

A splendid Aalamgiri Gate of Lahore Fort, at the very top of which the *Subz Hilali Purchum* is swaying with all its glories, commemorating the various regimes of the Mughal, Sikh and the British Rule, now seems of complaining the government and the citizens of Islamic Republic State of Pakistan for not taking care of its pomp and show properly.

Across the globe, the prestigious nations are recognized to be concerned about the preservation of their cultural heritage. Conversely speaking, one cannot visualize such a healthy trend neither in government nor among the public of Pakistan.

Lahore Fort - the only historical monument in Lahore representing the thorough Mughal architecture is suffering at its utmost the negligence attitude of all the three; the government, the media organizations and the public, narrates Leena Maqsood.

The history of the glorious Lahore Fort — the only monument in Pakistan representing a thorough history of the Mughal architecture — is replete with several deteriorations, it underwent with the various invaders.

A renowned historian, Alberuni refers to Lahore Fort in connection with Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi's invasion in 1021 AD. It is again mentioned during the Sultan Shahbud din Ghari's conquest of Lahore in 1186 AD. The fort was ruined by Mongols in 1241 AD but was repaired and rebuilt by Sultan Balban in 1267 AD. It was again plundered by Amir Taimur's army in 1398 AD and rebuilt by Sultan Mubarak Shah in 1412 AD.

Akbar the Great demolished the earlier constructed fort and built it in burnt brick in about 1566 AD. Akbar's successors, Jahangir, Shahjehan, and Aurangzeb made several ob additions to the fort.

In later half of the 18th century, Sikhs occupied the fort after the collapse of Mughal authority in Punjab. The door

In 1846 the British army occupied the fort, since the Sikh lost Punjab to the Britishers in a battle. The British army made alterations in the fort on a large scale to convert the buildings into barracks and officers' residences. They modified the beautiful Diwan-e-Khas into chapel, Diwan-e-Aam into

governments and public ignorance is quite interesting tale.

After 1947, the fort was first of all used as Refugee Camp and then officially taken as a protected monument. For some time it remained ignored as low priority subject.

Unfortunately, knowing well

participants of Islamic Summit Conference at Lahore by the then government.

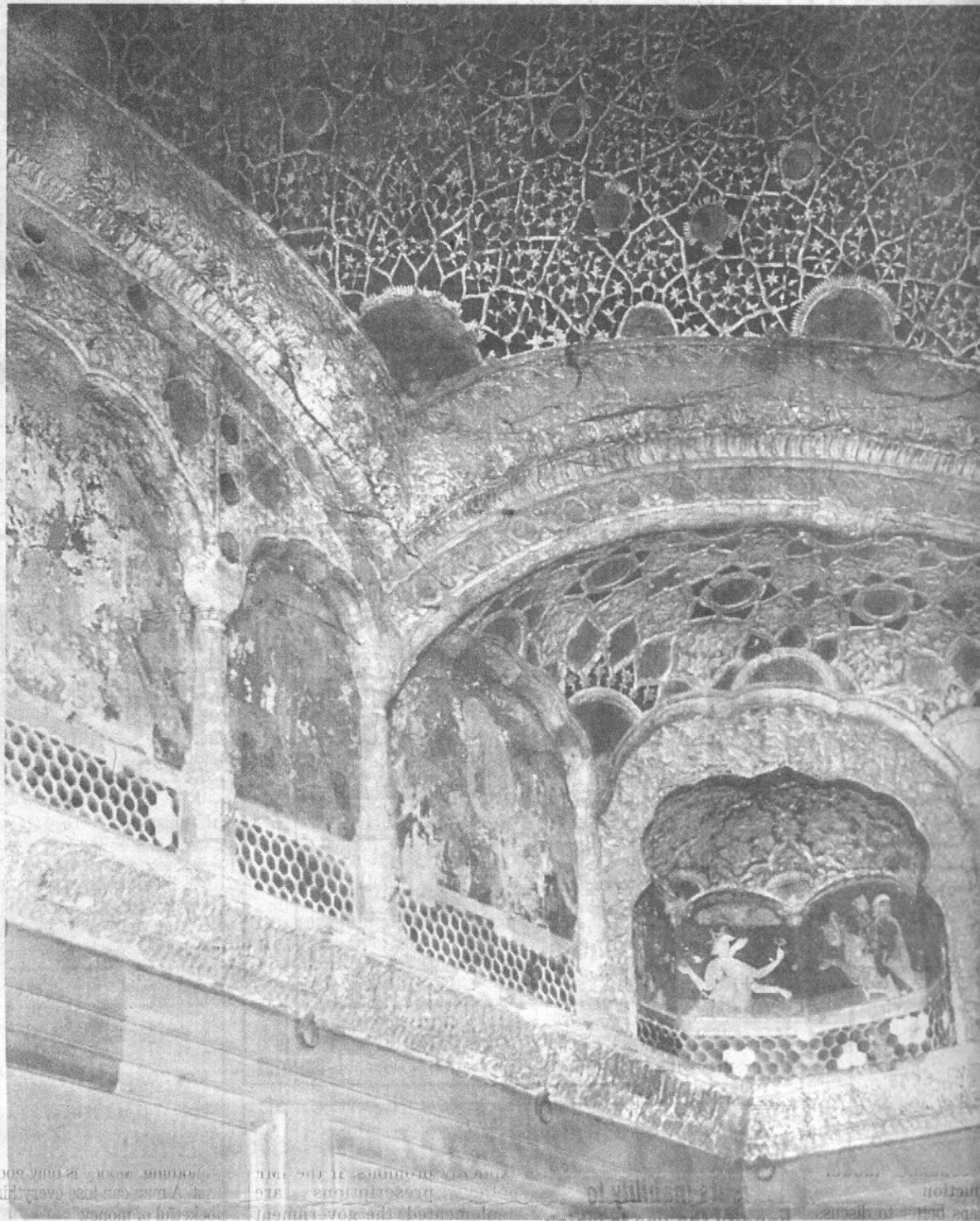
For weeks together, the Shish Mehal and the adjoining areas were used by the people of stage, film and TV for rehearsals of dramas and cultural shows.

