



## **PRESS RELEASE**

**UNESCO has been repeatedly urging the Punjab Government to stop work on the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) Project in the vicinity of Shalamar Gardens and to facilitate a UNESCO Mission to come to Lahore to investigate threats posed to this World Heritage Site due to works undertaken for construction of OLMT; and make their recommendations. Currently the Government of Punjab (GoP) is ignoring requests by UNESCO and delaying issuance of visas for the members of Reactive Monitoring Mission. The dates requested by UNESCO are 9-12<sup>th</sup> January 2017.**

The obstruction in way of UNESCO – the highest international body for heritage protection, by the GoP is not in the long term interests of the people of Pakistani. If the Metro Line indeed poses no threat to listed heritage as the GoP claims, there is no reason why the Government should not welcome the Reactive Monitoring Mission in compliance with Pakistan's international and legal commitments. The Reactive Monitoring Missions are part of the statutory reporting by the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee. The costs of the Reactive Monitoring Missions are borne by the World Heritage Fund. There is no reason why this Mission should not be facilitated by the Government of Punjab.

Brief Chronology of UNESCO/ WHC formal and/or public communication on the matter of the OLMT and Shalamar Gardens.

1. A letter was written by Ms. Mechtild Rossler, Director, World Heritage Centre to H.E Mr. Ghalib Iqbal, Ambassador and Pakistan's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2015 regarding the OLMT and Shalamar Gardens (Fort and Shalamar Gardens World Heritage property). The letter states;
  - i. the OLMT Project can result in serious irreversible damage to Shalamar Gardens
  - ii. the project should be stopped in the vicinity of Shalamar Gardens till UNESCO advisory bodies have reviewed and evaluated the project.
2. 'Analysis and Conclusion by World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies in 2016' recommends that the World Heritage Committee should urge Pakistan to immediately suspend any further work within the section of Shalamar Gardens and, as a matter of utmost urgency, identify an alternative location beyond the buffer zone for this specific section of the Orange Line Metro. The WHC advisory bodies also recommend that the Committee should request the State Party to invite a Reactive Monitoring Mission to the property to discuss alternative solutions for the metro line with relevant Government authorities. The same is stated in the Draft Decision 2016 by the WHC.
3. The Adopted Decision 2016 by the WHC maintains this stance. Serious concern is expressed about the development of the Orange Line Metro and requests the State Party to prepare a visual impact study of the project to be presented to the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies before pursuing the works of the Orange Line Metro associated with the Shalamar Gardens. The WHC should request Government of Pakistan to invite a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Mission to the property at its earliest convenience, to examine the Orange Line Metro Project and to discuss the same with relevant Government authorities.
4. UNESCO has formally requested the GoP to facilitate the Reactive Mission by UNESCO to investigate the OLMT Project and issue visas for 9-12 January 2017 (see Annex 2. Invitation letter). The Pakistan Government has to date not responded to World Heritage Centre or UNESCO. An investigation of the OLMT by UNESCO/ ICOMOS joint mission (the Scientific Advisory Body of the WHC and UNESCO) is in the best



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interest of heritage protection and the country; however the government appears to be deliberately delaying the facilitation of this Mission (see Annex 3. Letter from Junhi Han, UNESCO). This apparent obstruction of the Reactive Mission goes against Pakistan's formal commitments to the World Heritage Convention, ratified in 1972.

5. **Reactive Monitoring Missions are part of the statutory reporting by the Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee on the State of Conservation of specific properties that are under threat.**

**ICOMOS Pakistan strongly protests against this delaying tactic of Government and requests an early processing and issuing of visas to all members of UNESCO's Reactive Monitoring Mission.**

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**APPENDICES:**

**Appendix A: Letter from Ms. Junhi Han**, Programme Specialist, World Heritage Centre, Asia and Pacific Unit, UNESCO apprising of the requested dates of the Mission pending confirmation by the GOP.

**Appendix B: Letter from Ms. Tara Bushe**, Assistant to the Advisory and Monitoring Unit, ICOMOS International Secretariat, apprising ICOMOS Pakistan of the tentative dates of the Mission.

**Appendix C:** Details of the **Chronology of UNESCO/WHC formal, and/or public communication** on the matter of OLMT and Shalamar Gardens, with UNESCO sources cited.

**Appendix C:** Email from Ms. Tara Bushe, Assistant to the Advisory and Monitoring Unit, ICOMOS International Secretariat, informing ICOMOS Pakistan of the possible rescheduling of Reactive Monitoring Mission dates to February 2017.