

# VANISHING HERITAGE OF RAWALPINDI

## THE VITAL NEED TO PRESERVE LEGACY

Rawalpindi, situated in the heart of Pakistan, possesses a wealth of cultural heritage that is worthy of preservation and celebration. With a history spanning several centuries, the city is a testament to diverse traditions, impressive architecture, and a warm and welcoming spirit. Its landmarks, such as the renowned Raja Bazaar and the grand residences of its past inhabitants, tell stories of a bygone era. Safeguarding this invaluable heritage necessitates collaboration among the local community, authorities, and cultural enthusiasts. By promoting awareness, undertaking restoration initiatives, and nurturing a sense of pride in our shared history, we can ensure that Rawalpindi's beauty and cultural legacy are embraced and cherished by future generations.



**WEBINAR**  
21<sup>ST</sup> JUNE, 2023

### SESSION OBJECTIVES

1. Intangible Heritage of Rawalpindi: Stories, Traditions, and Folklore.
2. Military Heritage of Rawalpindi: Importance of Hotels in Promotion of Tourism
3. The Way Forward for Developing Rawalpindi as a Cultural Tourism Destination

## VIEWS OF THE PANELLISTS



**Mr. Shahid Shabbir**  
**Topic: Intangible Heritage of Rawalpindi: Stories, Tradition and Folklores**

- Rawalpindi has a rich historical background, but it gained significant prominence approximately 200 years ago, specifically during the Sikh Empire and subsequently during the British Era when it became one of the largest garrisons of British India.
- The entire Rawalpindi region is home to numerous temples, gurdwaras, and other religious places, which can be utilised to promote Rawalpindi's image and cultural diversity.
- While the history of Rawalpindi is fading due to the migration of its local Hindus and Sikhs, the architectural remnants of the past still remain.
- In Old Rawalpindi, one can still find Sikhs and Hindus living alongside Muslims, showcasing the city's cultural diversity.
- Old Rawalpindi still preserves houses constructed during the British and Sikh periods, serving as tangible reminders of its historical eras.

- Banni, Kartarpura, and Bagh Sardaran were once the thriving centers of the city, gaining prominence during British and Sikh rule.

- The existing knowledge of Rawalpindi's history primarily revolves around British rule, overshadowing the existence of previous civilizations.

- The Citizens Archive of Pakistan developed a documentary about the challenges of Rawalpindi, but it was never released. Snippets of it can be found on YouTube which highlights its architectural and cultural aspects.

- Efforts are needed in Rawalpindi's heritage, with a particular focus on safeguarding old architecture such as temples and gurdwaras.

- Rawalpindi continues to hold significance as a melting pot of various religions, cultures, and traditions. However, the gradual disappearance of its architecture raises concerns about preserving the city's historical identity.



**Brig. Javed Akhtar**  
**Topic: Military Heritage of Rawalpindi**

- Rawalpindi is home to the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the Pakistan Army, serving as the central command and control center for military operations, training, and strategic planning.
- Situated near the capital city of Islamabad, Rawalpindi is an integral part of the greater Islamabad-Rawalpindi metropolitan area. Its proximity to the capital makes it strategically important for the defense of the national capital region, facilitating rapid coordination and deployment of military forces if needed.
- Rawalpindi acts as the gateway to Northern Pakistan, allowing easy access to scenic destinations such as the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and Azad Kashmir. It serves as a starting point for travelers exploring the natural beauty of the northern regions.
- Rawalpindi has significant historical

importance in terms of military operations, playing a crucial role in British-Pakistan relations and serving as the first base during the Indo-Pak war. The city has witnessed numerous historical events, military campaigns, and battles, adding to its military significance and heritage.

- While Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan, Rawalpindi holds greater value in terms of its rich military culture and traditions.

- Rawalpindi's cantonment area became a major center of military power during the British Raj after the establishment of an arsenal in 1883. The city also hosts a well-established defense industry, encompassing defense production facilities and research institutions. It plays a vital role in the development, manufacturing, and maintenance of military equipment, weapons, and ammunition for the Pakistan Armed Forces.

- The city features extensive military infrastructure, including military bases, airfields, and logistical facilities, which contribute to the operational readiness and overall defense capabilities of Pakistan.



**Mr. Rehan Zahid**  
**Topic: The Way Forward for Developing Rawalpindi as a Cultural Tourism Destination**

- Pakistan possesses numerous heritage sites, but its history is gradually fading away due to a lack of awareness, government interest, and public negligence.
- Rawalpindi has the potential to become a beautiful tourist destination if proper planning and initiatives are undertaken by both individuals and the government. The city's rich historical and cultural heritage can attract heritage enthusiasts.
- The preservation of Rawalpindi's pre-independence heritage has been hindered by a lack of acceptance for other religions and cultures.
- Developing Rawalpindi as a branded tourist destination requires a multifaceted approach, including preservation, restoration, exploration, infrastructure development, visitor experience enhancement, education, and public-private partnerships.
- It is crucial to plan, document, and preserve the remaining heritage before urban development takes over. This requires drafting a cultural heritage plan and spreading awareness among the public. Collaboration between the

government, private sector, and local community is essential for tourism initiatives.

- Infrastructure development, including roads, museums, and a tourist facilitation center, is necessary to provide guidance and information to visitors about Rawalpindi's destinations, history, culture, and traditions. Enhancing connectivity and accessibility will facilitate tourism.

- A destination management plan should incorporate road infrastructure, pedestrian paths, signage, heritage trails, and parking facilities, among other elements, to ensure a well-structured and enjoyable visitor experience.

- Ensuring the safety and security of tourists is paramount. Implementing measures such as increased police presence, surveillance systems, and tourist police units will contribute to a secure environment.

- Organising cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions can showcase Rawalpindi's diverse traditions, arts, and crafts. Supporting local artisans and craftsmen will provide opportunities for them to display and sell their products, enhancing the tourism experience.

- Establishing a modern museum dedicated to Rawalpindi's heritage is essential.



Watch the whole webinar at  
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