Furthermore, the split

programs here.

The Ptv program for Golden Jubilee and cultural galas a routine. During the years, dinners the American ministers, the Queen of Britain, the World James Wolfensohn

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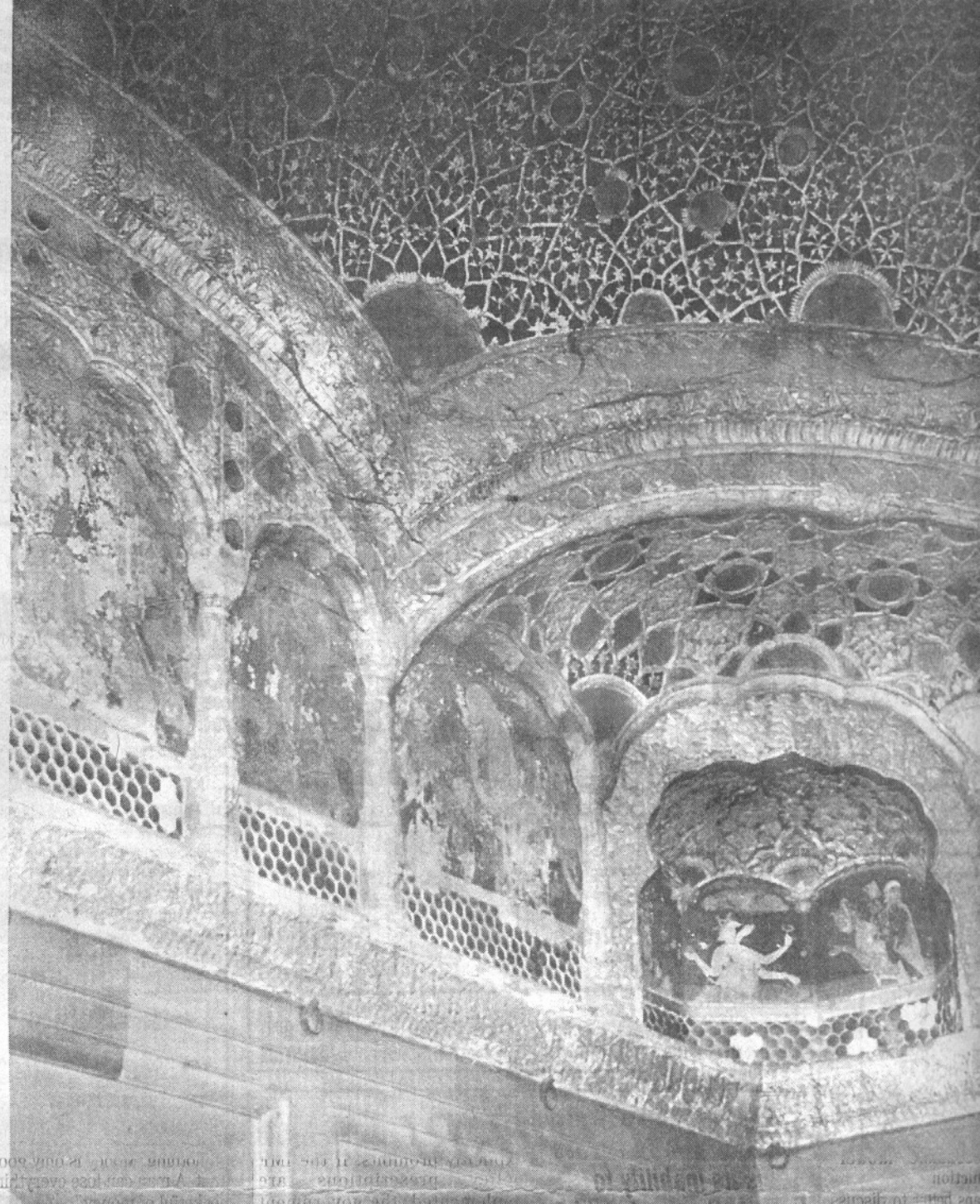
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In later half of the 18th century, Sikhs occupied the fort after the collapse of Mughal authority in Punjab. The river Ravi that was previously flowed by the fort, shifted away from the fort during the period of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who raised a defense wall at the northern side of the fort.

