



## **Press Release: Government Misrepresents Facts About Shalamar Gardens to World Heritage Committee Delegates** **July 10, 2017**

Multiple news items have appeared in various newspapers regarding deliberations of the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) being held in Poland, some even implying that the Committee has endorsed the Orange Metro Train project, which is UNTRUE.

The draft decision drafted by ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites) in light of Pakistan's lack of fulfilment of decisions made in the 40<sup>th</sup> session was extremely damning as it stated "extreme concern" for the impact of Orange Metro on the Outstanding Universal Value of the Shalamar Gardens. It also deeply regretted that the "State Party did not invite the Reactive Monitoring mission and that no exhaustive impact assessments for this project" was conducted, thus suggesting that Shalamar-Lahore Fort be put on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

However, rather than answering the concerns raised by Unesco and Icomos, the Punjab Government has lied to the Committee members, as it has been to the citizens over the course of the Orange Metro project. Mr. Sibtain Fazal, Managing Director Punjab Mass Transit Authority while speaking for Pakistan State Party stated that "we have not been able to invite the reactive mission so far because the issue of Shalamar is pending adjudication within the honourable Supreme Court of Pakistan. Legal propriety compels us to wait for the court's decision before inviting the mission." It needs to be clarified that the Unesco mission is independent of the legal case and has not been allowed to visit because it will weaken the Government's case by providing an independent expert opinion. Mr. Fazal further put the onus on adherence to domestic laws for not completing the "visual impact study" for Shalamar as required by the committee last year. Whereas domestic laws are being used as an excuse for delaying in carrying out the visual impact study, the Government has broken labour, environmental and heritage laws to continue with project construction. Lastly, he also stated that "consultants of the project considered all possible alignment options in front of Shalamar Gardens" when the Tunnel Boring Technology which has been advocated by civil society to preserve Shalamar as well as other heritage sites was never considered owing to politically driven timeline.

The Pakistan State Party has lobbied heavily with other State Parties through its 16 member delegation by misrepresenting facts to ensure that the WHC decision is watered down. However, Unesco can't take a decision regarding Orange Metro's impact on Shalamar till the Reaction Monitoring Mission has visited the site. Thus, the Government's tactics only delay rather than resolve the issue at the expense of public money.

The RastaBadlo Initiative, Lahore Conservation Society and Pakistan Civil Society Forum denounces Government's lies to international bodies and forums, and would like to highlight such impropriety on the behalf of state representatives.