

Ombudsman to create awareness on cybercrime against children

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Ombudsman (Wafaqi Mohtasib) will soon launch a countrywide awareness drive to equip the masses and key stakeholders with tools and techniques needed for combating cybercrimes against children in an effective manner. A sub-committee of a high-level task force, formed by the Federal Ombudsman at the end of last year to evolve a holistic plan of action to curb cybercrime against children, have finalized an all-encompassing strategy in that regard, Wafaqi Mohtasib Commissioner for Children and Transgender Syeda Viqar un Nisa Hashmi told APP.

Viqar un Nisa, who is also convener of the task force, said under the strategy, multiple detailed sessions would be arranged with parliamentarians, judiciary and police on the issue for ensuring policy initiatives, while the masses would be sensitized through Mosques, Lady Health Workers and other means.

She said public service messages would be broadcast at electronic,

print and digital media for extensive sensitization of the citizens about the issues. The convener said the messages would be displayed at public places such as markets, police stations, hospitals, railways stations. Sharing the strategic objective of the awareness campaign, Viqar un Nisa said it was meant to increase public awareness on the effects of IT on the abuse and exploitation of children forms of cybercrimes against children and imbibe skills in children so that they may protect themselves from being trapped.

Under the drive, she said the law-makers would be encouraged to bring legal reforms on the issue, whereas initiatives would be taken for inclusion of the subject of cyber crimes against children in the schools syllabi.

The convener said all the national stakeholders including the public sector especially law enforcement agencies, private sector, civil society organizations, religious groups, media (electronic and print), educational institutions and international development partners would be mobilized to combat cybercrimes

against children.

She said another sub-committee of the task force on legal reforms had finalized the draft of 'Prevention & Control of Cybercrimes against Children Bill, 2021' to introduce amendments in Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, Qanoon-e-Shahadat Order, 1984 and other relevant laws.

CAD, Pak Aid distribute relief items to 100 orphans, widows & Khateebis

Creative Approach for Development (CAD) and Pak Aid, a Lahore-based NGO, distributed relief items to 100 orphans, widows and Khateebis here on Sunday.

Assistant Commissioner Chitral Saqalain Saleem was the chief guest on the occasion. CAD Chairman Shahzada Mudassir-ul-Mulk and officials of the Pakistan Aid, people from different walks of life, elders of the areas were also present.

Before distributing relief items, the Chairman of the CAD Shahzada Mudassir-ul-Mulk along with Assistant Commissioner Saqalain Saleem visited the hostel of orphans wherein 30 orphans are staying. —Agencies



ISLAMABAD: People bath in waterfall to get relief from hot and humid weather at Angoori.

RDA seals 4 plazas, 24 shops, site offices of illegal housing schemes

From Our Staff Correspondent

RAWALPINDI: During its operation against illegal housing schemes and other unauthorized constructions across the city, the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Sunday sealed four illegal plazas, 24 shops, a site office of a housing scheme while demolition notices issued to four other illegal housing schemes.

The staff of Land Use and Building Control (LU&BC) Wing and Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorates of RDA carried out strict action against illegal residential cum commercial buildings, sealed four illegal plazas and 24 shops in University Town while an FIR was also lodged against University Town, RDA spokesman said in a press statement.

The authority also sealed site office of Al-Makkah City and issued demolition notices to four illegal housing schemes namely Gulshan-e-Bahar, Mian Muhammad Bukhsh Town, University Town, Mivida (Khanyal Homes) in Rawalpindi.

The operation against illegal housing societies and commercial markets was being conducted following the directions of RDA Director General (DG) Capt (Retd) Abdul Sittar Isani.

The LU&BC Wing of RDA has issued 26 notices and 25 challans to the owners of illegally constructed buildings. The LU&BC Wing has also received fees/charges of Rs 32.12 million from various residential cum com-

mercial buildings last week in lieu of commercialization fee. The owners of the above mentioned properties have violated approved plans / maps violating the Punjab Development of States Act 1976 and RDA Building and Zoning Regulations, 2020 and constructed illegal residential cum commercial buildings without approval and NOC. Following the directives of the RDA DG, the LU&BC Wing has been actively conducting continuous operations against illegal, unauthorized commercial and residential construction activities including plazas, shops, schools and other illegal lands in RDA controlled area in Rawalpindi. The RDA DG has directed the LU&BC Wing to take strict action against encroachments, illegal and unauthorized constructions and commercial activities without any fear and favour.

Eid shopping gets momentum, despite spike in coronavirus cases

The Eid shopping get momentum in twin cities despite spike in third wave of COVID-19. The important shopping malls located at Raja Bazaar, Moti Bazaar, Commercial, Bara and cantonment markets fully crowded and the visitors violating the coronavirus lockdown.

The Punjab government had issued a notification to change the business hours and weekly closure of bazaars and markets in Rawalpindi district in the wake of COVID-19 surge.

The traders were directed to close shops by 6:00 p.m. and take an off on Fridays and Saturdays.