The fort suffered great spoiliations once again in 19th century during the Sikh civil wars. In early 1841, Sher Singh besieged and bombarded the fort. Consequently, the old Aalamgiri Gate was destroyed and large breaches in the fortification wall occurred. Sher Singh mounted his guns on the minarets of Badshahi Mosque, from where the cannon balls fired at the fort shattered the roof of Diwan-e-Aam and caused a great havoc to many other parts of the fort.

In 1843, Hira Singh, the son of Raja Dyan Singh besieged the fort. His soldiers indiscriminately plundered the defense wall of the fort through heavy artillery.



Lahore Fort is a victim to the negligence of authorities as well as the cruel treatment of the local visitors.

dispensary, Shish Mehal into commanding officer's residence, and a lush green lawn into a tennis ground. They also filled up the great tank in Jahangir's Quadrangle. The fort was handed over to the then Archaeological Survey of India (now the Department Of Archaeology of the government of Pakistan) in 1927. The British rulers, however, destroyed the southern fortification wall before handing over the fort.

Presently, the fort comprises of somewhat 26 different monuments, including Shish Mehal, Naulakha Pavilion, Diwan-e-Khas, Diwan-e-Aam, Jahangir's Quadrangle, Makatib Khana, Pain Bagh, Hazoori Bagh, Sleeping chamber of Shahjehan, Moti Masjid, Pictured Wall, Masjidi and Aalamgiri Gates etc.

How the beauty of the fort is now being marred of the

that Pakistan has very little elsewhere in terms of its architectural heritage and monuments especially of the Muslims' Period, we have culturally been most unfair regarding the protection of these monuments.

In late 1950s, the fort was used for providing a light and sound shows that continued to be held regularly till early 70s. Lot of digging was done to spread the cables to put up lights that damaged to a great extent the buildings around.

Luckily, this equipment fell out of use due to its poor maintenance and little interest by the successive changing governments after Ayub era and the nuisance is off, otherwise it would have totally destroyed the Jahangir Quadrangle by now.

The worst use made of this protected monument was in the year 1974, when the cultural shows were mounted for the

system for central cooling was hanged through drilling and nailing the roofs of Shish Mehal that adversely affected the Kashi Kari and the mirror work.

Temporary structures were raised for holding dinners in the Shish Mehal for the visiting Heads of states, including President Soekarno, Sohartu, the Shah of Iran, Shah Hussain of Jordan, and Turkish President etc.

This not only accelerated the pace of deterioration of these centuries old buildings but also set a precedent and led other stage productions organizers in future to misuse the old monuments by way of nailing, putting up tents, using the palace for fireworks, cooking, littering and causing a hell of noise and pollution effects.

