

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SINDH, SUKKUR BENCH, SUKKUR
C.P No.D-1447 of 2020
C.P No.D-228 of 2021

Before: Mr. Justice Salahuddin Panhwar
Mr. Justice Abdul Mobeen Lakho

Petitioner in C.P. No.D-1447/2020: Yaseen Ali Ghunio through Mr. Suhail Latif Memon, Advocate.

Petitioner in C.P No.D-228/2021: Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, in Person

Respondent No.3: Divisional Superintendent, Pakistan Railways Sukkur through Mr. Mian Imtiaz Ali Qureshi, Advocate

Federation of Pakistan: Mr. Muhammad Aslam Jatoi, Assistant Attorney General

Province of Sindh & others: Mr. Ali Raza Balouch, Assistant Advocate General along with Qasid H. Mallah, Professor Archeology, Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Chief Engineer, Sukkur Barrage Left Bank Region, Sukkur and Shahzad Tahir Thaheem, Deputy Commissioner, Sukkur

Date of hearing: 08.03.2023

Date of decision: 25.05.2023

ORDER

Abdul Mobeen Lakho, J: Through this common **order**, we intend to dispose of both captioned petitions relating to **conservation, preservation, protection, rehabilitation & maintenance** of historical/ancient sites already declared and enlisted under Sindh Cultural Heritage (Preservation) Act, 1994 & Sindh Antiquities Act, 1975.

2. In both petitions, it has been prayed that **Respondents** have *completely* failed to **secure, maintain** and **preserve** the **historical** sites as the same are depleting, deteriorating seriously due to continuous **catastrophes**/calamities; besides a humoring annual budget gets exhausted in preserving the Historical sites, but due to disavow act on the part of concerned Respondents, such sites having long standing history and antiquities have scrub intended to the so called effort for its' prettification/beautification.

3. In C.P. No.D-1447 of 2020, learned Counsel representing the Petitioner, at the very outset, contended that **Lansdowne Bridge**, being ingeniously

designed Railway Bridge, was completed and opened to traffic on 27th March, 1889; besides it became one of the **longest rigid girder bridge in the world**; however the said bridge is *nowadays* in **worst** condition as its **road, iron grills, footpaths** and **entrance** have *significantly* are wholly **damaged** and neither none the Railway Department nor Provincial Government departments took efforts to maintain, preserve or uphold such *imaginatively bridge*, being *appurtenance* component, which is already **declared** as **antiquity** under sub-Section (1) of **Section 10** of the **Antiquities Act, 1975**; besides it having historical value, listed as **Protected Sites/ Monuments** under Antiquities Act, 1975. He further contended that some permanent employees may be hired, fully equipped with tools to keep the bridge *clean*; *besides leakage* from pipes installed at the wall of the Lansdowne bridge be blocked so that its' beautification may be maintained.

4. Compatibly, in connected petition, being C.P No.D-228 of 2021, filed by the Petitioner in person, who is an advocate by profession, in his arguments, asserted that in fact the Province of Sindh with a number of historical sites and the concerned Departments established in this regard to preserve, maintain and uphold; however, due to their dearth of interest, same are at the verge of getting destroyed. He next contended that there is a historical place "*Satiyan Jo Astan*", which has an intrinsic value and provide a sneak peek into our **ancient heritage** and it speaks about the place, tradition and historical significance; besides endows with the details about the *variety* and *quality* of the material used in its establishment. He further contended that though a **massive annual** budget has been retained by the Government to preserve, uphold and maintain such historical **cenotaphs**, but of no avail as such the same are at their *lowliest* condition and are losing their prominent status.

5. It shall not be *excessive* to mention here a little brief regarding importance of historical monuments and cultural heritage existing in any country as the same are **unique, irreplaceable** and **matchless** construction and reflects architectural astuteness of people in the past that *compiled huge* structures in the period, when there was no technology; besides such **monuments** take us to the path of knowing our past and **connecting** it with the future and makes it easy to analyze the history of the a place; that such monuments helping in educating and imparting every bit and piece of information of the past and make things more interesting; Additionally, it

provides the details about the past language and their mode of communication. Needless to emphasize that such **monuments** also *attract* the **visitors**/tourists resulting in growth of *economy, foreign currency* to a country, hence with these points, it becomes clear that historical monuments are very precious and their conservation, upkeep, preservation and proper maintenance are also essential to enhance their life as it will assist future generations to get the know-how of their **ancestors** and *enlighten* with an **abundance** of knowledge. Moreover, maintaining existing structures is often better than building new facilities and the same will be blessing if the remaining ancient places will remain intact.

