

Naqqar Khana restoration

By Mahmood Zaman *Lahore Dawn. 21.2.02*

LAHORE, Feb 20: The Naqqar Khana is an annexe of the Shalamar Gardens on its eastern side. It was opened last year for conservation after remaining closed for more or less 300 years.

The monument is an imposing structure, hidden completely beneath a bush pile several feet deep. Several hundred tonnes of garbage has been moved since the job was taken in hand. It took almost a year to remove enough bushes and weeds to allow a close inspection. The building was then declared fit for repairs.

The restoration work began with the ceiling of Naqqar Khana's entrance. The job is near completion. The entire building will hopefully be restored by the mid-2003.

The development plan, part of the project for repair and restoration of historic monuments, includes restoration of the main pavilion, walkways, lawns, water channels, water tank and flower beds. Tourists facilities and a children's park are also planned.

The main pavilion, according to historians, used to be a resort for Emperor Shah Jahan where, while in Lahore, he held meetings with his ministers and guests. The fresco paintings in the pavil-



THIS pavilion was used by Emperor Shah Jahan to meet his ministers. — Dawn

ion walls, ceiling and niches have been damaged beyond restoration.

The Naqqar Khana has also been described as a resort for royal women. Another account says the building used to house drummers and buglists to

announce the arrival of caravans from Delhi and Kashmir.

The building deteriorated structurally in the later Mughal period and remained closed during the Sikh period. When the British annexed the Punjab in 1849, a deputy commissioner,

McGregor, used the Shalamar Gardens as his residence-cum-office.

The Naqqar Khana was opened to assess damage to the building. It was closed again after it was found that restoration would not be easy.