



PESHAWAR: A deserted look of Shahi Bagh Fun Land during lockdown as preventive measures against COVID-19 outbreak.

DC for strict action against wheat hoarders

From Our Staff Correspondent

SARGODHA: Deputy Commissioner Sargodha, Abdullah Nayyar Sheikh has directed the District Food Controller to revoke the licenses and permits of commission agents and wheat traders who did not return official gunny bags.

He also directed to blacklist them and not to issue any kind of permit in future. He directed the Assistant Commissioners across the district to register cases against the wheat hoarders and seize the stock recovered during the raids under the stockpiling ordinance. While the revenue staff has been directed to complete 100 percent target of wheat procurement within next ten days and take action against the failed officials and officers under PEEDA Act.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Director Agriculture has been directed to complete action against field staff that did not meet the target and provide details to the district administration.

Water shortage hit Rawalpindi
Residents of number of localities of Rawalpindi complaint shortage of water supply with the mercury level

going up day by day.

Residents of Dhoke Elahi Bukush, Nadeem Colony, Umar Road, Arya Mohallah, Sadiqabad asked the authorities concerned to take notice of the scarcity of water in their areas for last several days.

Muhammad Yousaf from Dhoke Elahi Bukush said a number of complaints has been registered with the concerned department but no action was taken so far. Another resident Atif Butt of Arya Mohalla said they register many complaints but the authorities turned a deaf ear on the genuine problem. People of this area have to fetch water from far flung areas to cater their daily needs, he added. On the other hand.

District govt issues price list of vegetables, fruits in Rawalpindi
The district Government Wednesday issued price list of vegetables and fruits in the markets of the Rawalpindi.

According to a spokesman, the fruits and vegetables would be available in open market as follows: Potato Rs 56 - 60 per kg, Onion Rs 48 -52 per kg, Tomato Rs 24-26 per kg, Garlic 140 to 155, Ginger Rs 295-

320 per kg, Lemon 130 to 145 per Kg, Capsicum Rs 90-105 per kg, Cucumber 35-40 per Kg, Cauliflower Rs 44-55 per kg, Brinjal Rs 20-25 per kg, Lady finger 26-30, Fresh bean Rs 70-75 per Kg, Carrot 50-55, Turnip 20 to 22 per Kg, Bitter 45-55 per Kg while fruits including Apple Rs 180-190 per kg, Banana Rs 140-150 per (dozen), loquats 55-65 per Kg, Mango Sindri 85-90, Water Mellon 13 to 15 per Kg, Mellon 25 to 30 per kg, Peach 100 to 105 per kg Similarly, chicken meat Rs 260 per kg and eggs 93 per dozen are available in open market.

Mayor warns tightens lockdown in Sukkur

Mayor Sukkur Barrister Arslan Shaikh on Wednesday has said that on the instructions of Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated with simplicity due to the corona epidemic.

He expressed these views through his video message, the Mayor Sukkur warned that if the epidemic escalates further in upcoming days, the government will be compelled to tighten the lockdown including Sukkur.

MoCC to launch seven national parks under 'Green Stimulus'

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC) has planned to launch seven national parks across the country under the "Green Stimulus" initiative of 10 Billion Tree Tsunami project as protected areas for conserving over 650,042 hectares (ha) of forest areas across the country.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam told APP that the project was aimed at preserving the depleting forest cover and dwindling wildlife habitats across the country that would cost around Rs 2,400 million.

He said the initiative would help in creating multiple green jobs for the local communities associated with these national parks. "The Billion Tree Afforestation Project implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) alone generated 5, 00,000 green jobs including enclosure nighabans (guards), plant nursery workers, field staff and workforce engaged in different field tasks."

Amin said at present around 65,000 people were employed on

daily wages under 10 Billion Tree Tsunami (10BTT) Project that have been directed to increase three times for achieving the 20 million trees this year target amid the pandemic of coronavirus.

"This indicates the quantum of sustainable and green employment opportunities to be created under the 10BTT project. It will also give ownership to the local masses of the protected area as its benefits would have direct impact on their economic well-being," he added.

To a question, he said the prime minister would launch the project where these parks would be established in Punjab, KP, Sindh, Balochistan, Gilgit Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) which would be fully funded by MoCC.

These six national parks, he said were sprawling on the total area of 650,042 ha that would be established as protected areas including Kherimurat 8740 ha (1.34 percent), Sheikh Baddin 15,540 ha (2.39 percent), Chiltan-Hazar Ganji 27,400 ha (4.22 percent), Takkar 43,513 ha (6.69 percent), Deva Vattala 449 ha (0.07 percent), Khunjab 554,400 ha (85.29 percent). Amin Aslam informed that Margalla Hills National Park was also part of these six national parks and comprised of approximately 20,000 acres. "The National Parks Service will initiate its working through these seven national parks and then it would be extended to 31 national parks across the country," the Adviser said.

