



PRESS RELEASE

June 14, 2017

World Heritage Site – ‘Shalamar Gardens and Lahore Fort’ likely to be inscribed in UNESCO’s list of WH in Danger and eventually be ripped off its WH Designation

The World Heritage Committee (WHC) has released its Draft Decision on Shalamar Gardens and the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) under construction inside the 61m protective buffer zone of the property. This decision will be finalized through a vote of member states in the upcoming WHC meeting in July 2017. The draft decision clearly mentions that the Orange Line Train poses an irreversible and permanent threat to Shalamar Gardens and Lahore Fort - World Heritage Site, hence it may be taken off the World Heritage register permanently if the project goes ahead as planned.

The statement of the formal scientific advisory bodies (ICOMOS, ICCROM) to the WHC includes the following:

- “1.The OLMT will irreversibly compromise the authenticity and integrity of the property and will be a potential threat to its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
2. That the full impact of the project on the OUV of the Shalamar Gardens goes beyond potential vibration impact.
3. The Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) provided to the WHC by the Pakistan State Party is not in line with international standards and fails to address the full range of impacts of the project.
4. It is not clear on what grounds the State Party decided that the OLMT would have no negative impacts on the OUV of the property, nor on what basis the Punjab Department of Archaeology issued a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) for this project.
5. In the absence of any mitigation measures proposed by the State Party, it recommended that the Committee immediately inscribe the property on the List of World Heritage in Danger.
6. It recommended that the Committee requests the State Party to invite a Reactive Monitoring Mission to define comprehensive mitigation measures and reverse threats to the property.
7. It recommended that the Committee request the State Party to immediately stop construction work on the section of OLMT where it approaches Shalamar Gardens.”

The seriousness of the threat posed to the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of Shalamar Gardens by OLMT is substantiated in the following text of Draft Decision 2017 by the World Heritage Committee.

“The World Heritage Committee:

- Decides to inscribe the Fort and Shalamar Gardens on the List of World Heritage in Danger
- Urges the State Party to immediately suspend without delay any further work in the immediate vicinity of Shalamar Gardens
- Requests the State Party to identify an alternative location for the OLMT
- Deeply Regrets that the Reactive Monitoring Mission was not invited (given visas by the Pakistan Government) as requested by the World Heritage Committee.
- Expresses utmost concern that the Department of Archaeology & Museums (Punjab) issued a NOC for the OLMT



- Takes into account that the Pakistan Government has not complied with the requests made by the Committee, nor proposed any clear way forward
- Considers the fact that construction work undertaken and planned for the OLMT represents a threat to the OUV of the property
- Deeply regrets that no exhaustive impact assessment was undertaken for the OLMT or Visual Impact Study as requested by the World Heritage Committee
- Requests the State Party to carry out a comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessment in line with WHC/ICOMOS guidelines including a Visual Impact Study to inform the search for alternative locations
- Expresses utmost concern that the Supreme Court will likely issue a decision on the OLMT Project before the requested Reactive Mission has been given a chance to visit the property and requests the Pakistan Government to issue the necessary visas”

It is clear from the world’s highest authority on heritage protection that Shalamar Gardens and other heritage sites will be irreversibly damaged if this project continues as planned. The expected delisting of Shalamar Gardens & Lahore Fort will jeopardize future support (technical and financial) from UNESCO, the World Bank and the IMF; seriously compromising the future of heritage tourism revenues to the tune of billions of dollars annually.

In the light of above decision ‘ICOMOS Pakistan’ and the country’s civil society strongly urges the Government of Pakistan to recognize its responsibility to its citizens and the heritage legacy in which they take extreme pride - and modify the OLMT Project in line with international guidelines for heritage protection. The Government is urged to honor the country’s international commitment made through signing of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. ICOMOS Pakistan contends that no government has the mandate or right to deprive future generations of their fundamental rights to their heritage and history.

Full Text of UNESCO/WHC Draft Decision, Analysis and Conclusion on Shalamar and Orange Line 2017 is available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3645>.

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