6. Arguments heard. Record perused.

7. On issuance of notices, concerned Respondents have shown their appearance and filed their respective statements in this regard, which are taken on record.

8. Pursuant to order dated 01.03.2023, **Chief Engineer** Sukkur Barrage, Left Bank Region, Sukkur, has *filed report*/statement, wherein he has *categorically* mentioned that the **Lansdowne Bridge, (The Bridge)** being national heritage, has almost completed its more than **one century** period; however, concerned Respondents have failed to preserve, maintain or uphold its **status**, as the road surface over **the bridge** as well as *pedestrian* path are in **dilapidated** condition requiring emergent rehabilitation/maintenance to ensure smooth and safe passage of both the road vehicles and pedestrians. Moreover, it is stated that the Pakistan Railways, had been approaching to concerned provincial departments through repeated letters since **2015** for transfer of The bridge from Railways Authorities to the Provincial Government as well as repairing the road on old Sukkur Channel **bridge** and Lansdowne bridge over river Indus Sukkur, but no *positive* response has been **noticed** by the Provincial Government. It is further stated that, there is need to construct chequered plate pedestrian path sides instead of RCC/ Wooden planks as said plates are being used nowadays in such like bridges, which make safe and secure.

9. Whereas, in pursuance of the **orders** dated **01.03.2023** & **03.03.2023**, **Mr. Qasid H. Mallah**, Professor Archaeology, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, has submitted detailed report, wherein he has pointed out each and every mode of structures of historical sites, which are being seriously damaged due to *inattentiveness* as well as **catastrophes**, with photographs, hence needs stringent efforts for **preservation** and **rehabilitation**.

He also briefed regarding history of **Bakhar**, which comprises on **Lakhan Jo Daro, Bakhar Fort, Arore Fort and Satian Jo Astan**, whereupon all the respective parties including Railways department *agreed* for taking sincere efforts with regard to *preservation* of **oldest history** of **South Asia**. This Court has appreciated the efforts taken by Mr.Qasid H. Mallah as he deserves and directed the Additional Registrar of this Court to issue him appreciation certificate on behalf of this Court. It shall be advantageous to *affix* complete report, comprising on photographs submitted by Mr. Qasid H. Mallah is as under:-

Field Observations of Lansdowne Bridge for Current Status and Development

Report prepared in fulfillment of Petition Number CP1447/20



Submitted in compliance of: **Orders of Honorable High Court of Sindh Sukkur Bench**
Dated: 03-03-2023

Prepared by:

Professor Dr. Qasid H. Mallah
Archaeology, SALU Khairpur
&
Mr. Suhail Latif Memon
Advocate,
High court Sukkur

Field Observations of Lansdowne Bridge for Current Status and Development

Introduction

This report is prepared and submitted in compliance of honorable high court of Sindh Sukkur Bench Dated: 03-03-2023. On the Orders of Honorable High Court for Site of Lansdowne Bridge was visited and examined by a team consisting of:

1. Dr. Qasid H. Mallah Archaeologist
2. Mr. Suhail Latif Memon Advocate
3. Mrs. ToobaShafaq Archaeologist
4. Mr. Hassan Ali Social Worker

The team intensively investigated entire bridge more than 8 hours inch by inch step by step. Each part was analyzed- problems were found and photographed. The team also examined the immediate Premises and surrounding for (a) understanding and documenting heritage remains and (b) find out the possibilities for further development and to make it tourism resort for general public.

The present Bridge has two parts one is close to Rohri town and the other part is from Bakhar fort to Bunder road of Sukkur city. Both part are established applying a different system, thus, their look is also different. In the general infrastructure setup, some features of both parts are not same, like, guard rooms at each end part, strong gates at each end part, and footpath on both sides of bridges. The focus of this report contains:

- ❖ Infrastructure features
- ❖ Heritage remains around the bridge and
- ❖ How to develop the bridge environment for tourist attraction.

