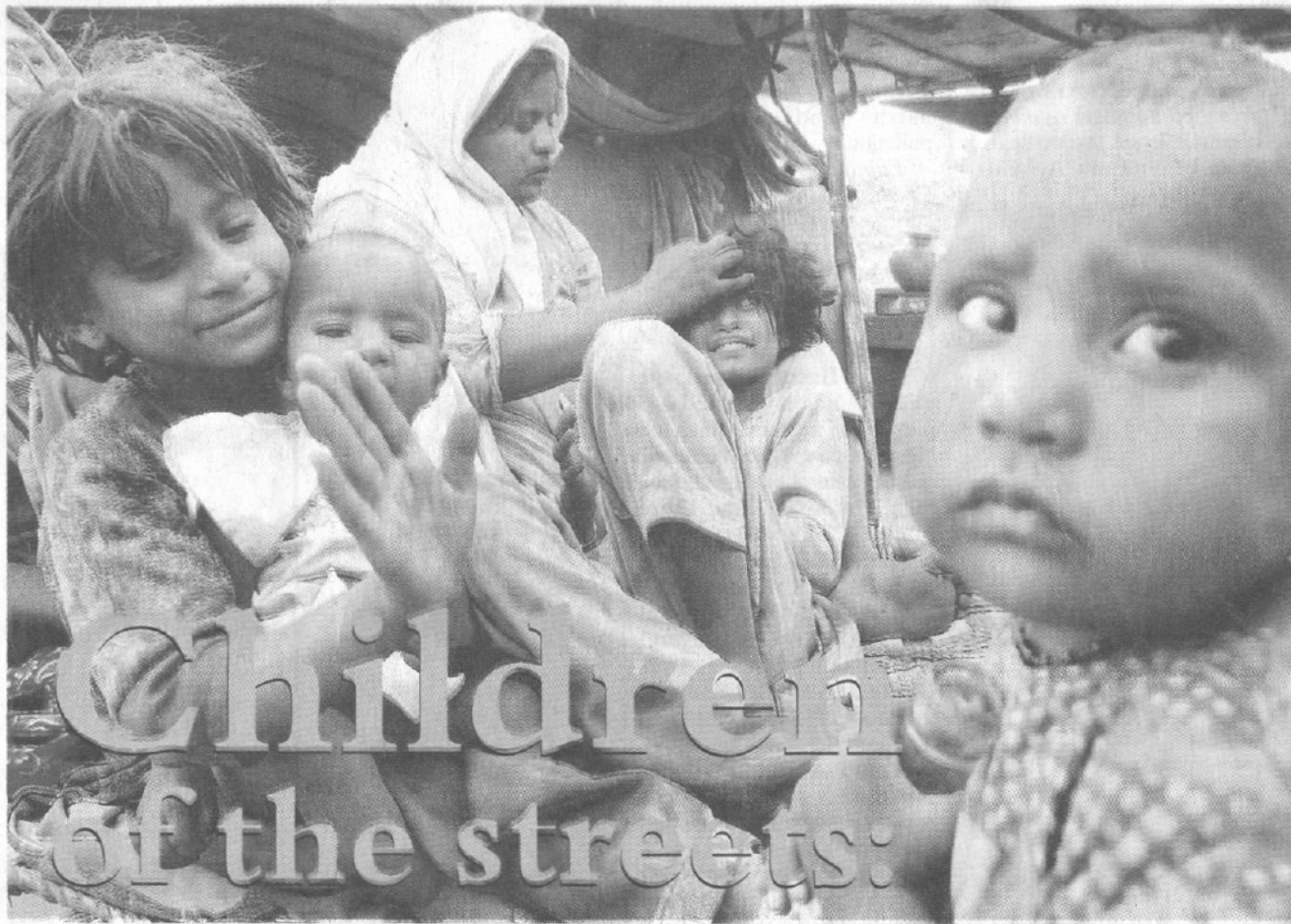


Children News 18-11-05

There are countless numbers of children on the streets who are victims of poverty. Some of these fall prey to various mafia. In certain cases mafia lords order their limbs to be broken and then set up in a crooked manner, and then these children are sold off for begging, or worse still to circus shows as freaks.