The most intensive misuse was made of the fort during Ad-Asia Conference that had conducted a number of

Nihan of UAE, Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, and Behari Vajpayee.

It has become that whenever the foreign dignitaries hosted in his honor, for making arrangements for seating arrangements, trucks move in morning till late, horses and camel dance on drum beat.

The entire eastern under-ground of Jahangir Quadrangle for seating arrangements. Lot of work buildings by way of 'Khaka' and 'Kia' road carpet way. The stone steps nailed to lay carpet temporary rail guests to move wash rooms have up.

Lahore
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News ✓

The News International, Monday, May 21, 2001

History of Lahore Fort

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The Ptv programs of 1997 for Golden Jubilee Celebrations and cultural galas have become a routine. During the last couple of years, dinners were held for the American delegations, ministers, the Queen of Great Britain, the World Bank Chief James Wolfensohn Sultan Al-

In addition to this, a major damage is caused by the fireworks. Quite a few portions of interior decoration, plaster and Kashi work come down in such functions. But organizers remain untouched with this unfortunate scene without realising that being a nation we are destroying instead of

dinners in the premises of protected monuments. But unfortunately, there are certain influentials who do so either by hook or crook.

He also mentioned about facing problems for not having enough security staff. Presently, there are only eight security guards responsible for guarding

adds to the destruction. They throw the residuals of bones, salads and other items on the grass which invites rats besides causing fermentation because of the left over".

Apart from this, the general public attitude visiting the fort is also very poor. They throw the wrappers of chips and empty juice packs on the grass. Furthermore, sufficient waste bins are also not found in the fort. People are also in habit of drawing sketches or lines either with pencils, pens or markers on the walls resulting in marring the precious miniature effect.

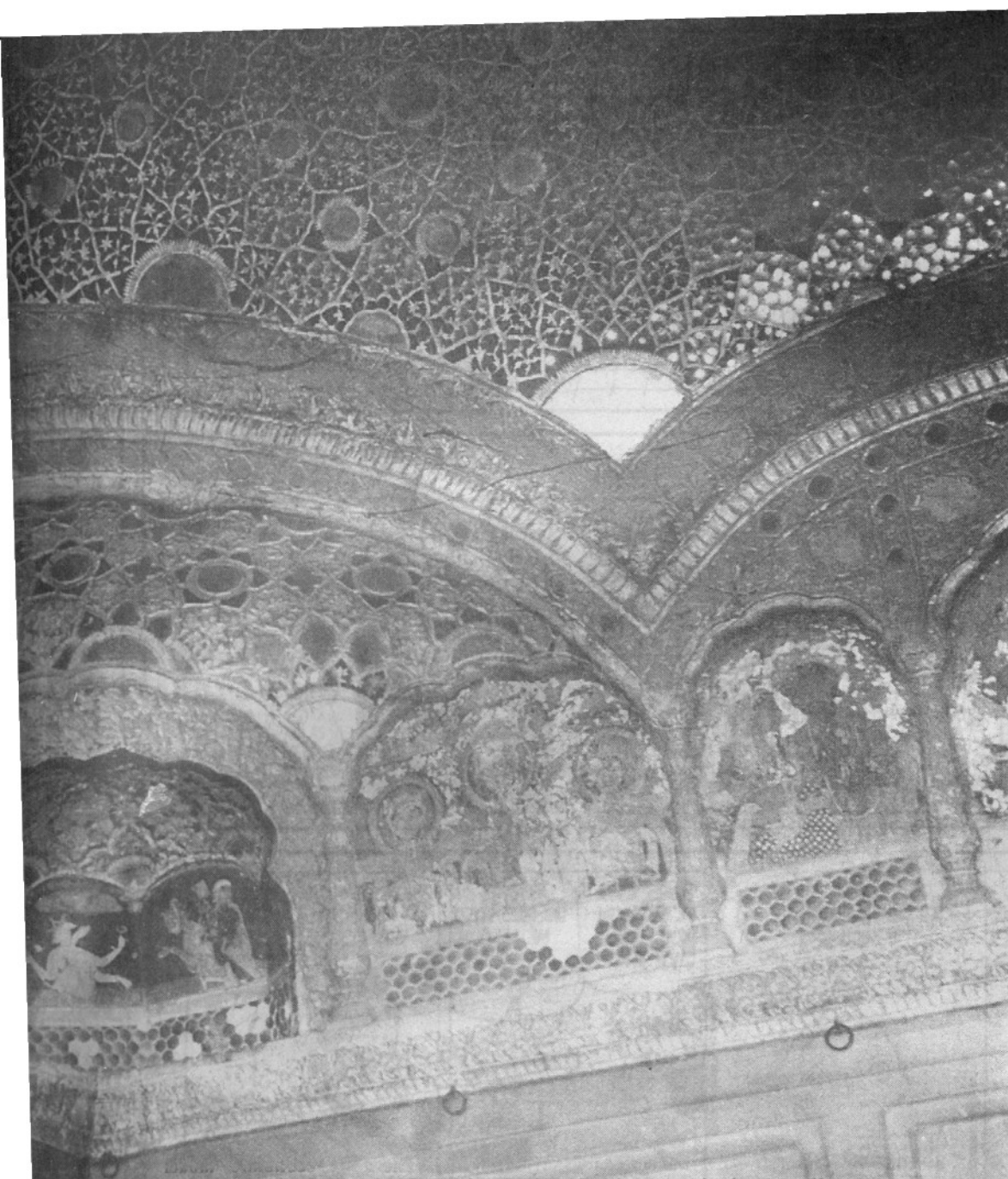
At times, the notorious youth write the names of their ancestors, contact numbers or messages for their lovers irrespective of knowing that such acts can spoil the image of Pakistani nation in the eyes of foreign tourists. Some people are seen with spitting the *Pan* and thus dark red drops, giving the impression of blood, can be seen anywhere.

