



Press Release

LEARN FROM PAST TO MOVE FORWARD- Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Omer Rasul opens exhibition at Anarkali Tomb

Lahore, May 31, 2018

The exhibition, ‘Fear and Vengeance in 1857’ was opened by the Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Umer Rasul at the historic Anarkali’s Tomb in the Civil Secretariat in Lahore today. The exhibition is a part of the Punjab Archives Digitization Project executed by the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) in collaboration with the Punjab Archives and Libraries Department (PALD), S&GAD.

The Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Omer Rasul emphasized the need to learn from the past to move forward as the archival material not only dealt with the history but it also revives the passion and spirit of the past movements and energizes our present to maintain the legacy and to pass on the facts to the future generations.

In his message on this occasion, Dr Umar Saif, Chairman, PITB said that the events of 1857 were an important part of our history, and yet we do not know much about its particular events. The opening up of the Punjab Archives under this project, brings out its treasures—long hidden—for public viewing, knowledge, and interaction,’ Dr Saif said. ‘Pakistan’s educational system, especially in the humanities, would only be strengthened when we engage fully with our past, and the archive was a central piece in this puzzle,’ Dr Saif emphasized.

This exhibition is based on the extensive archive of the events of 1857-58, which are housed in the Punjab Archives. Called the ‘First War of Independence.’ by nationalists, the ‘Mutiny’ by the British and ‘the Great Rebellion or Revolt,’ by most modern historians, this event remains a critical marker in the history of South Asia. From about May 1857 till nearly the end of 1858 the rule and control of the East India Company was shaken and almost lost over large parts of northern and central India. The Rebellion brought to the fore the exploitation of the East India Company, and finally led to its dissolution and takeover of British India by the Crown in 1858.

This exhibition brings out one element of the Rebellion, that of ‘Fear and Vengeance’ during the ensuing year. Using lithographs which were produced in the time immediately after the Rebellion, the exhibition showcases how the British were indeed frightened that their rule might end. The call for special prayers in churches, the hurried evacuation of all British women and children, and the erection of huge defenses, exhibited the fear of the badly armed yet courageous and high-spirited sepoy who had challenged British supremacy in South Asia. The exhibition also presents original documents from the time, especially telegrams which had just been introduced in the Punjab in 1857, and the British resolve to hold on to the Punjab as its bastion. The prints furthermore, visualizes the bloody and widespread revenge the British exacted on the rebels in the aftermath of the revolt in 1858, and the resulting fear and loathing it elicited.

Mr Tahir Yousaf, Secretary, Archives and Libraries Department, S&GAD said that his vision for the department was based on open access and maximum facilitation. ‘We are here to serve the scholarly needs of our country and the world, and the opening of such exhibits showcases our commitment to the progress of our country,’ he noted. The exhibition will remain open till June 8, 2018, from 9am to 2pm at the Anarkali’s Tomb in the Civil Secretariat, Lower Mall, Lahore.