



ISLAMABAD: A view of an empty Islamabad Highway during the partial lockdown due to coronavirus outbreak. —Online

KP announces death compensation for frontliners of corona

From Our Staff Correspondent

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government Sunday decided to pay compensation to bereaved family of employees of all departments deployed on corona duty in case of death from Coronavirus infection.

KP government spokesman Ajmal Wazir, in a media brief, said that Chief Minister Mehmood Khan has highly appreciated the services of doctors, paramedics, Pak Army, police and other departments in fight against Corona pandemic and announced the government would provide financial assistance to bereaved family if any of the employee get infected due to corona and embraced martyrdom.

He said the provincial government was thankful to all Ulemas, civil society and general public for extending support and cooperation to the government in this hour of tragedy.

Ajmal said the CM is very much concerned about the labour and daily wagers, adding that on the directives of Prime Minister Imran Khan and CM Mehmood Khan relief packages would

be provided to all at their doorsteps soon. Referring to media report regarding shortage of wheat and flour in the province, he said the daily wheat demand of KP is 10,000 ton while from KP food department's wheat supply quota for flour mills is 5,000 ton daily.

He said the government has increased the wheat supply quota for flour mills to 6000 ton daily keeping in view the present situation and has also relaxed wheat supply from Punjab to 5,000 ton daily to meet the demand.

Ajmal said that there is no shortage of wheat or flour in the market as the flour mills have been directed to provide enough stock on daily basis to meet the demand and supply. He said all the district governments, food and relief departments have been directed to remain vigilant against profiteer and hoarders and ensure provision of wheat and flour to masses during corona pandemic lockdown. He furthered that in the wake of corona pandemic CM is supervising the situation on hourly basis and issuing directives accordingly from time to time.

At present, he said 180,000 ton of wheat is available with KP food depart-

ment which is enough for May 1, 2020.

Ajmal said the KP government would get 50,000 N-95 masks from National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) by Sunday while other equipments including, gloves and etc have been arrived and provided to health, relief departments and district and Tehsil governments for distribution among doctors, para-medical and other essential staff as well as masses.

Regarding lockdown, the KP Government spokesman said that medical stores, grocery stores, bakers, bank franchise, agriculture's departments, money transfer shops, courier, specific industrial units, vegetable and fruit shops, petrol and CNG pumps are exempted from the restriction of closure.

Ajmal said KP government has increased the capacity of corona diagnostic test to 500 on daily basis and has allowed two private medical complexes RMI and HMC Peshawar to conduct the tests at their labs. He said that soon the corona diagnostic testing would start in Bannu, DI Khan and Abbottabad where results would be given within three hours of the test.

Sukkur Municipal conducts disinfection spray

From Our Staff Correspondent

SUKKUR: Sukkur Municipal Corporation (SMC) conducted disinfection spray in different residential areas of the district on Sunday.

According to Mayor Sukkur, Arslan Shaikh, the SMC officials were doing best to keep control on coronavirus pandemic in all the areas and precincts of the Sukkur.

He said all the staff of the municipal administration doing their services round the clock and assisting possible suspects of Covid-19 at quarantine centre established in Labor Colony and Yousif Masjid adding that officials SMC were spraying disinfectants in all the areas of the district.

The SMC officials conducted disinfection spray in Minara Road, Barrage Colony, Jilani Road, Ghareeb Abad, Shikarpur road, Bunder road, Jinnah Chowk, Clock Tower, Bhosa Line, New Pind, Delhi Colony, Marwari Muhalla, Shams Abad, Wari Tar, railway station, Airport Road, Akhwat Society, Sindhi Muslim Society, New Goth, Qureshi Goth and in adjacent residential areas.

Mayor Sukkur also appealed to public to stay safe inside their homes, use hand sanitizer and wash hands regularly at least for 20 seconds. He asked public to use face mask and gloves when they have to come out of their homes in case of emergency. Deputy Mayor Tariq Chuhani also appealed public not to make rush at public places while going out to take milk and grocery at shops. He said personnel will keep continue spraying disinfectants in all the localities and

areas in the district.

