

DAWN

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Ombudsman asks USC to ensure availability of essential items

ISLAMABAD: The federal ombudsman has directed the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) to ensure quality and quantity of essential food commodities in all its outlets to facilitate the low-income families.

The ombudsman took serious notice of complaints from the public about the quality and shortage of food material, especially during Ramazan. There were also complaints of mal-administration in the USC outlets. The federal ombudsman deputed his advisers in various regional offices throughout the country to undertake visits to USC branches to monitor the situation.

The advisers undertook visits to different areas of Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Peshawar, Sargodha, Bahawalpur, Abbottabad and Jhang and checked the observance of office timings, availability of staff, adequacy of the daily victuals as well as quality and quantity.

According to a press release, the advisers also checked whether government instructions about production of CNICs for issuance of quota of different eatables was being observed.

It was noted that in some areas of Bahawalpur wheat flour was not available in sufficient quantity, the statement said.

Similarly, cooking oil was also not adequately available at various branches of USC in Lahore, the advisers observed.

It was also noted that due to announcement of further subsidy by the government, sugar and flour bags were being repacked due to which some delay was observed in the delivery of the items.

The advisers issued instructions to the management to ensure that the required material and daily victuals were available in sufficient quantity and sold to customers at the subsidised rates as announced by the government.

Every year in Ramazan, the government announced subsidy on essential food items. But there have always been excessive complaints of low quality and substandard items being sold at utility stores, the press release added. — Staff Reporter