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METROPOLITAN 15

Ombudsman office to organise global symposium in November

Qureshi says his office resolved over 100,000 complaints in three years

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) in cooperation with the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat will organise a two-day international symposium on citizen's rights in the federal capital in the first week of November.

"This major international activity will bring together heads of ombudsman institutions from Asia, the Islamic world and representatives of other regional and international ombuds bodies," Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi told reporters during

an informal chat.

Mr Qureshi, who had been re-elected as the AoA president unopposed in September 2023, said the UN secretary general and the president of the General Assembly have also been invited to this symposium.

The Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) is a 47-member strong non-political, independent, democratic, and professional body of international character representing more than two-thirds of the world population.

Mr Qureshi said the symposium would discuss measures to enhance the capacity of the ombudsman institutions worldwide and highlight the role of ombudsmanship in realising the goals and targets of the UN Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

Speaking about the performance of his office, Mr Qureshi

said that over 132,000 cases had been lodged in three years, out of which 127,000 cases had already been resolved. He said during the current year the investigation officers visited remote areas and resolved 2210 complaints.

"This measure greatly enhanced the outreach and accessibility of this office and ensured free and expeditious relief to the general public," he remarked.

He also said that the heads of federal agencies had been duly instructed to address the grievances of the poor and marginalised segments of society and take necessary steps to ensure efficiency in the discharge of their official duties.

According to Mr Qureshi, the number of complaints increased to 194,990 during 2023, reflecting the confidence of people in the performance of the top office.

"Initiatives, including Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) and inspection of various public sector agencies, have further contributed to providing much-needed relief to the general public," he said, adding that new offices were being established soon in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. "This will ensure the presence of this office in 24 cities and shall enable the general public to fully avail its services closer to their homes," he added.

He said the institution made a modest beginning with four offices in 1983 and now it has 17 regional offices and four complaint collection centres besides its head office in Islamabad. Mr Qureshi said in addition to expanding its geographical footprint, other important measures included the use of technology.

According to the ombuds-

man, his office is fully capable of resolving complaints of maladministration in large numbers, reaching out to the complainants for redressal of grievances at their doorstep, informal resolution of disputes, inspection of various federal government agencies to improve service delivery, and undertaking studies to ascertain the root causes of corrupt practices and recommending appropriate steps for their eradication.

He added that facilitation desks were functioning at eight international airports in the country to facilitate overseas Pakistanis and as many as 181,872 overseas Pakistanis benefited from these facilities in 2023. "In a nutshell, the institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib is not merely a complaint office but serves as an architect of better governance," he remarked.

The News

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Ombudsman announces international symposium on citizens' rights

By Asim Yasin

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi announced that the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), in collaboration with the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, will soon organise an international symposium on citizens' rights in Islamabad.

"This significant international event will bring together heads of Ombudsman institutions from across Asia, the Islamic world, and representatives of other regional and international Ombuds bodies. Invitations have also been extended to the UN secretary-general and the president of the General Assembly," he said during an informal interaction with the media on Tuesday.

Federal Ombudsman

Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi said that the symposium's theme will focus on enhancing the capacity of Ombudsman institutions globally while also highlighting the role of Ombudsmanship in achieving the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. "This will also serve as an opportunity to showcase Pakistan's rich cultural heritage and tourist attractions to the international participants," he added.

He further mentioned that new offices will soon be established in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. "This will ensure the presence of our office in 24 cities, enabling the general public to access our services closer to home," he noted.

Federal Ombudsman

Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi reported that over 132,000 cases have been received this year, with 127,000 already resolved. He also mentioned that investigation officers visited remote areas and resolved 2,210 complaints on the spot. "This initiative has significantly increased the outreach and accessibility of our office, ensuring free and prompt relief to the public," he said.

Additionally, he emphasised that the heads of federal agencies have been instructed to prioritise the grievances of the poor and marginalised segments of society while upholding high standards of efficiency and propriety in their duties.

The federal ombudsman highlighted the hard work and dedication of his offi-

cers, noting that their commitment to providing selfless service has been instrumental in addressing a large number of complaints. "In 2023, the number of complaints rose to 194,990, reflecting the public's confidence in our office's performance. Initiatives such as the Informal Resolution of Disputes (IRD) and the inspection of various public sector agencies have further contributed to providing much-needed relief to the public," he said.

Qureshi also urged media personnel to support efforts in raising awareness about the role, scope, and activities of the Wafaqi Mohtasib Institution so that more people can benefit from the free and timely relief provided by this "poor man's court."