Entry to Dir Lower at Chakhdra Bridge strictly being monitored

Entry to Dir Lower at Chakhdra Bridge was strictly monitored by the officials of the law enforcing agencies, police and entry to all passenger vehicles have been banned apart of the vehicles carrying goods, medicines, vegetables and other food items as well as easy passage to ambulances.

This was stated by an official of police performing his duty at the main entry point at the Chakhdra Bridge. He said Deputy Commissioner Saadat Hassan along with other officials, doctors and paramedics staff, male nurses also visited the check-point and directed the officials not to allow any one without screening. There were also setup counters for the screening and no one was allowed to entry unless and until screening test. Quarantine centre was also established to facilitate the people coming from abroad or other district. Action was also taken against all those violating Section 144 in Dir Lower District. Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower Saadat Hassan, has also imposed ban on all kinds of political, religious, public gatherings, wedding hall function, fairs, shows, seminars, workshops, games to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in light of provincial government directives. He said DC has also banned gathering of more than 5 persons. An appeal was also made to the general public to follow the government-issued guidelines by limiting yourself to homes so that to effectively fight against the coronavirus.

Kashmiri detainees languishing in different jails at risk: JKPFL

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Jammu and Kashmir People's Freedom League (JKPL) has expressed grave concern over the plight of Kashmiri detainees in different jails of Kashmir and India in the current chaotic conditions caused by the Covid-19 across the world.

A JKPL spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar on Sunday said the authorities have not taken safety measures inside jails to prevent the outbreak of the deadly virus among the inmates, Kashmir Media Service reported.

The spokesman said Muhammad Ramzan Khan, the General Secretary of the party, facing detention under the draconian Public Safety Act was already an asthma patient.

He demanded that Ramzan and all other Kashmiri detainees be immediately released from jails and necessary arrangements be made to prevent the outbreak of coronavirus. He also condemned Indian police for humiliating the public and

thrashing them during lockdown.

Alkhidmat Foundation organises exercise for lifting of coronavirus affected bodies

Alkhidmat Foundation Hyderabad on Sunday organized exercise for shifting of coronavirus patients to hospitals and lifting of corona affected bodies by adopting all required safety measures. Under supervision of Administrator Mother and Child Care hospital, Furqan Hafeez, the volunteers of Alkhidmat took part in exercise in which affected areas were being cordoned off and bodies wrapped in plastic bags were lifted to contain spread of virus in the areas.

During exercise, an antiseptic spray had to be conducted after lifting of bodies of coronavirus affected persons to secure area from being infected by virus. Furqan Hafeez said that volunteers of Alkhidmat Foundation were ready to face any situation with regard to coronavirus situation and objective of this exercise was to raise awareness among general public regarding its dangers.

Quick Read

Passengers transferred from virus-stricken Zaandam cruise ship off Panama



PANAMA CITY: Passengers on a virus-stricken cruise liner stranded off Central America were transferred to another ship, after the US-bound vessel was given permission to pass through the Panama Canal.

The Zaandam had been stuck in the Pacific Ocean since Mar 14 after dozens of the 1,800 people on board reported flu-like symptoms and several South American ports refused to let it dock.

The ship's Dutch owner Holland America said Friday four passengers had died and two more had tested positive for COVID-19.

Panama on Saturday reversed its decision to block the Zaandam from its canal, and said it would be allowed to pass "to provide humanitarian help." Another ship, the Rotterdam, has since arrived off the coast of Panama from San Diego carrying food, medical staff, testing kits, medicine and food for the beleaguered vessel.

Passengers showing no signs of the virus were ferried from the Zaandam to the Rotterdam on Saturday, a French tourist told AFP by telephone. "It's like emptying a bathtub with a teaspoon," she said.

"The boats can hold about 100 people, and they are putting about half in at a time. That's why it's going slowly."