Religious tourism to attract foreign investment, alleviate poverty

The Business Report

PESHAWAR: Internationally known as home to Indus Valley and Gandhara civilizations, Pakistan is a unique country having plenty of ancient archaeo-religious sites, ancient mosques, fairy tales havelis and dizzily awesome minarets, which are leaving inerasable traces on hearts and minds of tourists every year.

Being a home to ancient civilizations of Mohenjo Daro (2500 BC) of the Indus Valley Civilization and Buddhist Ruins of Takht Bhai (1st CE) of the Gandhara Civilization, Pakistan is an archaeo-religious sites

rich country having historical mosques, elaborate mausoleums, forts, shrines and worship places for Sikh, Hindus, Christians and followers of Buddhism being visited by millions of visitors and pilgrims of different schools of thought annually.

Pakistan's six stunning cultural heritage sites, which have been granted world heritage status by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) including Mohenjo Daro in Larkana Sindh, Takht Bhai in Mardan KP, Taxila (1000BC) in Rawalpindi, Lahore Fort and Shalimar Gardens in Punjab, Makli monuments at Thatta Sindh and Rotas Fort (16th century)

in Jehlum Punjab, are attracting millions of domestic and foreign tourists, historians, Sikhs, archaeologists, architects and Buddhists pilgrims from across the world especially from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, China, Thailand, Turkey, Nepal, Bhutan, Korea and Japan every year due to their spiritual attachments with these ancient establishments. Tourists and archaeology lovers' travel would remain incomplete without visiting the archaeological-rich KP to explore its about 2000 religio-heritage sites, 30,000 relics of Gandhara Civilization and UNESCO world heritage site of Takht Bhai, Sahr-I-Bahlol and Jamal Ghari in Mardan district.

Scuffles, arrests in Paris as thousands mark May Day

PARIS: Police scuffled with protesters in Paris firing tear gas as thousands turned out across France for May Day workers' rights demonstrations.

A police source told AFP that far-left "black bloc" protesters had repeatedly tried to block the trade union-led march in the French capital, with 34 people detained.

Some protesters smashed the windows of bank branches, set fire to dustbins and threw projectiles at police, who responded with volleys of tear gas and stingball grenades. An injured policeman had to be evacuated, an AFP journalist saw.

The CGT union said nearly 300 May day protests were planned around the country, with authorities expecting around 100,000 demonstrators to join them in total.

The crowds held placards with different demands, ranging from the end of the nighttime curfew in place as part of coronavirus restrictions, to a halt to unemployment reforms due to come into force in July.

Members of the yellow vest anti-elite movement, which rocked Emmanuel Macron's presidency two years ago before largely fizzling out, could also be spotted at protests up and down the country.

Five people were arrested in the southeastern city of Lyon as black



bloc protesters again clashed with police at the demonstration, which drew some 3,000 people despite the rain. "There are so many motivations for a revolt that are building up - the management of COVID-19, the so-called reforms that are going to take away people's ability to live, job-seekers who are going to lose their benefits," said a pensioner who gave her name as Patricia. "We absolutely need to express ourselves," the 66-year-old said.

Ukraine to buy extra 10 million doses of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine

Ukraine has signed a contract with Pfizer for an additional 10 million doses of its coronavirus vaccine, bringing the total number of doses to 20 million, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's office said. "We signed a

contract. Hence, we will receive a total of 20 million doses of Pfizer vaccine this calendar year," the presidential office quoted Health Minister Maksym Stepanov as saying.

Ukraine is expecting to receive the first 500,000 doses in the next few weeks, with a further 4.5 million doses in the third quarter and the remaining 15 million doses in the fourth quarter, the statement said. The first contract with Pfizer for 10 million doses was signed last month. Ukraine also plans to source vaccines from AstraZeneca, China and the global COVAX scheme. A total of 752,293 Ukrainians have received their first vaccine dose as of May 1, according to health ministry data. —Reuters

ISS astronauts splash down off Florida on SpaceX craft

WASHINGTON: A SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule carrying four astronauts back to Earth splashed down off Panama City early a NASA livestream showed.

Boats were retrieving the spacecraft and crew after their six-month mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

The crew reported they were feeling well, NASA said.

The capsule splashed down at 2.56am local time in the dark in the Gulf of Mexico off the Florida coast after a six-and-a-half hour flight from the ISS, images relayed by NASA's WB-57 high-altitude research aircraft showed.

Astronauts Michael Hopkins, Victor Glover, Shannon Walker and Japan's Soichi Noguchi went to space last November as the crew on the first fully operational mission to the ISS aboard a vehicle made by Elon Musk's SpaceX, which has become NASA's favored commercial transportation partner.

Seven astronauts remained on the ISS including a new crew of four who arrived on a different SpaceX craft last week.



"Thanks for your hospitality," Hopkins said earlier as the capsule undocked from the space station for its return journey. "We'll see you back on Earth."

Prior to that, two American astronauts made a test mission to the ISS in May and stayed for two months.