It can be concluded simply that sound, noise and excessive use of public visits can reduce the age of old monuments. Hence, this ancient monument of art with a subject of historical, religious, architectural and artistic study should not be allowed to languish, so that those to come may not find it useless for study purposes or architectural enthusiasm.

Perhaps no where else in the world can the history of a country during the last 400 years can be so well-studied in case of history of Lahore.

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Nihan of UAE, the Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, and the Indian Prime Minister Atul Behari Vajpayee.

It has become a practice now that whenever there is visit of a foreign dignitary, a dinner is hosted in his honour at the fort. For making arrangements, a vehicular traffic including heavy trucks move in the fort from morning till late at night. The horses and camels are made to dance on drum beats.

The entire roof of the eastern under-ground chamber of Jehangir Quadrangle is used for seating arrangements of the guests. Lot of weight is put on buildings by way of laying 'Khaka' and 'Kiari' to level the road carpet way for the VVIPs. The stone steps are drilled and nailed to lay carpet and provide temporary railings for the guests to move. Temporary wash rooms have also been set up.

preserving them for the next generations.

A historical monument like Lahore Fort requires amounts in crores for renovation. But unfortunately, not a single government in past has ever sanctioned sufficient funds for its necessary repair and preservation besides knowing that Lahore Fort is on the World Heritage list of UNESCO and is protected under the Antiquities Act 1975.

However, it is a matter of great concern that such monument, which of course can never be replaced, continue to be damaged, without raising any alarm under the very patronage of our governments.

The Director Archaeology of Northern Zone Lahore, Qasim Ali Qasim, replied about organizing the formal functions at fort that under clause 18 of the Antiquities Act 1975, it is not allowed to host official

the 26 monuments of the fort day and night.

Talking to Dr Ejaz Anwar of the Lahore Conservation Society, who is working for the preservation of Lahore's immense architectural heritage, it has been declared that the Charter of Venice 1962 also prohibits these activities. UNESCO has already shown concern of such events and it may even cut off the aid if necessary measures are not taken for the preservation of such a national asset.

He further added: "The erect tents in the lawns tying their ropes to the delicate portions of the building and its walls can prove more dangerous in case of windstorm, uprooting the building portions from where these are tied in".

He also criticised the havoc caused after each such event as a result of the meals served. He said: "Our food culture also

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These were the monuments which compelled the writers and poets, who visited the city and termed it 'the splendid city of Lahore, whose mausoleum and shrines, magnificent and numberless, where death seemed to share equal honour with heaven'.

Being a nation, majority of us is always in hurry to copy the western trends, whether they relate to fashion or eating habits. But it is quite strange to note that we never follow their good habits as that of their carefulness and consciousness of being limiting the viewing of historical monuments.

For example Western Abbey is now open to visitors for four days a week. Ignoring these monuments would mean ignoring our history which is not advisable in any manner.