

(110)

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

CWP-PIL-103-2023

Date of decision : 12.02.2024

Sunaina

.....Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab and others

....Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE G.S. SANDHAWALIA,
ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE

HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE LAPITA BANERJI

Present: Ms. Sunaina – Petitioner in person.

Mr. Saurav Khurana, Addl. Advocate General, Punjab.

G.S. SANDHAWALIA, ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE (Oral)

1. In the present petition filed by way of Public Interest Litigation under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, preservation, protection and renovation of Sheesh Mahal at Patiala, being declared a protected monument by the Punjab Government vide its notification dated 18.02.1972, is prayed for.

2. The petitioner, who is an Advocate and a Social Activist, has filed the present petition. Reference has been made to culture of Patiala and that Sheesh Mahal, or the Palace of Mirrors, is the jewel in the crown of Patiala and is one of the most magnificent buildings in Patiala, being built by Maharaja Narinder Singh from the year 1845 to 1862. The Palace is said to have a medal gallery of around 3200 medals collected by Maharaja Bhupinder

Singh from different parts of the world, apart from other artifacts of Tibetan art and rare manuscripts. It has been stated that the Palace is closed for the public for the last 14 years due to unknown reasons and, therefore, keeping in view the statute, called “The Punjab Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1964”, the petition has been preferred for preservation, protection and renovation of the Palace, being a protected monument.

3. In its reply dated 18.12.2023, the State of Punjab has taken the following stand :-

- “1. That the representation made by the petitioner dated 18.09.2023, has already been taken by the State since 2015 and the department is actively pursuing completion of work and several major components of the project costing about Rs. 8 Cr have been successfully completed. Work worth Rs. 1.00 Cr is at an advance stage of closing.
2. That it is also worth mentioning here that the restoration of the building in question is being carried out and is likely to be completed shortly. The same will be opened up for public in all probability during the next financial year.
3. That renovation of such buildings is a very tedious due to its intricate nature of works in which delays cannot be avoided altogether because of safety concerns, coupled striving to preserve original theme and structure.

*It is, therefore, submitted that the Status Report of this work is attached hereto as **Annexure R-1** and the said work is likely to be completed in a month or two, as reflected in the statement attached. Perusal of report*

reveals that five (5) major components out of 8 stand completed.”

4. From the stand of the State, it is thus clear that the State is redressing the grievances of the petitioner and pumping in substantial amount for the monument, which is likely to be opened in the next financial year. Out of eight major components, five are stated to have been completed.

5. Keeping in view the above, we dispose of the writ petition, binding the State by its undertaking to ensure that the amount, which has been allocated for the renovation/restoration and maintenance of Sheesh Mahal at Patiala as such is utilised immediately and the work is completed at the earliest. Liberty is granted to the petitioner to file an appropriate application, if it is found that the undertaking given by the State is not being adhered to.

(G.S. SANDHAWALIA)
ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE

(LAPITA BANERJI)
JUDGE

February 12, 2024
ndj

Whether speaking/reasoned	Yes/No
Whether reportable	Yes/No