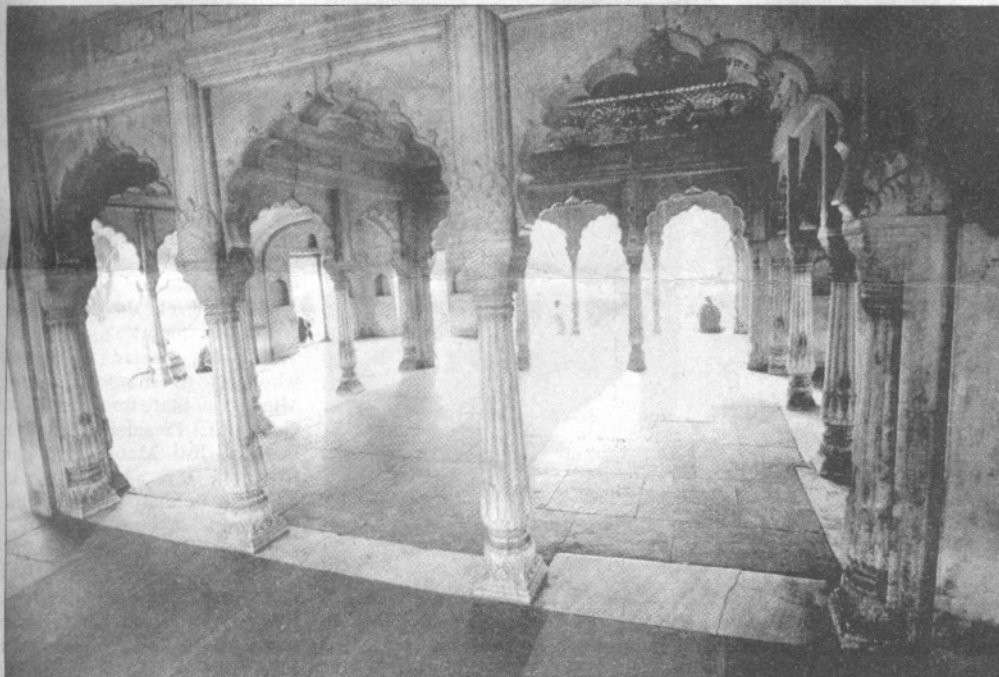
The garden was constructed

under the supervision of Fakir Azizuddin and named Hazuri Bagh.

The marble to build Bara Dari was reportedly brought from the tombs of Zebunnisa, Shah Sharf, Noor Jehan, Asif Jah and Jehangir on the request of Jamadar Khushal Singh in 1818. Ranjeet Singh often held his court in the garden.

Before the construction of the Hazuri Bagh and Bara Dari, the place was a *serai* in the Aurangzeb's era. Elderly people of the Walled City used to converge there in the past and *mushairas* were held. Now such an activity is a rare sight.

From the Bara Dari, the view to Alamgeeri Gate of the fort is worth seeing.—ZULQERNAIN TAHIR



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Photos by Azh