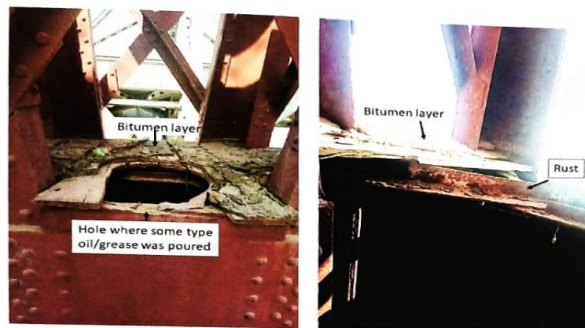
Part one: Rohri Side Bridge

This part of bridge connect Rohri with Sukkur through Bakhar fort. This is amazing part having made through cantilever technique. The pillars fixed in earth below surface have some sort of hole covered with wooden logs with bitumen layer on the top which was perhaps to save the base from river moisture and / or rain water. The logs are destroyed and bitumen is in vanishing

Field Documentation of Lansdowne Bridge 2023

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Mallah & Memon

condition. It is informed that some oils was poured into those holes to protect the base of pillars. This need to be checkout.



The cantilevers are fixed into the ground and right at the ground surface level some rust has started appearing needs to take care.

Some plastic pipes cross through the road for drainage of the rainwater which hits the girders. These pipes may be removed and other type of arrangements may be made.



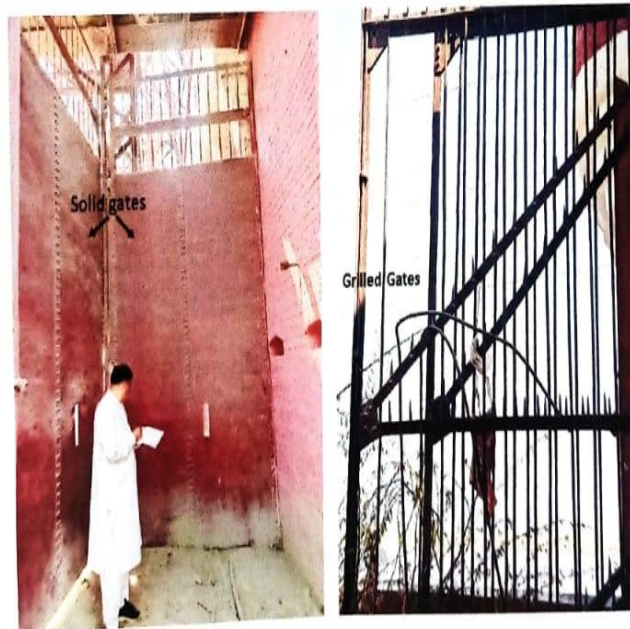
The hill is comprised of limestone and flint imbedded into it – the spots where soft limestone is present it vanishes due to moisture and rainwater. It is seen at the top surface where some cracks into rock have appeared threatening the burnt brick wall constructed over it. If the soft lime stone was drifted it will damage structures above it.

Field Documentation of Lansdowne Bridge 2023

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At the entrance point on both sides of bridge – two type of gates are provided (a) solid Iron Gate and (b) gate made of grills. Both gates are very much functional but badly neglected – their base is blocked with dust and road rubble – somewhere the pipes are thrown to block their movement and working capability. In gates at some point the British style (period) locks are still hanging and are ready to use if maintained properly.



The main entrance and both footpaths are given separate gates of both types. The condition of footpath is bad and are closed with piece of grills welded with main bridge pillar – an amazing destructive act to create the spots into original object.

There are six pipes placed over the footpath from eastern side and four on the western footpath in totally unorganized and poorly managed and maintained. The separate arrangements for placing the pipes are suggested here to avoid any future mishap.



The eachside entrance of bridge is provided with guard rooms in oblong shape on each side. The walls near to ground level from exterior needs maintenance. At this point the eastern room is given to the security police and western room is used by railway water supply department. Some cracks in the top boundary wall on exterior side are observed.

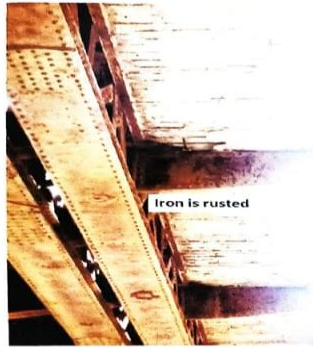


Northern side of this part of bridge may be cleaned and maintained properly- all other types of problem occurred here as well.



Part Two – Northern Part of the Bridge

This part of the bridge is connected from northern side of the Bakhar Fort towards Sukkur City – It is built with different mechanism then the southern part. The shape is in somehow arch type. The footpath is provided with grilled gates to be closed – gates are in good condition except the base part which is not maintained properly and this prime negligence is destroying the amazing gates. The dust is creating rust and rust is deteriorating the gate. The condition of both side footpaths of northern bridge from the lower side is worse. The plaster is fallen and the iron rods are exposed and in very rusty conditions which are unable to bear any pedestrian load. The perpetual river moisture and probably low quality work has affected the plaster. The girders of northern bridge also need maintenance and have started the rusting. Any types of treatment may be provided promptly to save them from further loss.



