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## Nothing is sacred in Land of Pure. DAWN report.

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Dawn Report.

Bulleh Shah graveyard levelled to build park

KASUR, April 12: Hundreds of graves in the 'historical' graveyard adjacent to the shrine of Hazrat Baba Bulleh Shah were demolished on Thursday to construct a recreational park.

The project is being executed by Auqaf authorities despite a strong opposition from social and religious circles besides devotees of the sufi saint. According to them, the graveyard existed when the great Sufi poet came here 249 years ago.

Some weeks back, when the construction was started, about 200 people had brought out a procession and tried to ransack Auqaf office.

The DCO had then ensured the protesters that nothing of the sort would happen.

Earlier, in January, the construction of a shopping centre on this graveyard was stopped under public pressure.

Determined, the Auqaf authorities resumed work two days ago. Under the mega shrine expansion project, a park was to be constructed on the eastern side of the main gate of the shrine. The project was announced by Zafrullah Jamali as prime minister in 2001. Costing Rs30 million, the project is still incomplete despite the lapse of six years although it has two years deadline. Under the project, 20 shops were to be demolished, with affected traders getting new shops of the same size on the western side of the main gate.

The shops were constructed within a year but were not allocated to the shopkeepers, as promised. They were instead 'auctioned' for

Rs300,000 each among some favourites although some bidders had offered up to Rs 800,0000.

As the ignored shopkeepers did not let demolition of their structures, the presence of shops on both sides of the main entrance had marred the mega project.

With this year's Urs due in August, the authorities have moved to complete the project at the historic graveyard.

Meanwhile, land grabbers are in a bid to occupy a corner of the model mosque and have already erected a wall while the shrine administration is unmoved. DCO Saeed Akhter Ansari was not in his office to give his comment. District auqaf manager Muhammad Rafique refused to speak on the issue.

Requesting anonymity, an Auqaf employee said that some bigwigs of the city and high ranking officials were involved in the scandal.

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