That was the first launch to the ISS from US soil since the end of the Space Shuttle program in 2011. It was also the first crewed mission run by a private company, as opposed to NASA. Until then US astronauts had caught rides to the ISS aboard Russian spacecraft. —AFP

Fauci okays India lockdown as virus cases surge

NEW DELHI: India should go into lockdown for several weeks to arrest the current devastating surge in Covid cases, top US pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci said in comments published.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has resisted imposing a national lockdown after a nationwide shutdown a year ago caused widespread human suffering and a painful economic hit. "I think the most important thing in the immediate is to get oxygen, get supplies, get medication, get PPE, those kinds of things," the Indian Express daily quoted Fauci as saying in an interview. "But also, one of the immediate things to do is to essentially call a shutdown of the country," he said. "And if you shut down, you don't have to shut down for six months. You can shut down temporarily to put an end to the cycle of transmission," he added. "No one likes to lock down the country ... But if you do it just for a few weeks, you could have a significant impact on the dynamics of the outbreak." India recorded more than 400,000 new cases on Saturday and added more than seven million infections in April, overwhelming its health care system. —AFP

As US vaccine demand falls, states look to new solutions

PASADENA, United States: It's official: America's COVID-19 immunisation campaign is stalling.

While vaccination programs are lagging badly in many countries - if they've begun at all - mass vaccine sites across the US are closing due to dwindling demand, leaving the authorities exploring new ways to reach people who haven't yet gotten a shot.

The national vaccination rate peaked around Apr 11, according to official data, and although 55 per cent of US adults now have had one or more doses, there's still a long way to go to achieve population immunity.

The people most eager to get their shots have, for the most part, already rolled up their sleeves and done so.

In Texas, as in much of the country, vaccinations are in freefall. A huge federal site in Arlington, between Dallas and Fort Worth, shut its doors in mid-April because of insufficient numbers.

Two other federal sites, the NRG Stadium in Houston and Fair Park in Dallas, have ended their appointments system and now take walk-ups.

The NRG Stadium, seeking to ease the process, is now remaining open until nine o'clock in the evening rather than five, and vaccinating people in their cars.

"We have the capacity to see about 6,000 people and at one point we saw up to 7,000 people. And now, it's dropped to 2,500 on average. So that is a huge drop," said Martha Marquez, a spokeswoman for Harris County Public Health. Authorities are considering more targeted approaches to reach people who are geographically isolated or find it hard to reach vaccine sites. —AFP

Israel holds day of mourning for stampede victims

JERUSALEM: Flags were lowered to half mast as Israel held a national day of mourning for 45 men and boys killed in a stampede at a packed ultra-Orthodox Jewish festival on Friday.

The deadly crush at Mount Meron in northern Israel has been described as one of the worst peace time disasters since the nation's founding in 1948.

The stampede happened as tens of thousands of people thronged the reputed tomb of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai to commemorate the 2nd century Talmudic sage's death and mark the Lag B'Omer holiday.

Some families managed to bury their dead before the Sabbath began on Friday evening. Funerals continued late on Saturday and Sunday, as the Abu Kabir National Center of Forensic Medicine said that all the dead had been identified.

"At around midnight, the identification of all 45 victims of the Meron disaster was completed," the centre's director, Chen Kugel, said. "A disaster of this magnitude requires complex analytical work," he added, stressing the centre had been sensitive towards the needs of the bereaved while maintaining "professionalism". —AFP

Venezuela triples wages but still not enough to buy food

CARACAS: Venezuela nearly tripled its minimum wage but inflation is so outrageous that that amount of money will not even buy a kilo of meat.

Labor Minister Eduardo Pinate announced the raise to government supporters at a May Day rally in Caracas.

The new monthly minimum wage is seven million bolivares, which is equivalent to US\$2.50. A kilo (2.2 pounds) of meat in Venezuela costs about US\$3.75. The once-wealthy oil producer is enduring its fourth year of hyperinflation and its eighth year of recession. Venezuela is now in the worst economic crisis in its modern history. Inflation is so bad that the everyday economy now works mainly in dollars. The leftist government of President Nicolas Maduro is under international sanctions championed by the United States. —AP

Over 200 migrants arrive in Sicily on rescue ship

MARSEILLE: More than 200 rescued migrants, half of them unaccompanied minors, disembarked from the Ocean Viking humanitarian ship at an Italian port the charity that runs it said.

SOS Mediterranee also issued a desperate plea for Europe to intervene to save those trying to reach the continent by sea after the Ocean Viking was too late to save 130 migrants from a capsizing rubber boat off Libya on Apr 22.

But on Tuesday the ship did rescue 236 people, with 15 different nationalities among them, stranded on two overloaded dinghies in international waters off the coast of western Libya.

Many of the migrants were beaten by smugglers and forced to embark, including "some of the 119 unaccompanied minors currently onboard Ocean Viking", SOS Mediterranee said in a statement.

Pictures taken at the scene showed the 236 migrants were given identity checks and COVID-19 tests as they disembarked at the port of Augusta on the Italian island of Sicily on Saturday. The unaccompanied minors were taken to a special reception facility. —AFP