He mentioned that the initiative would help to provide employment opportunities to youth and women whereas it would help promote ecotourism, preserve natural wildlife habitats and increase hiking spots for adventure tourism as well.

Youth drowns in BRB Canal
A youth drowned in BRB Canal while taking bath near Patwan Kalan on Wednesday.

According to Rescue 1122, Muhammad Afzaal (22), of a Mohallah Bhasar Pura Kasur city, along with friend Abdur Rauf went to BRB Canal for taking bath. During bath both went to deep water and drowned in the canal. On information Rescue 1122 team reached the spot and succeeded to save Abdur Rauf, however

NDMA launches hotline for registering locust complaints

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Wednesday operationalised a hotline 051 111 222 999 for registering and resolving locust related complaints.

The hotline has been established at the operation room of National Locust Control Centre (NLCC).

A spokesman of NDMA said in a statement that the aggrieved farmers could register their com-

plaints about the existence of locust in their respective areas or need of spray on the hotline for 24 hours.

Chairman NDMA Lt Gen Muhammad Afzal said NDMA was doing utmost to kill the locust.

Meanwhile, the spokesman said that the locust swarms have hit 61 districts of the country including 31 districts of Balochistan, 11 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 12 of Punjab and seven districts of Sindh have been affected by the locust in the province.

The spray and survey of locust hit areas was continuing in the af-

ected area. The survey of 325,000 hectare area has been completed in last 24 hours. While the treatment of 3,600 hectare areas is complete in last 24 hours.

Giving province wise details of the operation, he said the spray of 1,400 hectare area of Balochistan and 700 hectare area of Punjab has been completed in last 24 hours. The treatment of 900 hectare area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 600 hectare area of Sindh has been completed in the last 24 hours.

Trump threatens to regulate or shut down social media companies

WASHINGTON: United States President Donald Trump threatened to regulate or shut down social media companies, one day after Twitter for the first time added a warning to some of his tweets, prompting readers to fact check the president's claims.

Trump, without offering any evidence, reiterated his accusations of political bias by such technology platforms in a pair of early morning posts on Twitter, saying: "Republicans feel that Social Media Platforms totally silence conservatives voices. We will strongly regulate, or close them down, before we can ever allow this to happen."

He added: "Clean up your act, NOW!!!!"

Twitter targeted two tweets the president posted on Tuesday in which he contended without evidence that mail-in voting would lead to fraud and a "rigged election".

Under the tweets, Twitter posted a link that read "Get the facts about mail-in ballots" and took users to a notice calling the claims "unsubstantiated", citing reporting by CNN, the Washington Post and other media. "Trump falsely claimed that mail-in ballots would lead to 'Rigged Election'," the notice contended. "However, fact-checkers say there is no evidence that mail-in ballots are linked to voter fraud."

Trump threatens to regulate or shut down social media companies (1) A screengrab of Donald Trump's tweet with an added warning by Twitter.

Trump aimed the misleading tweets at California, contending falsely that anyone living in the state would be sent ballots when in fact they will only go to registered voters, according to the notice.

The move drew a furious response from Trump, who used the platform to accuse Twitter of "interfering in the 2020 presidential election". "Twitter is completely stifling FREE



SPEECH, and I, as President, will not allow it to happen!" he tweeted.

The president has long used Twitter as a platform to reach his 80 million followers. For years before being elected in 2016, he built his political brand by supporting the "birther" lie that Barack Obama, America's first black president, was not born in the US and therefore was not eligible to be president.

On Tuesday, Trump ignited a storm with an attempted character assassination of MSNBC host Joe Scarborough by spreading the baseless rumor he murdered an aide.

Twitter, perhaps fearing a clash with one of its most influential users, had previously held out against calls to act.

The tweets in question violated a recently expanded Twitter policy, according to the San Francisco-based company.

"In serving the public conversation, our goal is to make it easy to find credible information on Twitter and to limit the spread of potentially harmful and misleading content," head of site integrity Yoel Roth and

global public policy director Nick Pickles said when the change was announced. Twitter's decision comes as Trump, already facing US economic calamity and 100,000 deaths from COVID-19 as well as sinking reelection polls, received a storm of backlash over his pushing of the Scarborough conspiracy theory.

The entirely evidence-free story claims that Scarborough killed a woman he was having an affair with in 2001, when he was a Republican congressman and she was one of his staffers. Trump ignited a storm with an attempted character assassination of MSNBC host Joe Scarborough

Trump pushed the story over the weekend. On Tuesday, he was at it again, tweeting: "The opening of a Cold Case against Psycho Joe Scarborough". "So many unanswered & obvious questions, but I won't bring them up now! Law enforcement eventually will!" he wrote. The deceased woman, Lori Klausitis, was found by investigators to have died after hitting her head during a fall in Scarborough's office, triggered by an abnormal heart rhythm. —AFP

France bans hydroxychloroquine to treat COVID-19

PARIS: The French government cancelled a decree allowing hospital doctors to administer hydroxychloroquine as a treatment to patients suffering severe forms of COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus.