Children of the streets:

In search of safe havens

Driving in my new Santro, and playing my favourite number from Metallica, I was in a hurry to get to work and almost ran over a child on the road. Horrified at what could have been, I quickly got out of my car to see if he was hurt. However, I was really

mother having died in childbirth, after producing six children, the father makes clay toys and sends his children off to sell them, not even bothering to know what perils are in store for them.

"My father has to support all six of us and the only mode of income is making clay toys. He has a bad temper and that is why he cannot hold on to any

job for more than a week. When I don't make a sale, he beats me and doesn't give me any food, that is why I stay away from home as much as I can and sometimes sleep on the pavements." The items that Tahir had for sale ranged from five rupees to Rs 25, but he gets no share of his earnings.

Street children are seen everywhere in every city of Pak-

istan and their living conditions are worse than that of animals. Poverty is one of the major factors which forces these children to take to the streets for various purposes, be it offering a massage, to selling flowers, to begging. These children work in the most adverse conditions, for one purpose only, to feed themselves.

Nine years old Abbas

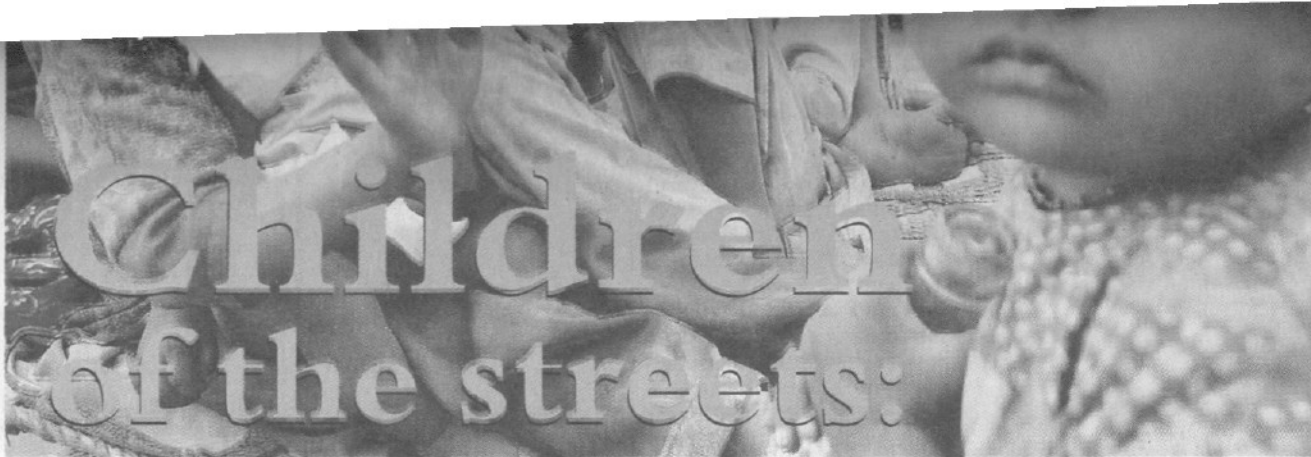
laments, "I wish I had enough money to buy food and eat to my heart's content, instead of toiling in the heat just to get through the day. When I see children my age riding in big cars and eating burgers, I really feel hurt at the injustice, why me? I ask God, what have I done to deserve this? Am I not a child sent by you? But there is no one to answer, I guess God also likes the rich and he ignores the poor," Abbas says with tear-filled eyes.

Abbas's father ran off with his cousin, leaving his mother pregnant with Abbas. She worked in houses as a maid but later developed TB because of poor nutrition, and she was fired from her apparently steady job. Abbas was only three years old then, and there was no one to support him and his mother. Eventually, an elderly neighbour took pity on the mother and child and gave them a place to stay, and some money, enough so that the mother and son could survive.

That also did not come without a price, he wanted Abbas's mother to do sexual favours for him, his mother being only 18, and that neighbour nearing his seventies, his mother eventually succumbed to his ardent advances but did not live long.

Abbas took to the streets where he was exploited and abused but he did manage to survive, now he earns his living by selling flowers but his eyes flash with anger at what has happened to him.