The Zaandam cruise liner left Buenos Aires on Mar 7 and was supposed to arrive two weeks later at San Antonio, near Santiago in Chile.

Since a brief stop in Punta Arenas in Chilean Patagonia on Mar 14, it has been turned away from several ports after reporting that 42 people aboard were suffering from flu-like symptoms.

Then on Friday, Panama's government blocked the vessel from its waterway, cutting off its route to Florida.

"It is very difficult to maintain mental health" aboard the vessel, passenger Dante Leguizamon, from Argentina, told AFP Saturday in a video recorded in the small cabin he has been confined to for six days.

"I am ... on a boat that I cannot get off, with coronavirus patients, with four dead, going to Miami, full of uncertainty, without money ... and without knowing if there is a plane back to my homeland." —AFP

Hospitals turn to snorkel masks to ease respirator overload

BRUSSELS: As hospitals face an overload of COVID-19 patients struggling to breathe, innovative medical staff are turning to snorkelling masks from sports stores to stop their lungs collapsing.

The idea started in Italy, the European country worst-hit by the coronavirus pandemic, with hospitals in other nations taking note and adding their own specific medical parts to make it work.

One such is the Erasme Hospital on the outskirts of Belgium's capital Brussels. It is attached to the city's ULB university - and through it to a private spin-off, Endo Tools Therapeutics, whose knowhow in 3D printing for medical use has proved invaluable.

"They are to be used for patients with severe respiratory problems. The aim is to avoid having to intubate the trachea of the patient and put them on a respirator," said Frederic Bonnier, a respiratory physiotherapist at the hospital who also teaches at the university. He spearheaded the design of a custom-made valve that fits to the top of full-face masks, where the snorkel is meant to go, allowing them to connect to standard

Spain's COVID-19 death toll rises by 838 overnight to 6,528

MADRID: Spain awoke to its third week under near-total lockdown, as the government met to approve a strengthening of measures and the coronavirus death toll rose by a record 838 cases overnight to 6,528.

Second only to Italy in fatalities, Spain also saw infections rise to 78,797 from 72,248 the day before.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, in a televised address to the nation on Saturday night, announced that all non-essential workers must stay at home for two weeks, the latest government measure in the fight against coronavirus.

He said workers would receive their usual salaries but would have to make up lost hours at a later date. The measure would last from Mar 30 to Apr 9.

Unions welcomed the measures and business groups CEOE and CEPYME said that while they would comply with the new rule, "it will generate an unprecedented huge impact on the Spanish economy, especially in sectors such as industry". The slowdown "may lead to a deeper crisis in the economy that could become social", they warned in a statement. In Madrid, birdsong drowned out traffic on deserted streets on Sunday morning as police reinforced patrols, stopping buses and cars to check passengers had reason to be out of their homes.

Schools, bars, restaurants and shops selling non-essential items have been shut since Mar 14 and most of the population is house-bound as Spain tries to curb the virus.

In rare case, US infant dies from COVID-19

WASHINGTON: A US infant has died from the COVID-19 illness, officials in the state of Illinois said, marking an extremely rare case of juvenile death in the global pandemic.

At a news conference, Governor JB Pritzker said "an infant" was among the fatalities linked to the new coronavirus over the previous 24 hours.

The state Department of Public Health said the child who died in Chicago was younger than one year old and had tested positive for COVID-19. "There has never before been a death associated with COVID-19 in an infant," the department's director Ngozi Ezike said in a statement. "A full investigation is underway to determine the cause of death." Pritzker described himself as shaken by the news. "I know how difficult this news can be, especially about this very young child," he said. "It's especially sorrowful for the family of this very small child, for the years stolen from this infant. We should grieve."

Last week, top French health official Jerome Salomon said a 16-year-old girl had died in the Ile-de-France region of Paris and its surroundings. "Severe forms (of coronavirus) with the young are very rare," Salomon noted.

