Govt keeping monitoring mission at bay: UNESCO

LAHORE: The Punjab government is reportedly ignoring requests by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) to stop work on the Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) project in the vicinity of Shalimar Gardens, and delaying issuance of visas to members of its Reactive Monitoring Mission to investigate threats posed to this World Heritage Site. According to a press release, UNESCO asked the government to facilitate a mission - headed by renowned conservation architect Richard Hughes - to come to Lahore from January 9 to January 12 to investigate threats posed to this world heritage site due to works undertaken for construction of the OLMT and to make their recommendations. The organisation said that obstruction in way of UNESCO - the highest international body for heritage protection - by the Punjab government was "not in the long-term interests of the people of Pakistan".

"If the Metro Line indeed poses no threat to listed heritage, as the GoP claims, there is no reason why the government should not welcome the Reactive Monitoring Mission in compliance with Pakistan's international and legal commitments." It said that the costs of the monitoring missions were borne by the World Heritage Fund, so the Punjab government had nothing to worry about. The government has been informed that with this attitude, the Shalimar Gardens will definitely lose the status of the world heritage site.