On the very northern part at Sukkur side the same conditions are found with solid and grided gates, footpath and guard rooms and exterior of the bridge. The rusty condition does not require much effort then the negligence. It must be carried immediately to save amazing gates. The waste is thrown into bridge causing damage may be removed and cleaned.



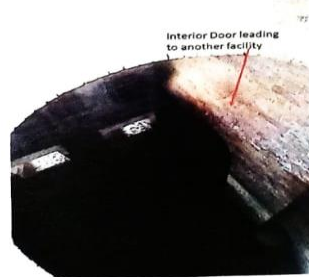
There are several pipe lines on this part of the bridge also kept exposed crossing through Footpath on this part of the bridge. The pipes are just thrown without any proper management.

Some pipes are not functional at all and are opened at several spots and must be removed immediately.

The cracks in guard room at a base and on the top boundary wall are observed and are very alarming for destruction if not maintained immediately.



A basement has been provided to within guard room – inside, there was another door from western side corner may be leading and connecting guard rooms on both sides. The basements may be maintained properly for further use.



The iron widows are in rusty conditions within this guard room. The room contains some cracks in the wall from interior which may be checked and maintained instantly.

Some type of maintenance material is thrown into the garbage at this part of bridge which requires quick attention otherwise it will be a piece of trash.

On the exterior of tower wall, some plants like Piple plant has grown due to constant seepage of washrooms. The seepage has caused the cracks in the walls – phenomenon may be tackled quickly. The adjacent area may be provided a green belt along with stone pitching and here the cracks in the tower wall and at the base are observed and documented.



Entire base side from exterior is under threat

There other important features commonly observed on both parts of the bridge. The monograms on the girders information boards, name/identification plates and inaugural boards may be repaired and maintained properly. Some of the inaugural boards contain wrongly spellings of the Bridge name which may be corrected.



The Remains BakharFort

In between both parts of bridges , the island named as Bakhar fort are present now occupied by the shrine of Sadder Din Shah and military school and residency. There are visible remains of fort wall on outer limits of the island and can be conserved. The traces of burnt brick walls and stone walls are visible. The glazed pottery, tiles and other artifacts still scattered on the ground surface of fallen structures. On the southeastern side , there are architectural remains of any type of building and because of the residential area we were unable to reach there- this still surviving piece of architecture can be save properly.

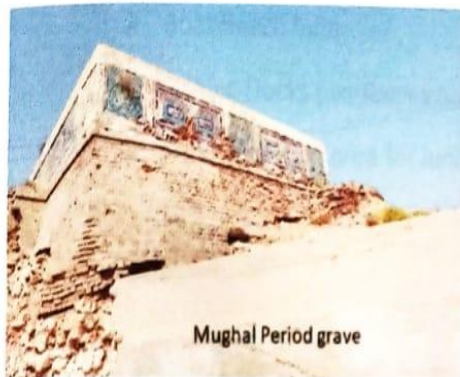


British Period Buildings

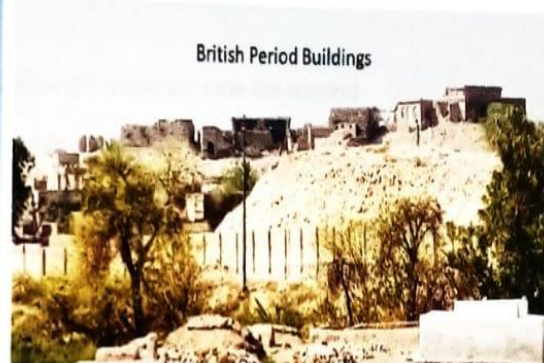
The Area around Lansdowne Bridge is intensively enriched with historical buildings belonging with various periods. During British times, the Rohri was as important as was the Sukkur. The

caravans coming from left side of Indus river were arriving here and then shifting to the Sukkur and beyond towards Baluchistan. This was one of the reason to have bridge here and British administration established several buildings for various purposes. The buildings were constructed on the small hillock near by the Bridge now merciful conditions need to be conserved immediately.

There is one of the grave of historical value which also needs to be saved as well.