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Children of the streets:

In search of safe havens

During my new *Santro*, and playing my favourite number from *Metallica*, I was in a hurry to get to work and almost ran over a child on the road. Horrified at what could have been, I quickly got out of my car to see if he was hurt. However, I was really surprised to see that the incident had had no affect whatsoever on the six-year-old child, whereas my conscience was killing me.

"Don't worry about me *baji*, I am fine, these things happen to me so often and people don't even bother stopping, sometimes I wish I would be run over at least, then I would be free from this misery," said Tahir. His words took me by surprise as, normally, one does not expect a child to be so morbid in his outlook. On closer inspection, I found that the child was barefoot in the blazing heat of a June afternoon, with sores on his feet, and bleeding.

My heart went out for this little child, and upon asking him I found that he sells clay toys to earn a living. His

mother having died in childbirth, after producing six children, the father makes clay toys and sends his children off to sell them, not even bothering to know what perils are in store for them.

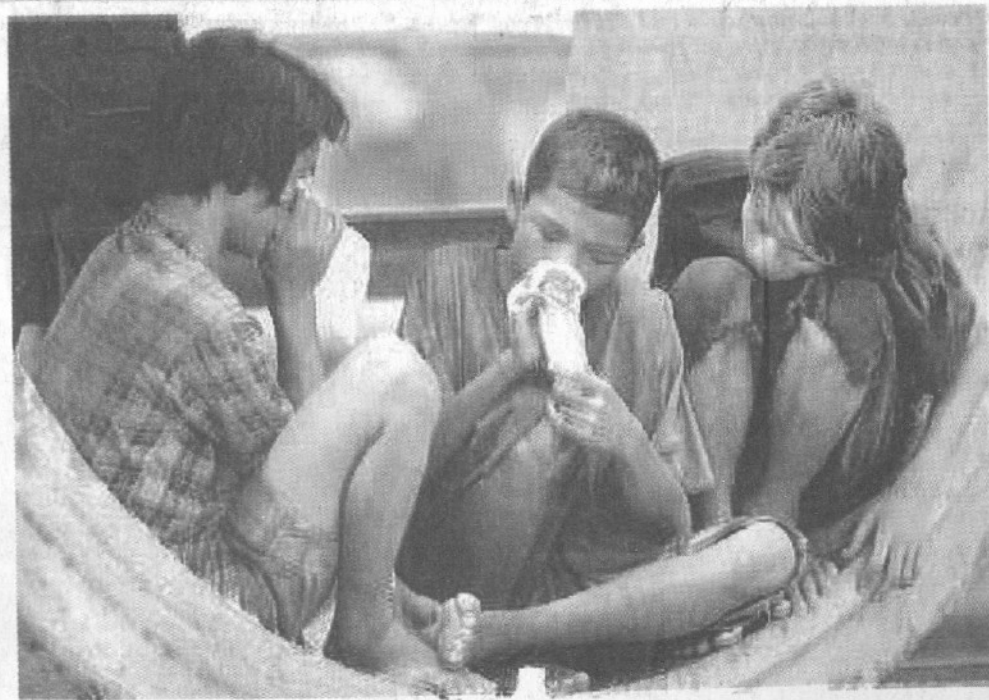
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istan and their living conditions are worse than that of animals. Poverty is one of the major factors which forces these children to take to the streets for various purposes, be it offering a massage, to selling flowers, to begging. These children work in the most adverse conditions, for one purpose only, to feed themselves.

Nisreen, a young girl, is seen



By Beena Qayyum

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So what puts innocent young people on the streets? Poverty is the single biggest factor.

Children are driven from their homes because of

poverty and forced to take to the streets. Often, they are runaways from home, usually coming from rural areas, for whom the lure of the 'bright lights' of the urban centres

Continued on page 4



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There are countless numbers of children on the streets who are victims of poverty and a system that fails to protect their welfare. Most are in search of safe havens but unfortunately they never find them. Corruption haunts to possess the vulnerable children at every corner. Some of these fall prey to various mafia operating in different cities of Pakistan. In certain cases mafia lords order their limbs to be broken and then set up in a crooked manner, and then these children are sold off for begging, or worse still,

