



Lahore is the most chronicled city in the annals of the history of the subcontinent. Lahore bears the distinction of being the capital of Punjab for nearly 1,000 years. Courted by successive ruling classes Lahore remains the cultural, academic and intellectual centre of Pakistan. Mughal Empire embellished the city for over two centuries by beautifying it with palaces, gardens, monuments and mosques. The British Raj also indulged in by improving the city by endearingly blending the Mughal, Gothic and Victorian styles of architecture.

Legend attributes it to be founded by two sons of Rama about 4,000 years ago and its signs are still visible in the northern part of the Royal Fort. Many historic travelers have vividly described the city including Xuan Zang, the famous Chinese pilgrim in early 7th century and Al-Biruni, in his Tarikh-e-Hind, at the



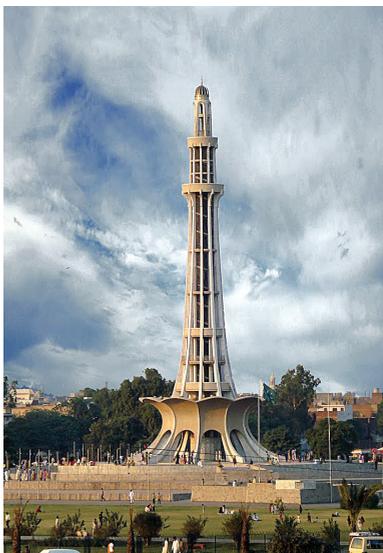
time of Mahmud Ghazni's invasion in the 11th century.

Lahore is the vintage point of historical sites and its environs are inundated with them. To begin with is the Royal Fort listed as World Heritage Site, built by Mughal Emperor Akbar who held his court in there from 1584 to 1598. Rectangular in shape it is ringed by a wall containing 12 gates. Every succeeding Mughal Emperor as well as the Sikhs and the British added a pavilion, palace, gate or wall to the Fort increasing its grandeur. The Imperial or the Badshahi Mosque is across the courtyard of the Lahore



Fort made up entirely of red sandstone and was built by Emperor Aurangzeb in a record time of two and a half years. It is said to be the largest mosque courtyard in the world for outdoor prayers. Another World Heritage site is located five kilometers east of the old city and is known as Shalimar Gardens spread over 42 acres. This historic relic is very well preserved and is used for holding state receptions.

Wazir Khan's Mosque and Shahi Hammam (Royal Bath) are also vintage points both built in 1634 by Mughal vizier and Governor hailing from Chiniot. Sunehri Masjid or Golden Mosque was built in 1753, Maryam Zamani Mosque named after Emperor Akbar's queen was constructed in 1634 and Dai Anga Mosque was built



in 1635. Following up on this incredible repertoire is the Mausoleum of Emperor Jehangir that also is the place where his queen Noorjahan is buried and is located in spacious gardens



planted with huge chinar, shisham, peepul and Banyan trees built by his wife in 1637 that are inlaid with floral designs. The tomb of Asif Khan, Jehangir's brother-in-law and father of Shah Jehan's beloved Queen Arjumand Bano (interred in famous Taj Mahal) is on the opposite side of the mausoleum and its bulbous dome looms over the top of the mosque.

Two other important historical burial monuments are the tomb of Anarkali a significant building of the Mughal period, ingeniously planned as an octagonal building roofed by a lofty dome. The other is the tomb of Sultan Aibek the founder of Muslim rule in the sub-continent in 1206. He died playing polo in Lahore and was buried here in 1210.

The most revered historical site in Lahore is the shrine of Data Sahib (Hazrat Ali Hajveri) the great patron sufi saint of Lahore whose well known work, *Kashf-ul-Mahjub* has been translated from the original Persian into several European languages and is considered a classic in ecclesiastical writings. The shrine of Sufi Saint Mian Mir was built by the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb and constantly attracts pilgrims. The tomb of Allama Iqbal, the poet-philosopher of the East lies on the outer fringe of Badshahi mosque and is a mixture of Afghan and Moorish architecture and is constructed entirely of red sandstone.

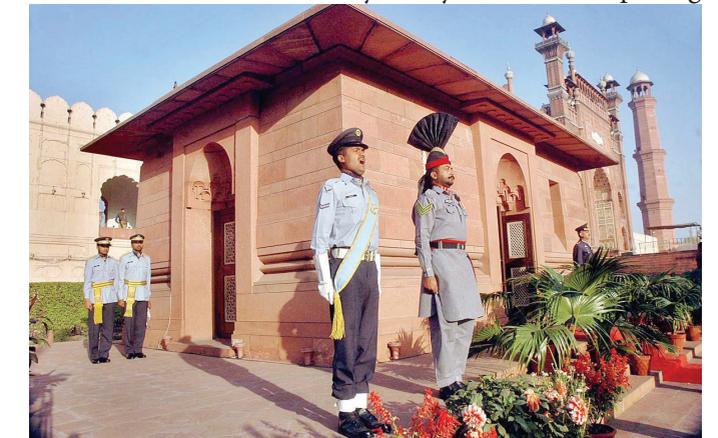
Lahore is the proud pall bearer of the struggle