The move, which takes immediate effect, is the first by a country since the World Health Organization said it was pausing a large trial of the malaria drug due to safety concerns.

The cancellation of the decree, which in effect means the drug is now banned for such use, was announced in the government's official bulletin and confirmed by a statement by the health ministry. It did not refer to the WHO suspension.

France decided at the end of March to allow the use of hydroxychloroquine, which in addition to malaria is approved for treating lupus and rheumatoid arthritis, in specific situations and in hospitals only for treating COVID-19 patients.

British medical journal The Lancet has reported that patients getting hydroxychloroquine had increased death rates and irregular heartbeats, adding to a series of other disappointing results for the drug as a way to treat COVID-19.

WHO expects hydroxychloroquine safety findings by mid-June French doctor defiant on hydroxychloroquine despite study

US President Donald Trump and others have pushed hydroxychloroquine in recent months as a possible coronavirus treatment.

France decided at the end of March to allow the use of hydroxychloroquine in specific situations and in hospitals only.

No vaccine or treatment has yet been approved to treat COVID-19 which has killed more than 350,000 people globally. Our comprehensive coverage of the coronavirus outbreak and its developments. —Reuters

EU proposes huge aid plan as COVID-19 hammers Latin America

BRUSSELS: The EU unveiled a proposed 750-billion-euro recovery plan to get the continent back on its feet after the devastation wreaked by the coronavirus pandemic, as Latin America outpaced Europe and the US in the number of daily infections.

The massive European plan follows other unprecedented emergency measures introduced around the world to rescue economies shattered by the disease, which has claimed more than 350,000 lives with infections rapidly approaching 5.6 million.

While the virus continues to cause havoc in Latin America, Europe has slowly started reopening businesses as outbreaks on the continent slow, but Italy and Spain lack the firepower of richer European nations to rebuild their economies.

The European Commission put forward a 750 billion euro (US\$825 billion) proposal to the European Parliament and member states on Wednesday, aiming to help the worst-affected countries with a mix of grants and loans.

Economic Affairs Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni hailed the proposal as a "European breakthrough" that would "tackle an unprecedented crisis".

Last week EU officials said the recovery package could be as much as one trillion euros, but the amount was announced Wednesday as 750 billion euros - a mixture of grants a loan credits. Heavily indebted Italy and Spain are slated to be the biggest beneficiaries, according to a document seen by AFP. Italy would receive up to 81.8 billion in direct aid and 90.9 billion in loans, while Spain would receive 77.3 billion in aid and 63.1 billion in credits, the document said. The proposed package is expected to kick off tough negotiations, as backers try to win the support of some northern EU states that oppose paying out aid in grants to nations already under mountains of debt - such as Italy and Spain. The proposal comes as the continent - which has lost at least 173,000 people to COVID-19 - grapples with the human tragedy and economic destruction.

Spain on Wednesday will begin 10 days of official mourning for the more than 27,000 people who died in the country, with all flags on public buildings at half-mast.

The Iberian nation and others hit particularly hard, such as Italy, Germany, France and Britain, have all started easing their lockdowns, as people head to shops, sunbathe at beaches and run in parks after months of confinement. Russia, meanwhile, said it had passed its peak of infections, promising to hold postponed World War II victory celebrations next month. While desperate to kickstart their economies, especially the tourism sector, most governments in Europe are also trying to move cautiously, afraid of a second wave of infections.

That fear has meant some activities have been allowed again, while others must wait - including choir singing. After horror stories emerged from choirs around the world of mass infections among singers, the activity is now considered dangerous by German authorities. At the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Berlin's Schoenberg district, there have been no choir rehearsals since early March. —AFP



26 people arrested in France and Belgium over UK truck deaths

PARIS: The French prosecutor's office said that 26 people have been arrested in France and Belgium in connection with the deaths of 39 Vietnamese migrants found in the back of a truck near London last year.

Belgian prosecutors said those held in raids around Brussels are suspected of running a people smuggling network believed to be behind the tragedy in Britain in October last year.

The dead, including two 15-year-old boys, were found on an industrial estate about 32 east of London last October.

Mostly from Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces in north-central Vietnam, their deaths shone a light on the human smuggling trade.

Autopsies had concluded that the provisional cause of death was a combination of hypoxia - oxygen deprivation - and hyperthermia - overheating - in an enclosed space. Maurice Robinson, the British

driver of the truck from Northern Ireland, admitted last November to plotting to assist unlawful immigration and acquiring criminal property.

Police have said that the Vietnamese victims were found not long after the container arrived in Britain from Zeebrugge in Belgium.

The refrigerated unit was picked up at Purfleet dock, not far from Grays, while police believe the truck cab was driven over from Ireland. —Agencies