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Punjab Halts Circular Road Evictions, Proposes Underground Markets for Traders

July 22, 2025

— Categories: Real Estate



In a significant policy adjustment, the Punjab government has suspended the planned eviction of nearly 2,300 shops along Lahore’s historic Circular Road. This move comes as part of an initiative by the Lahore Authority for Heritage Revival (LAHR) to restore the iconic Circular Garden, a green belt with deep historical roots tracing back to the British colonial era. The pause follows growing unrest and protests by affected traders who feared losing their livelihoods without secure relocation plans.

The Circular Garden once served as a boundary green zone surrounding the Walled City after several of its gates were dismantled. Over decades, this land was gradually taken over by commercial encroachments, resulting in the unauthorized construction of 2,285 shops. The LAHR had launched a campaign to revive the garden as part of broader efforts to preserve Lahore's heritage, but the project drew backlash due to a lack of clarity on resettlement measures. Traders expressed concerns about abrupt displacement and demanded that proper alternatives be arranged before any demolition begins.

In response to the backlash, the provincial authorities have now opted for a more measured approach. Instead of immediate evictions, the government is exploring the construction of underground markets to accommodate the displaced businesses. This solution not only addresses the traders' concerns but also aligns with urban development principles by preserving green space while maintaining commercial viability. According to officials involved in the project, the proposal for underground markets is currently under technical review and could become a model for similar heritage-preservation efforts across the province.



This revised strategy shows a rare instance of balancing preservation with pragmatism. The government's willingness to listen and act in the interest of the city's economic contributors, while safeguarding its historical identity, deserves credit. However, the success of this plan will ultimately hinge on timely execution, transparent consultation with stakeholders, and the assurance that redevelopment will not lead to further unchecked encroachment in the future. As Lahore continues to expand, creative solutions like underground markets may pave the way for a more harmonious blend of heritage conservation and urban growth.