Mughal Period grave



British Period Buildings

Tourist Attraction Development

Considering the historical importance of the bridge; it is highly essential to develop it in such a way that people belonging to all walks of life may be attracted and educated. There are three places which can be developed for this purpose:

1. Area in the Southwest of bridge and Southeast of Satuenjo-Asthan
2. Area in the Southeast of Bridge and in West of Rohri town
3. Central area of the Bridge on the Bakhar Fort

Some suggestions are provided here:

Area1

The Area is located near to the Heritage remains of Satuenjo-Asthan and in front of British Buildings. This is very ideal place for:

- Walking track
- Kids play land
- Boat Beach
- Canteen for refreshment

Area2

The Area is located near to northwest side of the Rohri town and is very suitable for all facilities as at Area1. This is huge area for having several things during day and night times such as:

- Lawns and Green belts
- Walking track
- Kids play land
- Boat Beach huts
- Fishing Docks (any floating boat fixed at one spot can serve the purpose)
- Parking & food area for lunch and dinner



Area3

The Bakhar fort Area is very suitable for evening relaxations because it has wider exposure towards Sukkur city, Lloyd Barrage and Sadh Belo and SautenjoAsthnanlocating in frontof facilities previously known as **Janbaz** – A restaurant, benches and green Belt may be established for such purpose.

General Arrangement for Bridge and Recreational Area

The first and most important arrangement is the removal of illegal encroachment near the Bridge and heritage monuments and places. All British period building in the premises of Bridge may be preserved so that the concept and. The necessary arrangement like

- ❖ Security Cameras for Bridge and visitors
- ❖ Decorative Lighting
- ❖ Street lighting along the paths of recreational facility
- ❖ Waste and garbage maintenance

Supervision of Bridge and recreational facilities from district authorities and their departments involved directly or indirectly to check the:

- Damage & Cleanliness of Bridge
- Quality of food in restaurant and Boats of Boat Beach
- Arrangements for any emergency (medical, fire, drowning)

10. Whereas, pursuant to order dated 07.03.2023, Director General (Antiquities & Archaeology), Government of Sindh, has submitted report and it is firmly stated that *undeniably* Cantilever Bridge/ Lansdowne Bridge, Sukkur is already declared as historical site and *enlisted* under Protected Sites/ Monuments under Antiquities Act, 1975. In support of his contention, he has annexed a Notification dated 09.03.2007, whereby Federal Government has declared Cantilever Bridge/Lansdowne Bridge as a protected antiquity under Sub-Section (1) of Section 10 of the Antiquities Act, 1975. It shall be conducive to affix copy of the notification dated 09.03.2007 as under:-

TO BE PUBLISHED IN PART-II EXTRA ORDINARY GAZETTE OF PAKISTAN

Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Culture

Islamabad, March 9, 2007

NOTIFICATION

S.R.O. (1)/2007.- In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section(1) of Section 10 of the Antiquities Act, 1975 (VII of 1976) the Federal Government is pleased to declare the antiquity described in the schedule below to be a protected antiquity for the purpose of the said Act.

Name & Description:	SCHEDULE
District:	<u>Cantilever Bridge</u>
Tehsil:	Sukkur
Locality:	Sukkur
Total Area:	On Indus River between Sukkur and Rohri
Owner:	909 Feet
Whether in use for religious purposes:	Pakistan Railways
	No

(No.F.9-07/2007-A.II)

The Publisher,
Gazette of Pakistan,
Printing Corporation of Pakistan Press,
Islamabad.

(Kamran Ahmad)
Section Officer (Arch-II)
Tel: 9219556

Copy to:-

- Secretary, Culture, Tourism, Sports and Youth Affairs Department, Government of Sindh, Karachi with the request to publish the said notification in the Provincial Gazette and a copy thereof be affixed at a conspicuous place on or near the site in question.
- Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Islamabad
- Director, Southern Circle of Archaeology, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Qaid-i-Azam House Museum, 241-Fatima Jinnah Road, Karachi.
- P.S. to Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Islamabad.

(Kamran Ahmad)
Section Officer(Arch-II)

P.T.O.

However, he assures that the Antiquities and Archaeology Department, Government of Sindh is *ready* to provide **technical assistance** to any department for **conservation, preservation and rehabilitation** of such old bridges/ancient sites.