the Muslims of the subcontinent waged to wrest a separate homeland for them. Minar-e-Pakistan is the landmark of Lahore which stands to commemorate the date (23rd March) when a resolution was passed in 1940 demanding creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of South Asia. The Minar is a blend of Mughal and modern architecture. It is about 60 meters tall. Quaid-e-Azam Library, the biggest in Pakistan was built in 1866 and is situated opposite the Governor's House on the Mall. Surrounding the Library is Bagh-e-Jinnah laid out in 1860 and is one of the finest public places that contains trees labeled with their Latin names.

Another historical legacy Lahore contains pertains to the holy places of Sikhs who briefly ruled Punjab and they include Chuharkana - Sacha Sauda, Gurdwara Dehra Sahib built in the memory of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru who compiled the Adi Granth, the principal part of Sikh scriptures (1563-1606), Kartarpur founded by Guru Nanak, founder of Sikh religion around 1516, Gurdwara Janam Asthan Ramdas 1536, Gurdwara Shaheed Bhai Taru Singh Ji and Gurdwara Rohri Sahib and Chaki Sahib.

Lahore is housed by many museums depicting



the contribution of the city in preserving its illustrious past. Lahore Museum, a Mughal style building, contains fine specimens of Mughal, Sikh and British times along with a collection of musical instruments, ancient jewellery, textile, pottery and armoury. There are also relics from Gandhara and Indus Valley Civilizations as well as some Tibetan and Nepalese exhibits. Faqirkhana Museum, a private Museum, houses a variety of old paintings including some by great masters, original manuscripts in different languages and artifacts from South East Asia and the South Asia. Shakir Ali Museum displays works of this excellent artist of Pakistan as well as other masterpieces under one roof. Mughal Museum was established in 1950 meant to depict country's economic



resources both in the form of raw products and worked objects.

Lahore is famous for its parks that are numerous and spread over the entire city. The parks provide the residents with a sense of belonging and give the city an energizing breathing facility. The most visited parks are: Bagh-e-Jinnah, Race Course Park, Gulberg Road, Gulshan-e-Iqbal Park, Model Town Park and Iqbal Park, Minar-e-Pakistan. Lahore is renowned for its fairs and festivals exhibiting the exuberant nature of Lahorites and their attachment to feisty events. The most widely adored is the Basant (Kite-Flying Festival) that begins at the outset of spring and makes skies of Lahore resplendent with colorful kites of all shapes and sizes. Mela Chiraghan (festival of lamps) is a very popular event celebrated every spring on the last Friday of March

outside the Shalimar Gardens. National Horse and Cattle Show is one of the most famous annual festivals displaying finest livestock, horse and camel dances, tent pegging, colorful folk dances from all regions of Pakistan, mass-band displays and tattoo shows in the evenings.

Lahore has a very rich tradition of commercial



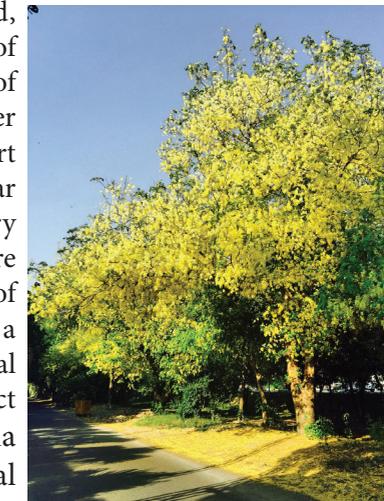
activity and it is full of interesting markets and bazaars. The old city has kept in harness the traditional shopping pattern with tiny shops where craftsmen can be seen busy turning out master-pieces in copper, brass, silver as well as textiles in the traditional fashion. The most celebrated commercial place is Anarkali Bazaar whose alleys and lanes are full of exciting wares, especially traditional crafts like leather ware, embroidered garments, glass bangles, beaten gold and silver jewellery, creations in silk and anything you wish for a bargain. Liberty Market stores rich varieties of readymade stylish suits and is the favorite shopping place for Lahorites. For handicrafts, The Mall is very popular which sells shadow work embroidery at



reasonable prices. Ichra Bazaar stocks best quality of unstitched silk, cotton and printed material of all sorts. On the other hand Mozang Bazaar sells some interesting hand-block printed cloth, tablecloth and bedspreads.



Lying on the Grand Trunk Road, Lahore is linked with all major cities of Pakistan by road, rail and air. There are several daily flights, Express trains and luxury bus services linking Lahore with Karachi, Quetta, Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Peshawar and dozens of major cities and towns of the country. A number of private transport companies ply regular air-conditioned luxury buses between Lahore and other main cities of Pakistan. Besides PIA, a number of International Airlines, operate direct flights to Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore.



Data courtesy PTDC

LAHORE

