

# DAWN

## Present mechanism for helping children inefficient: report

ISLAMABAD: Social issues like child labour and beggary is an outcome of extreme poverty, homelessness, abandonment of children, and predominately a lucrative family business of some communities and begging rings.

This was highlighted in a report prepared by Federal Ombudsman Ijaz Ahmad Qureshi who launched the report in a press conference at the Mohtasib Secretariat on Wednesday.

The report indicates that the present mechanism for the shelter, welfare and development of children, indeed, is inadequate and inefficient as shelter facilities are meant for boys only. Internal trafficking of

children is not recognised as an offence, it stated.

The field data revealed that 91pc of children involved in beggary or child labour were living with their families or guardians, generally migrants from Northern Areas, nomad tribes and refugees, while 9 percent were those who have no proper dwellings. The medical examination of street children revealed serious issues of malnourishment, drug addiction, sexual abuse, skin diseases and even HIV.

The report also indicates that there is neither provision of legal services to implement a ban on child labour nor provision of minimum age for light work. The report fur-

ther reveals that violation of laws relating to children's employment were witnessed but the local administration had no record of action taken in this regard. The team tasked with surveying the social bane also observed that there is no child court in ICT and only one model police station with a desk for children.

The task force noted that from 1991 to May 2022, only 597 adult beggars and their facilitators were put behind bars. Challans were submitted for 98.9 percent cases, leading to conviction in 98.09pc of them and acquittal in 1.9pc yet scores of beggars are witnessed across the city.

The report also indicates that

11,681 streetchildren in ICT had been picked by the police from January 2020 to May 2022 and dropped at the Edhi Centre and Child Protection Institute (CPI).

The Edhi Centre neither has the mandate nor the capacity to accommodate children therefore they are released in the evening, the report added.

The report has recommended that a robust mechanism must be made for the rescue and care of children in need which includes the registration of refugees on a priority basis and provision of basic facilities of health and education for them regardless of their status. — Bakhtawar Mian