In the US state of California last week,



the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health said that a teenager had tested positive for COVID-19 and died.

But the agency added the case is complex and there may be an alternate explanation. Multiple studies have found the virus disproportionately affects older patients and those with underlying conditions.

The United States has the highest number of new coronavirus cases in the world, more than 120,000, although its death toll of more than 2,000 is still below that of other countries including Italy, Spain and China. More than 450 US deaths occurred over the 24-hour period prior to Saturday afternoon. The Chicago baby was among 13 new deaths in Illinois.

Italy's COVID-19 death toll tops 10,000 despite long lockdown

ROME: The coronavirus toll in Italy shot past 10,000 and showed little sign of slowing despite a 16-day lockdown.

The 889 new fatalities reported in the world's worst-hit nation came a day after it registered 969 deaths on Friday - the highest single toll since the COVID-19 virus emerged late last year.

The toll in Italy now stands at 10,023. An additional 5,974 infections brought to 92,472 the number of people who have officially tested positive for COVID-19 in Italy since the crisis began last month.

Italy now looks certain to extend its economically debilitating - and emotionally stressful - business closures and the ban on public gatherings past their Apr 3 deadline.

"Is it time to reopen the country? I think we have to think about it really carefully," civil protection service chief Angelo Borrelli told reporters. "The country is at a standstill and we must maintain the least amount of activity possible to ensure the survival of all." Italians had begun to hope

that their worst disaster in generations was easing after the increase in daily death rates began to slow on Mar 22. But the new surge has changed the Mediterranean nation's mood.

Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte told Italians late on Saturday to be ready to spend more time cooped up at home.

"If one is being reasonable, one cannot envision a quick return to normal life," Conte said in his latest sombre television address. The monumental economic toll of fighting the pandemic has triggered a huge row among European leaders about how best to respond. The southern European nations worst-hit by the virus are urging the EU to go abandon its budget rules.

The bloc has already loosened its purse strings in ways not seen since the 2008-2009 global financial crisis. Giuseppe Conte taking part in the video conference

France is backing a push by Italy and Spain for the EU to start issuing "corona bonds" - a form of common debt that governments sell to raise money to address individual economic needs. More spendthrift nations such as Germany and the Netherlands are balking at the idea of joint debt.

Conte said he and German Chancellor Angela Merkel had "not just a disagreement but a hard a frank confrontation" this week about how to proceed.

"If Europe does not rise to this unprecedented challenge, the whole European structure loses its raison d'etre to the people," Conte told Saturday's edition of the Il Sole 24 Ore financial newspaper.

The entire eurozone is expected to slip into a recession over the coming months.

But Italy is facing the threat of a near economic collapse after being the first European country to shutter almost all its businesses on Mar 12.

Some forecasts suggest that its economy - the third-largest among nations that use the euro common currency - could contract by as much as seven percent this year.

New Zealand records first death tied to COVID-19

MELBOURNE: New Zealand recorded its first death related to COVID-19, and the number of people infected with the virus rose by 63 cases to a total of 514, Director-General of Health Ashley Bloomfield said on Sunday (Mar 29).

Bloomfield said the woman who died was in her 70s and was initially diagnosed with influenza. The New Zealand Herald reported that the woman had tested positive for COVID-19 on Friday morning, before dying in Greymouth Hospital two days later. Bloomfield said that he was still waiting for answers on how the woman contracted COVID-19, but said that it was likely a link from overseas, according to The New Zealand Herald.

He added that the woman was "well known" to district health board staff members, and that those who treated her are symptomatic of COVID-19.

According to Newshub, 21 staff members were potentially exposed before the woman tested positive for COVID-19.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern had called the news "devastating", reported The New Zealand Herald.

"Today's death is a reminder of the fight we have on our hands," she said, calling on New Zealanders to "stay at home, break the chain and save lives".

New Zealand declared a state of emergency on Wednesday, as the government imposed self-isolation for everyone, with all non-essential services, schools and offices to be shut for a month. —AFP