11. Additionally, Deputy Commissioner, Sukkur, has also filed compliance report, wherein he has submitted that all kind of religious political, commercial banners, boards and posters from the walls of the bridge have been removed including *encroachment* from the entrance and exit points of the bridge including *fish* and *fruit* vendors. He further submitted that the endowment fund society has been established for securing/renovation of heritage of historical sites existing in District Sukkur.
12. It is pertinent to mention here brief history of 'Lansdowne Bridge' and 'Satiyun Jo Astan' as inscribed is as follows:-

Lansdowne Bridge

"An ingeniously designed Lansdowne railway bridge on the River Indus, was completed and opened to traffic on March 27, 1889 and hence it become one of the longest rigid girder bridges in the world. The bridge hugs together twin cities of Rohri and Sukkur and hence reducing the time and space. It is regarded as a great feat of engineering of 19th century. It is a suspension bridge, (pillar less, weighing 30,300 tons). The bridge spans 200 feet in the center, and extends 310 feet on each bank, a total length of 820 feet and its width is 15 feet. Moreover, it has the longest cantilever span in the world and thus it is accredited as a monument of engineering feat.

The proposal to construct the bridge was floated between 1872 and 1874. The material was imported from abroad and it began reaching the site in 1879. Expenditure on the bridge was estimated at about Rs.3,375,000. The contract of the bridge was awarded to the Westwood and Bailey Company of England, and Mr. F.A Robertson was the Chief Engineer. It was inaugurated by Lord Reay, then Government of Bombay, which was largely attended by dignitaries from all over Sindh. The bridge was named after Lord Lansdowne, then Governor General.

Satiyan Jo Astan

Satian jo Aastan site is known as the resting place of seven pious & prestigious ladies. According to the folks these women resided here in a hill cave & veiled them secure from all males. One day they heard of a tyrant Raja who desired to see them in front of him. Feeling very sacred & feared they started praying for protection of their piousness. Suddenly the earth turned downwards & they were draped in the cave. This place gave them eternal shelter when their honour was in danger. Knowing about the folk tale the than Governor of Bakhar Mir Abul Qasim Namkeen (1553-83) ordered to protect the cave and decorate the adjacent area. The hillock was levelled in rectangular shape. The ground floor was distributed in seven rooms or Hujras for visitors' stay & one of them was dedicated to seven sisters & kept closed. From within a 25 step stair led to the upper platform. Tradition states that on this beautiful location and peaceful surrounding when construction of a fine complex was completed Mir Abul Qasim Namkeen used to retire here in full moon nights with friends and courtiers. All those were entertained with music, mangoes & watermelons. As per his desire he was buried here after death . Hence forth it was turned into the family grave yard of Sabzwari syeds. Except others here are 17 graves of Mir Abil Qasim family constructed from Ochre stone. Inscriptions & Qūranic verses in finest Naskh script adorned these structures. The famous colourful glazed tiles were also used to enhance the aesthetic impact . Though the place was as " khani Qabrustan " however- it is more popularly known as " Satian jo Aastan

13. At this juncture, the learned Counsel representing the petitioner in C.P. No.D-1447 of 2020, as well as the petitioner in person in C.P. No.D-228 of 2021 argued that these petitions may be **disposed of** with directions to the concerned **departments** to *preserve, upkeep* and **maintain** the historical **sites** on permanent basis, because it not only protects cultural heritage, but fulfills need to connect to the past while providing a framework of ideals for future though maintaining a sense of permanency and heritage of the city; besides make it more valuable for the country to attract *visitors* including foreigners, *promote tourism* and boost the economy of the country.

14. In view of above, captioned petitions are disposed of accordingly by issuing following directions to the Secretary Culture, Archeology Departments and Secretary Schools Education department to ensure:-

- To declare lands down bridge and Sukkur Barrage as heritage properties and notify the same within one month;
- Permanent preservation and proper maintenance of historical sites
- Establishment of information desks at historical sites;
- Establishment of labs for Scientific research and archaeological discoveries coupled with arranging seminars;
- Promote cultural, national and local identity;
- Inspiration for artistic and creative endeavors;
- Tourist guide shall be appointed to assist the tourists; besides provide them information regarding such historical sites.
- Tours may be arranged for schools and colleges students for inculcating them knowledge about such a historical site especially the bridge unique in the world.
- Public at large may be sensitized through print, electronic and social media for ownership and protection of the site instead of depending on the state authorities.
- Secretary Schools & Education Department shall ensure introduction of lands down Bridge and Sukkur Barrage in the syllabus upto elementary school with regard to history, architectural and scientific value of lands down and Sukkur Barrage from upcoming academic year 2023-2024.
- Secretary Education shall notify a committee including competent engineers, archeologists and educationalists, who shall prepare a comprehensive story/introduction to be added in the syllabus as above.

Office. Learned MIT-II shall ensure compliance and translation of the judgment in Sindhi in Urdu.

JUDGE

JUDGE

Faisal Mumtaz/PS